

## CBHC Priority:

# Structure and Financing for Colorado's Safety Net for Individuals with Serious Mental Illness (SMI)

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## Issue Background:

Colorado's safety net behavioral health system was created over decades to serve individuals with serious mental illness (SMI) and children with serious emotional disturbance (SED) primarily. CBHC is concerned about the sustainability of the new safety net system that has been developed in Colorado, and the potential impact on vulnerable patient populations. To date, the reforms have resulted in a new government agency, additional regulatory oversight, more data collection, expanded safety net service requirements and the anticipated onboarding of additional providers – yet no new funding has been identified to support this structure. Without a plan to pay for these new services and providers, we are worried that current safety net providers may have to cut essential services and programs that are not covered by Medicaid and other sources. **One promising approach to supporting the new safety net is to pursue participation in a federal program designed to improve and standardize community mental health services called the Demonstration Program for Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics (CCBHC).** By doing so, Colorado would be eligible for up to 4 years of enhanced federal Medicaid match for safety net behavioral health services. CBHC will continue to support HCPF and the BHA in laying the groundwork to participate in a state demonstration grant for CCBHC. A successful grant proposal to participate in the CCBHC federal demonstration is essential for supporting Colorado's vision for an expanded safety net.

## Request of Elected Officials:

As behavioral health reform moves forward, we ask that you give attention to and work to protect the system that past legislatures built to provide services and support to Colorado's most vulnerable populations.

Members of the **Joint Budget Committee** have identified the CCBHC demonstration as a key strategy to pursue. We ask them to support the state in applying for the federal demonstration and to develop a plan to create a state certification process and payment methodology that aligns with the federal standards.

Members of the **Behavioral Health Disorders in the Criminal Justice System (BHDCJS) Legislative Oversight Committee (LOC)** should request that the BHDCJS Task Force study enhancements to the safety net system for adults with SMI, including options to optimize the use of Assisted Outpatient Treatment laws in Colorado, enhance access to civil beds, and improve alignment among providers, law enforcement, and courts.

## Talking Points About the Issue:

- We support the BHA and recognize the need for expanding behavioral health safety net benefits and provider capacity.
- Such changes can only succeed with adequate funding. Enhanced federal matching funds for the safety net through CCBHC are essential for supporting Colorado's behavioral health safety net.
- As we expand safety net benefits to more Coloradans, we must nevertheless ensure that the safety net designed for individuals with SMI is protected and strengthened.
- The SMI safety net is multi-systemic, and solutions should bring community partners (e.g., judicial, law enforcement, human services, etc.) together to identify and intervene early when an individual is posing a threat to themselves or others or is gravely disabled.