



Community Mental Health System Transforming Healthcare across Colorado

Community-based Services Paying Dividends across Multiple Systems

DENVER---As the country continues plotting the path of healthcare reform, other states might be wise to borrow a road map from Colorado. Healthcare reform is fueling innovative efforts across the entire state to improve the health of the population. One key opportunity to improve a patient's health is a commitment by healthcare providers to treat the whole person -- mind and body -- in an integrated setting. The integration of behavioral and physical healthcare services provides an opportunity to further enhance the quality of care, improve access, and reduce costs throughout entire healthcare system.

Colorado's community mental health system is committed to this type of service delivery. Every community, large and small, can reap the benefits of integrated care, as is demonstrated through the various efforts of the Community Mental Health Centers/Clinics and Behavioral Health Organizations across the state.

To demonstrate the commitment to integration of services, the Colorado Behavioral Healthcare Council (CBHC) is mapping all of the locations where its members are currently providing integrated services, totaling nearly one hundred sites to date. This mapping project demonstrates the expanse of collaborative efforts currently underway throughout Colorado. The mapping project is a tool for various health care providers and policy makers to learn about the different levels of collaborative arrangements that currently exist across the state.

"These diverse types of integrated programs currently underway, demonstrate the importance and commitment of treating the whole person. In some cases, teams will treat the entire family," said George DelGrosso, Executive Director of the Colorado Behavioral Healthcare Council. "When mental and physical health providers work together, it increases access to care and reaches more people before problems escalate."

Colorado's network of community mental health providers cover the entire state, and often there is no easy means of sharing and learning from one another. "This mapping project provides a tool to help foster the growth, and further development, of these types of integrated efforts. Also, this serves as a great way to inform others of how our members are stepping up to the plate to address a critical component of health care reform," said George DelGrosso.

The need for enhanced collaboration and integration of mental health and physical health services has



been gaining national attention as people look for opportunities to improve outcomes and extend limited health care dollars.

"People with co-morbid conditions drive up the cost of the healthcare system when one condition goes undiagnosed or untreated," shares Linda Rosenberg, president & CEO of the National Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare. "Most of us have witnessed or experienced the connection between mental and physical health in our own lives. The connection cannot be ignored if we hope to provide effective treatment. Many people with cancer, heart disease and other physical conditions have untreated depression or anxiety, which can seriously complicate those conditions. In contrast, people with severe and persistent mental illness often have other conditions, such as diabetes, heart disease, or alcoholism that go undetected, which complicates care and recovery."

From the southwest to southeast corners, throughout the mountain communities, along the front range and farther east, Colorado is seeing an exciting mix of mental health and substance abuse providers coming together with schools, private practices, Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs), hospitals, local health departments and other non-profit healthcare providers to ensure that the health needs of the population are being met.

"This report and these maps confirm that Colorado is a hot spot of innovation that is emerging based on the convincing evidence that it is no longer acceptable to divide people into mental, substance use, and physical parts," says Dr. Larry Green of the University of Colorado, Department of Family Medicine. "I was amazed and delighted to learn that there are so many community-based collaborations currently underway around the state. Colorado is fortunate to have such inspired leadership!"

A look at CBHC's Integration Mapping Project clearly demonstrates that there is no single "plug-and-play" model when it comes to integrating care. Behavioral health services are being brought into primary care settings, while in other models primary care is successfully integrated into behavioral healthcare sites. Moreover, healthcare services have been effectively integrated into shared points of delivery, such as school-based health centers. The CBHC map demonstrates how providers have tailored their collaborative efforts to meet the unique needs of each community, pulling from the diverse pool of community resources available to help assure success.

"Communication and information sharing is crucial to providing the best healthcare," DelGrosso says. "This map provides resources that are helpful tools as we learn from each other in order to address billing and funding issues, promote best clinical practices, and work through policy barriers in an effort to improve the healthcare delivery system in Colorado. A comprehensive and integrated healthcare system is the wave of the future."



For more information about healthcare reform and integration, as well as to access the CBHC Integrated Care Mapping Project, visit the CBHC website at www.cbhc.org

CBHC is a nonprofit membership organization that represents Colorado's statewide network of community behavioral healthcare providers (including 17 community mental health centers, two specialty clinics, and five behavioral health organizations). Members contract with the State of Colorado and others to provide comprehensive, community-based behavioral and psychiatric services to more than 90,000 people across the state. CBHC members provide a network of skilled therapeutic and community resources to meet the mental health need of individuals and families in rural and urban communities. For more information, visit www.cbhc.org.