



SMART Community Policing Act

U.S. Senator Michael Bennet (D-Colo.)

Public safety in Colorado and across the country demands a comprehensive response. Mental assistance responder teams play a critical role in partnering with law enforcement and emergency responders to connect at-risk individuals with resources, prevent crime, and improve public safety. Mobile crisis teams, co-responder units, and case managers are vital to these efforts. They engage people experiencing crises related to mental health, poverty, homelessness, or substance use disorders to deescalate challenging situations and connect them to services. The mental assistance responder teams reduce the strain on law enforcement and allow officers to focus on violent crimes. [Studies confirm](#) this approach yields better public safety outcomes while conserving limited resources.

The Supporting Mental Assistance Responder Teams (SMART) Community Policing Act would provide dedicated funds for collaborative partnerships with law enforcement, health professionals, case managers, and outreach teams to improve public safety and connect people with mental health services and community resources. Specifically, the legislation would create or expand programs that:

- Pair a mental health clinician with a paramedic or emergency medical technician to respond to certain low-risk calls to the 911 system;
- Train crisis workers to respond to calls for service and help stabilize encounters;
- Provide mental health services for persons, including those in crisis who may need further evaluation and treatment;
- Stabilize encounters between law enforcement officers and people experiencing behavioral health crises and connect them with appropriate support programs; and
- Build case management and outreach teams to follow up with people to develop specific solutions to reduce repeat interactions with emergency services.

The legislation is based on Denver's STAR Program and Grand Junction's Co-Responder Program. Denver's STAR Program has responded to almost 4,600 calls for service that would have otherwise required police to respond. Grand Junction's Co-Responder Unit has responded to over 3,200 crisis calls. Colorado's successful community policing is a model to the nation by creating opportunities for law enforcement to focus on violent crime, deescalate encounters involving mental and behavioral health crises, and save taxpayer money.