



CBHC Statement on SAMHSA Clawbacks and Potential Cuts

The week of March 24 has sent shockwaves through the safety net behavioral health community. On Tuesday, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) notified Colorado's Behavioral Health Administration that they were clawing back \$31.5 million in grants for mental health and substance use prevention, treatment and recovery services. On Wednesday, we learned that the US Dept. of Health & Human Services intends to cut its workforce by 10,000—on top of previous layoffs and resignations—and consolidate its divisions to 15 from 28. One of those divisions is SAMHSA, which will now be folded into a new Administration for a Healthy America along with other agencies focused on safety net care, toxic substances and occupational safety and health.

Even as CBHC and our members continue to digest and process the implications of this double whammy, we are crystal clear on some important considerations:

- Safety net behavioral health services have never been fully funded in Colorado; federal SAMHSA funding is critical to supplement our state's constrained budget dollars. If that funding is reduced, it is the most vulnerable people in our communities who will suffer.
- The kind of programs that have been funded by these grants can't be funded by Medicaid and are the bedrock of community behavioral health:
 - Assertive Community Treatment programs for adults with severe and persistent mental illness-- those programs provide wraparound services like drop-in centers, job training, transportation, care coordinators who help connect these individuals with other services like housing. Programs like this are essential for helping individuals recover.
 - Homeless outreach, to help individuals with serious mental illness and/or substance use disorder get off the streets and into treatment.
 - Adolescent mental health services, particularly "first episode psychosis" treatment for young people who are just beginning to show signs of serious mental illness. It's crucially important to treat these conditions early.
 - Substance use disorder treatment services such as peer services and medication-assisted treatment. These are proven tools to help people with substance use disorder recover.
 - Crisis response services.
- While providers knew these grants would be ending, it's important to understand that they had built the funds into their budgets for the year. In Colorado's tight budget environment, the state simply can't backfill those funds. These cuts are not abstract "waste, fraud and abuse"; they directly affect some of our most vulnerable community members who now risk losing access to essential services. And that risk has now been heightened with the prospect of reductions to SAMHSA funding.
- The investment of these public dollars yields a remarkably efficient ROI: A 2019 analysis from the Colorado Health Institute found that every dollar spent on behavioral health yields \$4 in savings on emergency care, incarceration, homelessness and related costs. Colorado relies on its partnership with the federal government to help fund these programs. Without that support, our constrained state budget simply can't backfill the loss.

CBHC and its members have always flexed to meet challenging times in order to continue serving the people who need us. These developments won't change that. But the scope of these challenges is, candidly,



unprecedented – especially in the context of the state’s budget crisis. Now more than ever, we look forward to working shoulder-to-shoulder with our state partners at the Behavioral Health Administration and the Dept. of Health Care Policy & Financing, legislators, and the Polis Administration to find solutions to ensure that our vulnerable neighbors and family members can still get the mental health and substance use care they need