



Building Bridges between the Criminal Justice System and Mental Health Resources

The collaboration of Weld County District 19 and the Bridges program has been a dynamic and strong relationship the last several years. Since the inception of the Bridges program in 2019, liaisons have been able to inform judges, district attorneys, defense attorneys and court clerks on the variety of treatment options as well competency services in Weld County. Liaisons have been able to work with defendants whom a question of competency has been raised and connect them to appropriate treatment services as well as other resources such as housing and transportation.

Senate Bill 18-251

To promote positive outcomes for Coloradans living with mental health conditions who encounter criminal justice involvement by fostering collaboration between both systems.

Custody to Community

Support individuals who are determined not to be a risk to community safety toward successful engagement in community-based services.

Stop the "Revolving Door"

Address deeper mental health needs and related social considerations of health toward long-term stability, reducing repeated involvement in the criminal justice system.

Timely & Appropriate

Identify meaningful responses to a participant's mental health, competency, and other service needs and provide advocacy to ensure services are timely, appropriate, and accessible.

Connecting Services

Liaisons speak directly with participants to determine needs and continue assessing those needs for the duration of the case.

Send in court reports as necessary to update the court in relation to competency services.

Support our participants to the degree they want, their contact with Bridges is voluntary.

We help locate requested or required services and connect the participant with those services.

Notes



Panelists

Heather Nakamura

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Heather Nakamura, MS, earned her MS in Criminal Justice from the University of Cincinnati and her BS in Human Development and Family Studies from Colorado State University. She has 16-plus years of experience in the Criminal Justice field. She began her career as a Probation Officer. Heather currently is the Problem Solving Court Coordinator for the Adult Treatment Court and DUI Court. She also currently handles the courtside of the collaborative approach to handling Competency cases.

Sara Roe

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Sara received her bachelor's degrees in Sociology and Criminal Justice at the University of Northern Colorado. After college, she spent four years working with adults and teenagers with mental disabilities in various roles. She then transitioned into criminal justice as an EHM Case Manager. Sara worked for four years in this position managing a caseload of up to two hundred people serving their time on house arrest. Sara now works as a Court Liaison in the Bridges Program with North Range Behavioral Health. Her experience working with people with disabilities, and knowledge of the criminal justice system, help to navigate the competency procedures and break down barriers for clients to be successful in and out of the court room.

Jennifer Turner

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Jennifer is the Statewide Coordinator for the Bridges Program. A passionate advocate for individual well-being, social justice, and collaboration, Jennifer believes the three are fundamentally connected. She is dedicated to the development and implementation of the Bridges Program through approaches which engage consensus building, effective systemic responses, and client and community voice. Jennifer is a graduate of the University of Denver Graduate School of Social Work. Prior to the Bridges Program, Jennifer's work focused on collaborative and client-centered approaches to problem solving for youth with complex systems involvement. Jennifer is a Colorado native and the mother of two boys, 19 and 24. Their experiences and insights constantly inspire her in the work she does for her community. Jennifer loves to spend time hiking with her dog, and her greatest passion is dance. She secretly hopes to one day make it on to "So You Think You Can Dance."

Joe Unnerstall

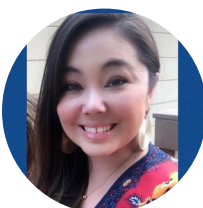
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Joe holds his bachelor's degree in Psychology after graduating from the University of Northern Colorado in 2005. He has 17+ years of experience in the child welfare, mental health, and human services field working with adolescents, adults, and families in various settings and roles. Joe currently works as a Court Liaison through the Bridges program with North Range Behavioral Health assisting individuals who need specific service providers.

Deborah Wilson-Porras

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Deborah possesses her PhD in Advanced Studies in Human Behavior and a Master of Science in Couples and Family Therapy. She holds an LPC and LAC in Colorado. For the past 7 years, she has worked with adults, adolescents, couples, and families at North Range Behavioral Health. She is the program director for the intensive outpatient program, overseeing the treatment team for Adult Treatment Court as well as the Outpatient Restoration Program case managers and Colorado Bridges Liaisons for Weld County District 19.

