

**CITY OF LOS ANGELES**  
**INTER-DEPARTMENTAL CORRESPONDENCE**

Date: April 27, 2026

Council File No. 25-0600  
CAO WA No. 0220-06377-0000

To: The Honorable Members of City Council

From: Matthew W. Szabo, City Administrative Officer  
Sharon M. Tso, Chief Legislative Analyst



Reference: Fiscal Year 2025-2026 Adopted Budget, Exhibit H, Item 49

Subject: **CREATION OF A NEW DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY SAFETY**

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

The City Administrative Officer (CAO) and the Chief Legislative Analyst (CLA) recommend that the City Council:

1. DIRECT the CAO, CLA and all relevant departments to conduct an in-depth review of the City's existing programs, including an analysis of following information for each program listed in Attachment A, and report back with recommendations for the organization of the City's community safety services:
  - a. Population served;
  - b. Regional availability;
  - c. Service delivery model (i.e. in-house staff or contracted services);
  - d. Staff qualifications and team composition;
  - e. Service deployment method (e.g., 9-1-1 dispatched, proactive planned programming, public phone line);
  - f. Program metrics including the annual number of clients served and response time (if applicable);
  - g. Total budget and funding sources.
2. DIRECT the CAO and CLA to develop a model for a unified, City-wide unarmed crisis response program that institutionalizes learnings from recent pilots, namely the Unarmed Model of Crisis Response (UMCR) and the Crisis and Incident Response through Community-Led Engagement (CIRCLE), and report back on the proposed structure.

## **SUMMARY**

During the Fiscal Year 2025-26 budget deliberations, the City Council directed the City Administrative Officer (CAO) and Chief Legislative Analyst (CLA) to report on the potential establishment of a Department of Community Safety. This report considers the merits of this proposal within the context of the City's current fiscal constraints, which require careful evaluation of the costs and benefits associated with any new ongoing services and the identification of quantifiable cost offsets necessary to maintain a structurally balanced budget.

Our offices first sought to identify the underlying objectives and intended benefits associated with the proposed department. While "community safety" is understood to extend beyond unarmed crisis response and to encompass a broad range of programs, recent Council actions suggest that the immediate objective is the institutionalization of unarmed civilian crisis response as a core component of the City's public safety system, alongside the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) and Los Angeles Fire Department (LAFD).

To inform the City Council's consideration, a preliminary baseline cost estimate is presented, reflecting the minimum additional staffing needed to establish a new City department and provide oversight and coordination of a limited subset of existing programs. The development of a refined cost estimate, however, is contingent upon two foundational policy considerations:

- (1) the functional scope of the proposed department; and
- (2) the identification of existing programs to be transferred.

The detailed cost to create a new department cannot be evaluated or quantified until these policy determinations are made. Therefore, given the City's current fiscal environment, proceeding with the establishment of a new department prior to clarifying these policy determinations would present a significant fiscal risk and is not recommended at this time.

Key next steps are identified with consideration of the foregoing analysis. Emerging as a consistent next step across all long-term options is the application of operational lessons learned from the Unarmed Model of Crisis Response (UMCR) and the Crisis and Incident Response through Community-Led Engagement (CIRCLE) pilots to establish a unified unarmed civilian crisis response program. It is therefore recommended that the management staff of both programs collaborate to establish the parameters for a unified unarmed civilian crisis response program in tandem with the analysis of the organization of the City's broader community safety services.

## **CONTEXT**

While the UMCR and CIRCLE programs have emerged in recent years as core components of the City's unarmed civilian crisis response framework, the term "community safety," as used in prior Council discussions, is understood to reflect a

broader set of functions and services. Numerous other City programs address a range of community safety needs beyond crisis response. **Attachment A** provides a non-exhaustive list of such programs for illustrative purposes. In this report, “crisis response” refers to services delivered by unarmed civilian personnel to address incidents relating to individuals experiencing personal or mental health crises.

The analysis conducted in preparation of this report and its recommendations has been undertaken within the context of the City’s current fiscal constraints. As detailed in the CAO’s most recent Financial Status Report (C.F. 25-0600-S133), the City faces ongoing external risks and fiscal pressures that require careful prioritization of limited General Fund resources. The City’s 2025-26 fiscal condition necessitated the consolidation of several existing departments, service reductions, and the consideration of layoffs which are currently being held in abeyance. Given these realities, careful consideration must be given to operational benefits to justify increased costs.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Objectives / Benefits of a Potential Department of Community Safety**

Consistent with prior Council discussions and actions regarding the long-term framework of alternative crisis response efforts (e.g., C.F. 20-0769), the City’s recent UMCR and CIRCLE pilots underscore the need for increased institutional structure and capacity for the coordination of non-traditional crisis response services. The establishment of a new department has the potential to provide several key benefits:

- Institutionalizing unarmed, civilian crisis response as a permanent component of the City’s broader public safety response, moving the City beyond reliance on traditional law enforcement, fire, and emergency medical services;
- Centralized structure for oversight and management of unarmed crisis response services;
- Improved coordination and standardization protocols and procedures across programs;
- Better collaboration between programs to ensure seamless handoffs and continuity of care for individuals served;
- Greater operational efficiency (e.g., dispatching).

However, the benefits listed above focus specifically on the City’s unarmed, civilian crisis response efforts, which are anticipated to be a core component, but may not be the entirety, of a potential new department. As detailed in a subsequent section of this report, “community safety” must be defined to determine the scope of the new department, which would allow for a more detailed analysis of the benefits.

### **Costs of a Potential Department of Community Safety**

The establishment of a new City department would require new investments in staffing, infrastructure, and administrative support. Table (1) provides a preliminary estimate of the baseline staffing necessary to establish a new department, supporting its core administrative functions and overseeing a limited number of existing community safety programs.

In addition to staffing, a new City department would require additional office space, custodial services, as well as Furniture, Fixture, and Equipment (FF&E). The estimate below does not include any one-time or ongoing facility or FF&E needs. Facility costs will depend on the availability of appropriate space within the City’s existing real estate portfolio at the time the department is established. If suitable City space is available, costs would primarily be limited to any necessary tenant improvements and ongoing custodial and maintenance services. If appropriate City space is not available, costs would instead depend on the prevailing market rate for leasing suitable office space at that time, as well as any modifications necessary to prepare the space for occupancy and program operations.

*Table 1. Sample Baseline Costs of a New City Department*

<b>Class Code</b>	<b>Classification</b>	<b>FTE</b>	<b>Annual Salary</b>	<b>Indirect Costs</b>
GM M-7	Executive Director	1	\$281,609	\$113,641
-	Assistant Executive Director	1	\$218,029	\$92,348
1117-2	Executive Administrative Assistant II	1	\$103,523	\$54,000
9171-2	Senior Management Analyst II	1	\$183,431	\$80,761
9171-1	Senior Management Analyst I	2	\$296,287	\$237,113
9184-0	Management Analyst	2	\$240,913	\$200,024
1779-1	Data Analyst I	1	\$121,605	\$60,056
1513-0	Accountant	1	\$103,064	\$53,846
1358-0	Administrative Clerk	1	\$64,269	\$40,854
	<b>Subtotal</b>	11	\$1,612,729	\$932,642
	<b>Facility and FF&amp;E Costs</b>		To be determined	
	<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>\$2,545,371</b>	

The City currently invests substantial resources in a range of existing programs that may be considered for inclusion within a proposed Department of Community Safety. **Attachment A** identifies 13 such programs that have been referenced at various times by the City Council or prior CAO reports as potential components of the City’s community safety efforts. As shown in the attachment, the combined budget appropriations for this limited set of programs is over \$86,000,000. It should be noted that this amount does not include: all assigned sworn staff in the departments’ base budget, externally-funded positions (e.g. County-funded staff in SMART), existing departmental capacity (e.g., accountants, department management) or infrastructure (e.g., office space) that facilitate the administration of these programs.

For purposes of this report, a focused analysis was conducted to assess potential cost efficiencies associated with transitioning the UMCR and CIRCLE pilots to a unified civilian crisis response program. This analysis identified limited opportunity for administrative or program management savings. While economies of scale may create efficiencies at the contractor level, City program management costs for both UMCR (Table 2) and CIRCLE reflect efficient administrative structures relative to the operational and oversight requirements of the programs. For instance, the three UMCR staff are supported by multiple additional staff in the CAO who provide oversight, data analysis, and administrative support including contracting, payroll processing, procurement assistance. Similarly, no material savings or operational efficiencies are anticipated at the responder level.

*Table 2. Current UMCR Program Management Costs*

<b>Class Code</b>	<b>Classification</b>	<b>FTE</b>	<b>Salary</b>	<b>Indirect Costs</b>
9171-2	Senior Management Analyst II	1	\$178,065	\$76,507
9171-1	Senior Management Analyst I	1	\$143,801	\$65,221
9184-0	Management Analyst	1	\$116,928	\$56,369
	<b>Subtotal</b>	3	\$438,793	\$198,097
	<b>Total</b>		<b>\$636,891</b>	

Current annual dispatch costs are approximately \$1,300,000 for UMCR and \$1,400,000 for CIRCLE. While a joint dispatch function could yield savings, depending on facility, staffing, and operational requirements for a Citywide dispatch center, these savings may be modest (approximately \$300,000). Additionally, one-time initial start-up costs may be needed to consolidate dispatch functions for the two programs.

*Table 3. Current CIRCLE and UMCR Dispatch Costs*

<b>Program Component</b>	<b>Annual Ongoing Costs</b>
CIRCLE Dispatch Operator	\$ 990,000
CIRCLE Software/Technology	\$ 417,000
<b>CIRCLE Total Dispatch Costs</b>	<b>\$ 1,407,000</b>
UMCR Dispatch Operator	\$ 1,189,808
UMCR Software / Technology	\$ 129,562
<b>UMCR Total Dispatch Costs</b>	<b>\$ 1,319,371</b>

Accordingly, with a scope limited to UMCR and CIRCLE, or a unified civilian crisis response program, there will not be sufficient cost savings to support the creation of a new City department.

While the transfer of additional programs to a new department may present opportunities for additional operational efficiencies and cost savings, the extent to which actual savings may offset the costs will depend on many factors, including:

- Operational alignment and/or overlap across existing programs (e.g., service deployment or call diversion processes);
- Existing facilities, management capacity, or operational infrastructure (e.g., dispatch staff, contract administrators) that could be leveraged as shared resources;
- External restrictions associated with each program's specific funding sources or operational requirements (e.g., data privacy) that may limit the ability to share resources; and,
- Current departments' existing management capacity and infrastructure supporting the administration of the programs but not directly reflected in the City's annual program-specific appropriation.

An in-depth assessment of each program's service model, target populations' needs, current operations, and funding sources would be required to identify potential opportunities for cost savings and operational efficiencies. Each program was established to fill tangible gaps in the region's response to a range of crises and incoming 9-1-1 calls. Each program has developed its own operational processes and protocols over time. This level of analysis would require significant time and planning; as a result, few operational efficiencies can be expected to be realized in the near term. Therefore, at this time, given the City's budgetary conditions, allocating new resources to establish a new City department without identified cost offsets or established programmatic efficiencies presents significant fiscal and program delivery risk.

### **Policy Considerations**

In seeking to develop more refined cost estimates, this Office identified two key decision points that require policy direction:

1. Definition of "Community Safety" and the scope of the proposed department, and;
2. Identification of existing programs and functions to be incorporated into the new department.

The scope of the proposed department will inform the selection of the programs and functions to be transferred. In the absence of policy direction on these matters, the level of analysis that can be completed at this time is limited.

### Defining Community Safety and Scope

The term "Community Safety" may encompass a range of interdependent services: from alternative crisis response, conflict mediation, and mental health services to public health, homelessness and street engagement strategies. To determine a potential scope of the proposed department, a preliminary research was conducted to identify other jurisdictions that have previously established a dedicated "Department of Community Safety." Among those jurisdictions, the term is generally used to describe a set of functions intended to provide varying types of supportive services to individuals in

crisis, beyond traditional law enforcement. However, the scope of those services varies considerably: some are narrowly focused on unarmed civilian crisis response, while others also incorporate violence prevention activities, coordination of homelessness services, and, in certain cases, neighborhood services and code enforcement functions. **Attachment B** provides an overview of how other municipalities have defined and organized “Community Safety” functions within a dedicated department.

The following options illustrate potential scopes for a new Department of Community Safety:

1. ***Crisis Response, Excluding Co-response Models***

This option would limit the department’s responsibilities to standalone teams of unarmed civilians providing crisis response for a variety of calls dispatched by 9-1-1.

2. ***Crisis Response, Including Co-Response Models***

Under this option, the department would oversee standalone crisis response as well as co-response models that include on-scene response alongside sworn members of the LAPD or LAFD.

3. ***Violence / Crisis Prevention Programs***

This option would include crisis response functions along with selected violence and crisis prevention programs intended to reduce the likelihood of contact with the criminal justice system.

4. ***Other Social Services***

Under this option, the department would oversee a broader set of social service coordination functions beyond crisis response and prevention, such as homelessness coordination and outreach strategy or other specialized social services. However, given existing established departmental structures and the City’s planned organizational investments in these areas, this broad scope is not recommended at this time. Many of these functions are currently housed within departments with established expertise and infrastructure (e.g., Community Investment in Families Department) or are in the process of reorganization (e.g., the new Homelessness Bureau within the Los Angeles Housing Department).

Program Selection

The scope of the potential department will largely determine the programs that may be best suited for oversight by the new department. **Attachment A** presents a preliminary categorization of some programs previously identified by the City Council as a component of the City’s community safety efforts.

Program selection may be evaluated based on several distinct policy and operational factors, such as:

- **Role in the Community Safety ‘Continuum of Care’**
  - Programs aimed at violence and crisis prevention

- Direct short-term incident-level crisis response services
- Follow-up and case management
- Referrals and connections to existing systems (e.g., County-administered services)
- **Criminal Justice System Diversion:** Whether the program is specifically designed to divert individuals from law enforcement involvement, reduce justice system contact, or provide alternatives to enforcement.

The preliminary analysis presented in **Attachment A** classifies each program by whether it diverts individuals away from the criminal justice system, the type of service (crisis response versus violence/crisis prevention), and where applicable, its model of crisis response (primary/standalone response versus co-response).

### **NEXT STEPS**

Based on the analysis presented in this report, the establishment of a new City department limited to oversight of only the UMCR and CIRCLE programs would introduce administrative and start-up costs that are not proportionate to its benefits, and is therefore not recommended. A Department of Community Safety encompassing additional crisis response and prevention programs could offer improved strategic alignment; further policy direction and analysis would be required to define scope, program inclusion, and fiscal impacts before this option could be meaningfully assessed.

An alternative approach would be the creation of an Office of Unarmed Response within an existing City department. Although this structure could reduce administrative overhead relative to a standalone department, no existing department currently provides a clear operational fit without structural or mission adjustments. Placement within LAFD may offer the strongest functional alignment due to its emergency response expertise, but differences in mission and service models would require careful consideration. Placement within the CAO may be appropriate on an interim basis but does not represent a sustainable long-term solution. However, given the potential of establishing a Department of Community Safety in future fiscal years, transferring existing functions out of the CAO on an interim basis would create duplicative transition efforts and unnecessary administrative costs (e.g., processing position transfers, personnel processes, physical relocation, space identification).

Across all long-term organizational options, a consistent near-term next step is the application of operational lessons learned from the UMCR and CIRCLE pilots to establish a unified unarmed civilian crisis response program. The development of this unified program should be the primary focus in the near term, while inter-departmental analysis is initiated to inform future decisions about the organization of the City's Community Safety services.

**FISCAL IMPACT**

The recommendations in this report do not have a fiscal impact.

**ATTACHMENT A. OVERVIEW OF THE CITY'S EXISTING COMMUNITY SAFETY PROGRAMS**

Program	Department	FY 25-26 Budget	Description	Diversion from Criminal Justice System
<b>CRISIS RESPONSE</b>				
Advanced Provider Response Unit (APRU)	LAFD	\$3,051,981	Medical calls that can be resolved by basic and advanced life support, on-site treatment for low-acuity patients and ability to transport to mental health facilities	N
Call Redirection to Ensure Suicide Safety (CRESS)	LAPD	\$960,000	Contracted service providers respond to calls received by LAPD regarding mental health and suicide ideation and appropriate for telephonic response	N
Crisis and Incident Response through Community-led Engagement (CIRCLE)	Mayor	\$7,200,000	Contracted service providers respond to low-acuity calls related to PEH incl. well-being checks, indecent exposure, disturbances, loitering, noise complaints, and syringe disposal	Y
Fast Response Vehicle (FRVs)	LAFD	\$9,864,735	Intervention and triage for acute emergencies, alcohol inebriation and mental health crisis	N
Unarmed Model of Crisis Response (UMCR)	CAO	\$14,031,319	Contracted service providers respond to low-acuity calls incl. mental health, well-being check, intoxication, minor disputes, indecent exposure, trespassing and disturbances	Y
<b>CRISIS RESPONSE -- Co-Response Model</b>				
Crisis Response Team (CRT)	Mayor	\$882,000	Trained, on-call volunteers who provide immediate, on-scene, practical, and emotional support to survivors impacted by personal tragedies related to traumatic incidents such as homicide, suicide, or a tragic death	N
Domestic Abuse Response Team (DART)	Mayor	\$3,741,235	Contracted providers ride along with LAPD officers to provide on-scene and follow-up crisis intervention for victims of domestic violence	Y

**ATTACHMENT A. OVERVIEW OF THE CITY'S EXISTING COMMUNITY SAFETY PROGRAMS (continued)**

Systemwide Mental Assessment Response Team (SMART)	LAPD	\$144,811	County mental health professionals respond to mental health related calls that require a police response	Y
<b>VIOLENCE / CRISIS PREVENTION PROGRAMS</b>				
Dispute Resolution Program (DRP)	City Attorney	N/A (Grant-Funded)	Provides free voluntary, confidential conflict resolution services for community disputes including: landlord-tenant, neighbor-neighbor, business-customer, and family-domestic; Provides community-police mediation to address complaints of police discourtesy and bias	Y
Gang Reduction and Youth Development (GRYD)	Mayor	\$38,406,425	Provides community engagement and programming, gang prevention and diversion services for youth and families, intervention and violence interruption services	Y
Neighborhood Justice Program (NJP)	City Attorney	N/A (Grant-Funded)	Diversion program in which certain first-time and other eligible offenders, are given an opportunity to resolve their case and repair the harm they caused through a community-based process, instead of in a courtroom	Y
Summer Night Lights (SNL)	RAP	\$5,760,000	Provides extended recreational, cultural, educational, and resource-based programming on designated days	Y
Street Medicine	LAHD	\$1,979,978	Medical services for individuals experiencing homelessness who are unable to visit traditional, brick-and-mortar medical establishments	N
	<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$86,022,484</b>		

## ATTACHMENT B. SUMMARY OF SELECTED COMMUNITY SAFETY DEPARTMENTS IN OTHER MUNICIPALITIES

Municipality	Department Name	Scope / Mission	Programs / Core Functions
Albuquerque, NM	Albuquerque Community Safety (ACS)	"Behavioral Health First" response, addressing trauma and breaking cycles of violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● First Responders <i>Responds to behavioral health crises, chronic mental illness, and situations that need de-escalation or mediation</i></li> <li>● Violence Intervention Program Division               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>Community-Oriented Response &amp; Assistance which supports community healing after traumatic events</i></li> <li>○ <i>Opioid Education &amp; Prevention</i></li> <li>○ <i>Violence Intervention Program to reduce gun violence</i></li> <li>○ <i>Hospital-Based Violence Intervention Program partners with hospitals to provide trauma-informed care, safety planning, and long-term support for victims of violent injury</i></li> <li>○ <i>School-Based Violence Intervention Program</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Cambridge, MA	Community Safety Department (CSD)	Enhance the community's health and well-being	<p>CARE (Community Assistance Response and Engagement) Team responds to 9-1-1 calls for non-violent behavioral health crises</p>
Durham, NC	Durham Community Safety Department (DCSD)	Advance community-centered approaches to public safety that offer alternatives to policing and the criminal legal system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Crisis Response               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>Embeds mental health clinicians in the 9-1-1 call center</i></li> <li>○ <i>Community Response Teams: Dispatches unarmed 3-person teams as first responders to non-violent behavioral health and quality of life calls for service</i></li> <li>○ <i>Co-Response: Pairs clinicians with police officers to respond to certain calls for service that pose a greater safety risk</i></li> <li>○ <i>Involuntary Commitment Response Team: Pairs a clinician and an EMT to conduct on-site mental health evaluations and provide support in situations that may require involuntary commitment</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>● Stabilization Services: Support those navigating housing insecurity, reentry after incarceration, behavioral health needs, connecting them to resources and longer-term support; also leads the Continuum of Care (CoC)</li> </ul>

**ATTACHMENT B. SUMMARY OF SELECTED COMMUNITY SAFETY DEPARTMENTS IN OTHER MUNICIPALITIES (continued)**

Greensboro, NC	Community Safety Department (CSD)	Community-centered prevention, crisis intervention, and long-term, intensive case management for individuals whose issues have put them in frequent contact with law enforcement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Behavioral Health Response Team</li> <li>• Violence Prevention</li> <li>• Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion: <i>Helps divert individuals from the criminal justice system by providing intensive case management and connection to community services</i></li> <li>• Homeless Prevention Services: <i>Includes Homeless Outreach Mobile Engagement program and management of federal grants</i></li> <li>• Criminal Justice Advisory Commission</li> </ul>
West Hollywood, CA	Community Safety Department	Ensure public safety and strengthen quality of life for residents, businesses, and visitors in West Hollywood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public Safety Division: <i>Includes oversight of contract with the County Sheriffs and Fire departments, management of the unarmed Security Ambassador program, emergency preparedness, crime prevention, and supporting Neighborhood Watch groups</i></li> <li>• Neighborhood and Business Safety Division: <i>Includes Code Enforcement, Business Licensing and Permits, and Animal Care and Control</i></li> </ul>