

MEMORANDUM

To: Chair Aurin Chowdhury, Council Members
From: Will Christenson, Office of Community Safety
Copy: Jared Jeffries, Deputy Commissioner of Community Safety; Damon Chaplin, Commissioner of Health; Casey Carl, City Clerk
Date: April 14, 2026
Subject: LIMS File 2026-00382 – Mental health services at the South Minneapolis Community Safety Center (SMCSC)

This memo addresses questions raised at the April 7, 2026, Committee of the Whole Meeting regarding mental health services at the South Minneapolis Community Safety Center (SMCSC).

Construction Updates and Timeline

Procurement is currently finalizing the contract with the general contractor. Once the contract is executed, Property Services will meet with the contractor to explore opportunities to accelerate the construction schedule. Construction on the SMCSC is expected to begin on May 1, 2026, with the goal of having the Center open and fully operational by the end of 2026. Staff will provide Council with updated and specific dates as they become available.

In parallel with construction, staff have begun operational planning for the SMCSC. Over the coming months, the Office of Community Safety will convene key partners to conduct detailed and coordinated planning for service delivery within the Center.

Feasibility of Launching Mental Health Services Prior to Center Opening

The Public Safety Aid designated for Community Safety Center Pilots was intended to support a model in which multiple services are co-located and integrated within the SMCSC. Planned services include Human Trafficking Prevention and Intervention, Mental Health Services, Culturally Specific Navigators, and Domestic Violence Navigators.

Staff evaluated whether mental health services could begin before the Center opens by temporarily locating them at the Lake Street Safety Center. After more than a year of operating the Lake Street site, staff have identified several limitations. The physical space is not conducive to larger-scale direct service delivery with only one conference room for confidential case management interactions. Establishing temporary operations would require additional staffing, time, and resources, only to later relocate the services. This creates budget pressures and reduces the one-time funding available for mental health services in SMCSC. Additionally, relocating services after launching them in a temporary space risks confusing community members about where to seek support. Such disruption can compromise continuity of care, reduce trust, and limit access.

Diverting funds from the SMCSC's planned community services prior to opening could undermine the center's purpose and jeopardize its success. Using these resources prematurely risks creating a facility that fails to operate as the high-performing, community-centered model envisioned by City Council.

Mental Health Services: Implementation and Current Supports

Given these considerations, staff recommend several alternatives. City departments will work with providers on training, outreach, and readiness activities in advance of the SMCSC opening to ensure

services are prepared to launch efficiently. These efforts could include nontraditional and culturally specific mental health and wellbeing outreach events designed to build trust, strengthen relationships among contracted partners, promote culturally specific practices, and educate residents about the services that will be available once the Center opens.

In the interim, several mental health services are already available through City programs and partners:

- The Neighborhood Safety Department contracts with community organizations to provide trauma and resilience services.
- Mental health therapy is available through School Based Clinics at Camden, Roosevelt, South, Southwest, and Washburn high schools, where therapists conducted 2,812 mental health visits during the 2024–2025 school year.
- The City also partners with Hennepin County and community-based organizations to offer culturally specific mental health services. More information on culturally specific mental health services can be found here: [Culturally Specific Mental Health Resources - City of Minneapolis](#)

Next Steps and Recommendations

Staff have begun operational planning for the SMSC, and a finalized construction timeline—expected in the coming weeks—will guide detailed planning for service delivery. Staff will continue providing Council with regular updates on construction progress and operational planning status.

In the coming months, staff will seek Council approval for the transfer of Public Safety Aid funds to support culturally specific navigation and domestic violence navigation services. Individual contracts with mental health providers will also be brought forward for Council consideration.