

CBHC BOARD POSITION STATEMENT

Behavioral Health Prevention: Building Healthy Communities

Position Statement

All Coloradans deserve access to the services and supports that build resiliency in meeting life's challenges and remaining free of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral problems. CBHC members support change in policies to reduce risk factors and increase protective factors, while increasing the capacity of community behavioral health providers to address the social determinants of health.

Background

Prevention in behavioral health aims to reduce the incidence, prevalence, and recurrence of mental health and substance use disorders by modifying risk exposure and strengthening the coping mechanisms of the individual. Early diagnosis and treatment can decrease the disease burden of mental health and substance use disorders. Yet all too often, the focus of behavioral health policies and interventions are on helping people who are already struggling with disorders rather than moving upstream and helping individuals to stay well.

The recognition of social determinants of behavioral health is foundational to an overall strategy to prevent behavioral health disorders and mitigate health disparities. Trauma, exposure to violence, social isolation, or other sources of toxic stress significantly contribute to the development and exacerbation of behavioral health disorders. Factors such as quality of education, economic stability, social connection, built infrastructure, and access to healthcare all impact a person's well-being.

People of color and underserved communities face greater risks. While their rates of behavioral health disorders may not significantly differ from the general population, [Blacks and Latinos](#) have substantially lower access to mental health and substance-use treatment, and are more likely to be incarcerated and homeless, than the general population. Further, African Americans are [more frequently misdiagnosed](#) than other populations, and along with Latinos are at [increased risk of serious depression](#) than Whites. Addressing social determinants of health is thus important for both improving health and reducing health disparities.

CBHC members play a critical role in coordinating care and connecting clients with needed local resources. They are also key partners to local public health agencies, community based organizations and coalitions that seek to address poverty, structural racism, and other systemic issues that impede behavioral health and wellness. This important work requires dedicated resources that fall outside of what providers are traditionally paid to do.

Policy Priorities

- ❖ CBHC supports policies and legislation that ensure health promotion and prevention for children, youth and families and promote early identification of behavioral health conditions.
 - Increase the availability of comprehensive screening, early intervention and prevention services, and consultation in early childhood/day care centers, schools, primary care, community behavioral health and other child-serving settings
 - Implement youth and adolescent suicide prevention strategies within community settings that teach coping, problem-solving and stress management skills; promote social connectdness; create protective environments; and address individual and family needs
 - Increase investment in multi-stakeholder community planning and prevention efforts

- ❖ CBHC supports flexible, value-based payment models that recognize and support the important role community behavioral health providers play in prevention, health promotion and wellness
 - Increase investment in care coordination and community health workers/navigators to to address the social determinants of health and assist clients in accessing needed community resources
 - Incentivize partnerships with local schools, housing and human service providers, regional coalitions and other local efforts to combat poverty, racism and other systemic challenges

- ❖ CBHC supports policies and legislation that increase access to preventive services as part of a full continuum of care
 - **Eliminate or reduce the administrative burden** of lengthy intakes/assessments, covered diagnoses, and “open client” requirements
 - Encourage the provision of services in non-clinical, community based settings such as homes, schools, community centers, and places of worship
 - Promote collaborative efforts between community behavioral health providers and local public health agencies to develop prevention campaigns and public health response

- ❖ CBHC supports policies that break intergenerational cycles of poverty and promote alternatives to institutionalization and the criminalization of behavioral health
 - Increase the availability of behavioral health crisis teams, co-responder programs, and services that interrupt the school to prison pipeline
 - Encourage cross-sector collaborations and ensure behavioral health providers are adedquately resourced to have a seat at the table of community based efforts

Effective Period:

The Colorado Behavioral Healthcare Council (CBHC) Board of Directors approved this policy on 08/19/2021. It is reviewed as required by the Public Policy Advisory Committee.

Expiration:

08/19/2023