



ADVANCING COLORADO'S

*Mental Health Care*

A JOINT PROJECT OF:

**CARING FOR COLORADO FOUNDATION**

**THE COLORADO HEALTH FOUNDATION**

**THE COLORADO TRUST**

**THE DENVER FOUNDATION**

# MENTAL HEALTH CARE IN COLORADO

**Increasing needs and inadequate resources for mental health services in Colorado** brought several foundations together to jointly discuss concerns about mental health care in our state. The resulting 2003 study – *The Status of Mental Health Care in Colorado* – provided the most

comprehensive documentation and analysis of the state's public and private mental-health system in nearly a decade. Findings showed a seriously fragmented, under-funded system of care, with tremendous needs, many of which have grown since the study was conducted.

- **1 of 5 Coloradans (over 900,000) need mental health care services annually; less than 1/3 of them receive services – meaning that 1 of 7 Coloradans do not receive the mental health care they need**
- **The over 600,000 Coloradans a year who go without care are less productive; in severe cases they are at greater risk for many more adverse consequences, including suicide and homelessness**
- **Only 1/2 of Colorado children from low-income families who needed care received it in 2000**
- **Of the one-third of Coloradans in need who do receive mental health services, 6 of 10 receive care from non-mental health providers, such as primary care physicians, substance-abuse services, child welfare and corrections**
- **Colorado ranked 31st nationally in mental health spending in 2001, 21% below the national average; in 2004, Colorado's ranking for mental health spending fell to 32nd nationally**
- **Care is too often inaccessible and inadequate, especially for minority groups, older adults, persons with disabilities and people living in rural areas**
- **There are too few child psychiatrists statewide, and too few mental health providers in rural areas, for minority populations and non-English speakers**

*Note: Unless otherwise noted, the above data are from the 2003 study, The Status of Mental Health Care in Colorado.*

In response, four foundations – Caring for Colorado Foundation, The Colorado Health Foundation, The Colorado Trust and The Denver Foundation – created **Advancing Colorado's Mental Health Care**. This five year (2005-2009), \$4.25 million project provides joint support to community collaboratives bringing together human services agencies, mental health care

providers and others to address the tremendous needs detailed in the study. TriWest Group serves as project coordinator and oversees training and technical assistance. And, the Heartland Network for Social Research is conducting an independent evaluation of this project.

# ADVANCING COLORADO'S MENTAL HEALTH CARE

## BUILD A STRONG SYSTEM OF CARE

Not only is Colorado's mental health system broken, it's so fragmented that it really cannot be called a system. When a person with a severe behavioral or mental health need receives care, services typically come from many different, disconnected sources such as human services, criminal justice, the school system, primary care doctors or community mental health agencies. This type of care – involving multiple providers and uncoordinated interventions – can result in poor mental health outcomes for the person and frustration for family members and caregivers.

### GOAL

**Integrate and coordinate mental health services so that people can be treated with the services they need most, regardless of where they seek care, funding sources, organizational structures, or variations in policy and practice.**

## IMPROVE ACCESS TO CARE

Mental health care is inaccessible and inadequate for many Coloradans. Significant disparities exist in access to care for minority groups, as well as for older adults, children from low-income families, persons with disabilities and people living in rural areas.

### GOAL

**Expand access to care for people in need by better coordinating and expanding existing services.**

## OFFER QUALITY CARE

There is a growing body of effective, evidence-based mental health treatments; however, most services do not incorporate these practices. In many cases, additional spending will be required to implement these proven services, but in return for such an investment, reduced costs of other health services, and better lives for those in need of care can be expected.

### GOAL

**Promote evidence-based mental health interventions to achieve improved clinical and functional outcomes, recovery, resiliency and a system of care that involves individuals and their families in decisions regarding care delivery.**

## PROVIDE ADEQUATE FUNDING

Funding is inadequate to meet the needs. For example, in 2001, Colorado spent just \$64 per capita on mental health care, compared to the national average of \$81 per capita. Since then, public mental health funding has not kept pace with increasing demand and Colorado's ranking in funding has fallen nationally. At the same time, costs are rising, particularly due to health care inflation and the wider availability of newer and better treatments.

### GOAL

**Address policy and financing changes needed to both sustain integrated systems of care and promote their development throughout the state.**

# THE SIX COLLABORATING PROJECTS

Six projects participate in **Advancing Colorado's Mental Health Care**, each representing a collaborative among numerous nonprofit and public agencies to improve the integration and coordination of mental health services in their community and to promote evidence-based practices.

## **EL PASO COUNTY** ~ *El Paso County's*

*Co-occurring Collaborative* uses resource advocates to help consumers access the various health and social services they need, with an emphasis on evidence-based practices and an overall focus on creating an integrated system of care for the chronically homeless who suffer from both mental illness and substance abuse.

CONTACT: **Dee Drake**, *Project Director, Mental Health America of Pikes Peak Region*; 719-633-4601 x 199 or [dee@pppartnership.org](mailto:dee@pppartnership.org)

**DENVER** ~ *Denver Public Schools Integration of Schools and Mental Health Systems Project* is devoted to creating a system of early identification and providing intensive, culturally sensitive interventions within the school setting for elementary school-age children who suffer from mental health issues that impede their ability to learn and put them at risk of being placed out-of-district.

CONTACT: **Jane Ann Hebert**, *LCSW, Project Director, Denver Public Schools*; 720-423-8235 or [JaneAnn\\_Hebert@dpsk12.org](mailto:JaneAnn_Hebert@dpsk12.org)

**LARIMER COUNTY** ~ *Creating Integrated Services for People With Co-occurring Disorders* works to create a seamless and welcoming system of care for all adults with co-occurring mental illness and substance abuse disorders, and to assist those individuals with the most severe co-occurring disorders to achieve and maintain maximum possible recovery through evidence-based practices.

CONTACT: **Janelle Patrias**, *Project Specialist, Health District of Northern Larimer County*; 970-224-5209 or [jpatrias@healthdistrict.org](mailto:jpatrias@healthdistrict.org)

## **SUMMIT COUNTY** ~ *Summit County*

*Collaborative* strives to increase the level of coordination of services in two ways: by locating therapists from the local community mental health center on-site at the local safety net primary care clinic, and by convening a resource team of child and family-serving agencies to better serve children with severe needs and their families.

CONTACT: **Helen Royal**, *Project Coordinator, Colorado West Regional Mental Health*; 970-513-0460 or [hroyal@cwrmh.org](mailto:hroyal@cwrmh.org)

**MESA COUNTY** ~ *Expanding the Circle in Mesa County* seeks to increase access to mental health services integrated within primary care clinics so that consumers have their physical and mental health needs addressed together to improve health outcomes and treatment compliance.

CONTACT: **Fran Parker**, *Consortium Director, Mesa County Consortium on Health, Marillac Clinic*; 970-255-7728 or [Fran.Parker@stmarygj.org](mailto:Fran.Parker@stmarygj.org)

**PROWERS COUNTY** ~ *Prowers County Behavioral Health Integration Project* aims to create a seamless system to deliver quality behavioral health services that are accessible to all through two initiatives: a multi-agency evaluation and referral team to coordinate care for children and families with complex needs, and a new school-based health center with on-site mental health capacity.

CONTACT: **Catherine Cattarello**, *Project Coordinator, Southeast Mental Health Services*; 719-336-7501 or [CCattarello@semhs.org](mailto:CCattarello@semhs.org)

➔ For additional information about **Advancing Colorado's Mental Health Care**, please contact **Andrew Keller, PhD, TriWest Group**, [akeller@trivestgroup.net](mailto:akeller@trivestgroup.net).