



Policy Referral

Quality of Life (Mental Health and Public Safety)

SAFETY COMMITTEE

JANUARY 5, 2026

Policy Referral (Committee Charge)

Analyze existing strategies and community-based responses to the involvement of people with mental health and substance use disorders in the criminal justice system. Review options to address gaps and/or further integrate or scale existing efforts across local partners to leverage resources and maximize impacts.

Mental Health Impact on Community Safety and Vitality

2017 Char-Meck Opportunity Task Force Report

Underscored need to “develop efforts focused on addressing mental health issues and/or reducing negative mental health impacts of living in low-opportunity environments”

Meck. Co. FY 2023 – FY 2028 Violence Prevention Strategic Plan (The Way Forward)

Highlighted need to “expand access to behavioral and mental health services for individuals”

NC Division of Juvenile Justice

2024 survey of 175 detained youth cited “97.7% carried at least one mental health diagnosis”

Center for Disease Control

CDC’s public health strategy recognizes that “people who are justice involved are disproportionately impacted by the nation’s mental health crisis”

Stanford University Institute for Policy Research

Policy recommendations suggest that “improving access to mental health care for low-income young men with mental health histories would be a cost-effective way to reduce their contact with the criminal justice system”

City of Charlotte

Although behavioral healthcare is not a strategic priority for Council, or a core service for Team Charlotte, we are engaged in a wide array of efforts reflecting the strong link between mental health and public safety, including:

Policing Strategies

- Crisis Intervention Team
- Community Policing Crisis Response Team
- Community Assistance: Respond, Engage and Support (CARES) Team

Investments

- Umbrella Center
- Katie Blessing Center
- Non-Congregate Shelter

Place-Based Strategies/Programs

- Alternatives to Violence
- Hospital-based violence prevention
- Street outreach
- Catherine Simmons Ave. / Lincoln Heights Action Plan

* Items in blue font reflect collaboration with Mecklenburg County

What are other cities doing?

A scan of public safety – mental health programs and initiatives in other cities suggests that Charlotte is among the nation's leading cities in advancing best practices, such as:

- ✓ **Crisis Intervention Team program:** specialized training for police officers, focused on de-escalation techniques and diverting individuals to treatment
- ✓ **Co-response Model:** dispatch of sworn officers in tandem with mental health professionals
- ✓ **Dispatch Diversion Program:** divert some 911 calls to non-law enforcement responders, dispatching licensed clinicians better suited to address low-risk calls associated with homelessness / mental health
- ✓ **Crisis Stabilization Partnership:** local government / police department collaboration with 24/7 behavioral health crisis centers
- ✓ **Permanent Supportive Housing:** subsidized housing paired with supportive services to help people who are chronically homeless and often have serious mental illnesses

Benchmarking Source: The Council of State Governments

What's next?

- 1. While being mindful that FY 2026 funding is not available to activate new programming or investments, there are items for Committee awareness in advance of the development of both the FY27 Budget and 2026 Legislative Agenda, such as:**

Area of Interest	Description	Council Engagement
1. Sustain – and eventually grow – CMPD's behavioral health-related investments	CARES Program, CIT, CPCRT, Smith Family Behavioral Health Urgent Care	Future budgets (with FY27 emphasis on sustaining current investment levels)
2. Scale non-profit Street Outreach	Public-private sector collaboration to grow street outreach capacity	FY27 Financial Partner Program
3. Additional state funding for mental health	BGIR Committee discussed this item for possible inclusion in Council's 2026 State Legislative Agenda	2026 Legislative Agenda development/approval process
4. Collaborative public safety / quality of life Action Plans in hot spot geographies (replicating work in the area of Catherine Simmons Ave.)	Collaborative efforts (City, County, non-profits, community groups) to reduce crime, address homelessness, and foster community-driven development in isolated geographies	Staff update in early 2026 (written or via Committee briefing)

- 2. A substantial portion of Council's Annual Strategy Meeting agenda will be devoted to public safety topics**