

Areas of Focus

**2021 CBHC Day at the Capitol**

**Area of Focus: *2021-2022 State Budget***

***Ask the JBC to REJECT the cuts proposed for substance use disorder programs in the CDHS budget.***

The 2020-2021 budget cycle created many challenges for various industries and programs across the state. CBHC is extremely grateful for the general support behavioral health providers received through this process and are hopeful that behavioral health will be prioritized in the current budget cycle. Currently proposed cuts to SUD programs in the CDHS budget would introduce uncertainty and difficulties in maintaining critical capacity.

**Objectives:**

* Share with legislators the importance of protecting the safety net behavioral health provider workforce and programs that ensure access to critical care
* Highlight specific programs in your region that would be impacted by the proposed SUD cuts, as well as specific stories of impact from those programs

**Area of Focus: *Teen Mental Health First Aid (tMHFA)***

CBHC is advancing a bill that will provide funding to expand behavioral health training for educators and teens. The bill authorizes and funds the Colorado Department of Education to develop a train-the-trainer program for school personnel related to teen behavioral health. The bill will establish a network of qualified trainers in schools across the state to instruct students in the skills they need to support their peers as well as educate them on how to identify and access local resources for help.

**Objectives:**

***Please support the upcoming Senate bill, Expanding Behavioral Health Training for Educators in Secondary Schools so that Colorado teens can be better equipped to support their peers and identify and utilize supports in their communities.***

* Share information with legislators about the impact of MHFA in your community, including youth and teen MHFA where appropriate
* Thank legislators for their support of last year’s inclusion of MHFA resources in HB20-1411
* Provide examples and stories of how MHFA, youth support, and partnerships with education systems has impacted community members in your region

**Area of Focus: *Behavioral Health Recovery Act***

CBHC is part of a broad coalition of advocacy groups including COPA, the Consortium for Prescription Drug Abuse Prevention, and others supporting Senator Pettersen’s planned legislation to restore funding to various programs, including some MSO specific line items, CMHC initiatives, and other community-based resources.

**Objectives:**

* Describe the current state of treatment services in your region, including descriptions of programs you operate, who you serve, and recent accomplishments
* Provide examples and stories of the impact of treatment services and the importance of supporting a full continuum of services, including prevention and recovery supports

***Please support the Behavioral Health Recovery Act when it is introduced. This bill will restore critical funding for needed programs and will direct resources to providers that are struggling because of unexpected expenses or decreased revenue due to the COVID-19 pandemic.***

**Area of Focus: *Behavioral Health Emergency & Disaster Response***

CBHC is working with the Governor’s Office and CDPHE to pursue potential legislation that would support the role of community-based safety net behavioral health providers in preparing for, responding to, and recovering from disasters. The bill would direct CDPHE to manage a fund and promulgate rules to support behavioral health provider emergency- and disaster-related initiatives. It would allow for gifts, grants, and donations in addition to any general fund dollars that are appropriated for these purposes.

***“CBHC is working with the Governor’s Office and CDPHE to finalize the details of this potential legislation. We will keep you informed of the progress and reach out when a bill has been introduced.”***

**Objectives:**

* Describe how your organization prepares for emergencies and disasters, your response activities, and how you engage in community recovery
* Provide specific examples of your response efforts in 2020 during the pandemic or any other related events such as wildfires
* Invite legislators to visit your facility, see your programs, and engage in any ongoing community initiatives you are currently providing

**Area of Focus: *CMHCs & SUD Treatment Programs as Other Outlet Pharmacies***

CBHC is working with Representative Joann Ginal and Senator Faith Winter to include CMHCs and SUD facilities as an “other outlet” in C.R.S 12-280-103 (32) (a), allowing the disbursement of controlled substances for the purposes of substance use disorder treatment. CBHC ran a bill in 2014 (HB-1083) that achieved this goal for Acute Treatment Units. This amendment to the pharmacy sunset review has no anticipated appropriation and would allow increased access to MAT across Colorado’s communities by expanding regulations.

**Objectives:**

* Describe how your facility would benefit from increased prescription authority and the impact that it would have on clients in your community

***“Please support legislation that will continue the Board of Pharmacy regulations, including the language that has been added to allow licensed community mental health clinics and facilities that have SUD treatment programs to be included in the definition of ‘other outlets’.”***

**Be Prepared to Respond to the Following Topics/Bills**

Legislators may already have been approached by other groups regarding these legislative proposals:

**Behavioral Health Authority**

CDHS will be leading a bill, sponsored by Representatives Mary Young and Rod Pelton and Senator Rhonda Fields to develop a plan to create a Behavioral Health Administration. *CBHC is supportive of this legislative effort and is optimistic about the opportunity to streamline administrative complexity, support providers, and offer better care for individuals in need.*

**988 Crisis Line – State Implementation**

Mental Health Colorado is planning to lead an effort to implement the newly allowed telecom charge towards investment in crisis services. This initiative would seek to connect Colorado’s crisis hotline to the 988 system that is currently being set up nationally. *While* *CBHC does not have a position on this bill at this time, we are encouraged by the opportunity to further explore how Colorado can increase investments in crisis infrastructure*.

**Secure Transportation for Behavioral Health**

Anticipated legislation aims to create a licensing structure for non-ambulatory, BH-specific transportation services and further directs HCPF to identify a pathway to pay for this service for Medicaid populations. *CBHC backs this initiative and broadly**supports increasing the availability of BH-responsive transportation services*.If your legislator has been approached, educate them on the importance of trauma-informed transportation.

**Police & Community Partnerships**

The Fraternal Order of police will be advancing a bill to increase an existing line item that supports various police behavioral health programs. The bill directs further investment into programs that support the mental health of peace officers and continues opportunities for programs that pair police and mental health response jointly. *CBHC is supportive of this initiative and more broadly supports expanding Colorado’s social response innovation (e.g. Denver’s STAR program).*

**Peers & Recovery**

Upcoming legislation will seek to increase peer professional autonomy by creating peer-led organizations that can bill Medicaid directly. *If asked, educate your legislator on the structure and benefit of peer employment through the CMHCs, while expressing CBHC’s support for peers as a critical component of the BH workforce alongside licensed professionals.**CBHC does not currently have a formal position on this bill proposal.*

**Annual Mental Health Wellness Exam Coverage by Insurance**

Representative Dafna Michaelson-Jenet will be re-introducing a bill from 2020 to require every commercial insurance payor to cover at least one annual 60-minute behavioral health wellness exam. *CBHC supports increasing access to behavioral health wellness exams and further ensuring parity in private insurance markets.*

**Meeting Wrap-Up**

* Thank legislators and aides for their time!
* Exchange contact information! Trade cell phone numbers and commit to them you’ll be available for questions during the session and when bills come to committee.
* Invite legislators to visit your organization and include key community partners and consumers if possible – demonstrate the critical role you play in their legislative districts.
* Provide resources on how their constituents can access your services.

* In previous legislative sessions, the General Assembly has funded or supported important behavioral health initiatives. Ifyou know that your legislator supported these efforts in previous sessions, thank them and share stories about how their actions have helped you and the individuals and communities you serve!