



## MECKLENBURG COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

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### **MEDIA ALERT FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Mecklenburg County Sheriff's Office Expands RISE Program to Serve Residents in Outside Counties**

**Charlotte, N.C.** – The Mecklenburg County Sheriff's Office (MCSO) is proud to announce the expansion of the Mecklenburg County Detention Center Central's (MCDCC) "Restoring Individuals Safely and Effectively" Program (RISE). Professional medical and psychological services for the program are provided by Recovery Solutions, an entity dedicated to assisting incarcerated individuals with restoration to mental capacity to stand trial. Starting this month, RISE will increase its capacity at the MCDCC from 10 to 25 beds and providing there is available space, RISE services are available not only to Mecklenburg County defendants, but also to defendants from 36 other counties within the Western District of North Carolina. This expansion represents a critical step in addressing the urgent need for mental health services within the criminal justice system.

Sheriff Garry McFadden's commitment to addressing mental health in the justice system began in 2019 with the establishment of a mental health unit within the MCDCC. After discussions with former MCSO Sergeant Charles Pearson, the two recognized the need for dedicated mental health services within local detention centers. In August of 2019, MCDCC opened a 28-bed mental health unit for men, providing therapy, medication, and structured programming to stabilize incarcerated individuals before their return to the general population or release to supervised housing or elsewhere outside the MCDCC. This was the state's first mental health unit for individuals incarcerated in a local detention center. This model expanded to women in 2020, further demonstrating MCSO's leadership in correctional mental health care.

In 2022, MCSO joined forces with the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS) to launch RISE. Designed to offer mental and psychiatric care for individuals incarcerated in the MCDCC and deemed incapable of proceeding to trial due to mental illness, RISE helps reduce the strain on state hospitals, like Broughton, and ensures defendants incarcerated in state local detention facilities receive timely care without prolonged incarceration or hospital waitlists.

Since its launch in 2022, RISE has served 56 residents, helping nearly 80 percent of participants restore or maintain their capacity to stand trial. The 2025 expansion of RISE will aid even more individuals incarcerated within local detention facilities in the Western District of North Carolina and those who have mental health conditions preventing their competency to stand trial. It will also alleviate the backlog in care at state-run psychiatric hospitals.

The RISE program offers a holistic, individualized approach to mental health and legal readiness, ensuring participants receive:

- Therapy & Counseling – Individual and group sessions to address mental health concerns.
- Psychiatric Support & Medication Management – Comprehensive psychiatric evaluations and medication monitoring to stabilize participants.
- Education on the Legal Process – Training on courtroom procedures, legal rights, and decision-making.
- Case Management & Social Services – Assistance with healthcare, social support, and community reintegration.

RISE participants must meet basic entry criteria, including they must voluntarily participate in the program and cannot be violent. RISE does not operate on a fixed timeline for participants as Recovery Solutions assesses each participant's progress and needs on a case-by-case basis.

Under MCSO's partnership with NCDHHS, the state reimburses MCSO \$180 per RISE resident daily, covering food, medical care, and housing within the MCDCC.

Destined for continued growth, RISE is already expanding beyond Mecklenburg County and its service area. In February of 2025, NCDHHS extended RISE to the Pitt County Detention Center, which will provide RISE services for local detention centers in the Eastern District of North Carolina and in April of 2025, RISE will again expand to Wake County Detention Center to serve local detention centers in the state's Middle District.

"I'm excited about our upcoming partnership with other sheriff's offices, expanding the reach of the RISE program to more communities," said Dr. Anna Abate, Recovery Solutions program administrator. "This collaboration will enable us to serve a broader population,

offering vital mental health support and capacity restoration where it's most needed and continuing to reduce the strain on state hospital beds. The future of RISE is promising, and we look forward to continuing our work to support individuals in need of capacity restoration."

"We can't wait for lawmakers in Raleigh to actively support our mental health initiatives at the MCDCC and else in the state. Here, we focus on the whole person. We know that our detention facilities are now the new mental health institutions because of cuts from our past and current administrations, so I cannot let my fellow citizens suffer through this any longer," Sheriff McFadden said. "The MCDCC houses more people with mental health struggles than any other local detention center in the state. We understand the needs of our citizens and I look forward to working with Sheriff Rowe of Wake County and Sheriff Dance of Pitt County to continually improve upon the success of this groundbreaking, statewide initiative."

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