



**MENTAL HEALTH
COLORADO**

LEGISLATIVE REPORT & SCORECARD

2021

mentalhealthcolorado.org

In 2020, millions of us were forced into isolation, and anxiety was at an all-time high due to the economic and health impacts of COVID-19. As we move into a post-vaccine world, we are seeing a secondary pandemic of mental health and substance use concern, and we must be prepared to deal with the increased demand for care and support. These needs are reflected in our 2021 policy priorities.

Our priorities in this report reflect the need for support across the lifespan. All of Colorado’s children deserve a strong start. Families should have the support they need. Mental well-being should be attainable for older adults. Coloradans should have access to quality, affordable health care and housing. We must reduce the potential harm caused by drugs and alcohol. Jails and prisons should not be our largest mental health facilities. Mental health discrimination should be a thing of the past.

Each policy priority positively impacts the well-being of our state and will help Colorado achieve healthier minds from one end of life to the other.

Mental Health Colorado is your voice for creating healthier minds across the lifespan.



Strong Start for all Children



Support for Families



Access to Housing, Supports, and Services



Wellness in Aging



Reduce Harm from Drugs and Alcohol

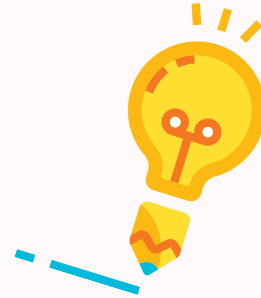


Decriminalize Mental Health



End Shame and Discrimination

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LEGISLATIVE SUMMARY



\$132

million secured in funding for mental health.

35

times Mental Health Colorado staff testified.

14

times advocates testified in committee or met with legislators.

250

emails sent to legislators advocating for mental health.

55

print or broadcast stories regarding our agenda bills.



STRONG START FOR ALL CHILDREN

 Indicates primary Mental Health Colorado bill

We develop brains and behaviors at a rapid pace, not fully maturing until as late as our mid-20s. Preventative care and healthy learning environments are central to ensuring healthy minds and bright futures.

HB21-1258: Rapid Mental Health Response for Colorado Youth

Allocates funding to provide screenings and 3 free mental health sessions to support Colorado's youth in pandemic recovery.

HB21-1161: Suspend State Assessments for Select Grades

Suspends state assessments in the 2020-21 school year. Standardized testing is a source of stress for students in the best of times. Alleviating this pressure during the pandemic year, when academic routines were disrupted, was a sensible intervention supportive of youth well-being.

HB21-1094: Foster Youth In Transition Program

Creates a foster youth-in-transition program to be implemented throughout the state. The program will allow foster youth who meet eligibility criteria to voluntarily continue to receive certain child welfare services so that youth do not lose access to essential services on their eighteenth birthday.

HB21-1304: Early Childhood System

Establishes a unified early childhood system in Colorado to provide early childhood opportunities and prioritize the interests and input of children, parents, providers, and the community in designing and delivering early childhood services.





ACCESS TO HOUSING, SUPPORTS, AND SERVICES

 Indicates primary Mental Health Colorado bill

Having a place to call home is an essential element of good mental health across the lifespan. Access to supports and services prolongs life and enhances mental health outcomes.

HB21-1021: Peer Support Professionals Behavioral Health



Representative
Rod Pelton



Representative
Yadira Caraveo



Senator
Rachel Zenzinger



Senator
Dennis Hisey

In the past two years, the number of Coloradans who didn't receive mental health or substance use care that they needed nearly doubled — yet, in 2019, Colorado's behavioral health workforce only met 30% of the state's need. Peer Support Professionals are individuals in recovery from mental health or substance use conditions who help others experiencing similar situations. HB21-1021 expands the reach of peer recovery support service programs by ensuring that peers are more widely available, reasonably compensated, and well-trained.

Data shows that **peer support services cut hospitalizations in half**, increase engagement in self-care and well-being, and decrease psychotic symptoms. The Georgia Department of Behavioral Health & Developmental Disabilities found that using **peer support services in treatment saved an average of \$5,494/person for the state each year.**



Peers are an essential component of Colorado's health care workforce and contribute to better outcomes for people with mental health and substance use conditions. Their lived experience and training enable them to relate to and connect with people in powerful ways."

- Vincent Atchity, Mental Health Colorado President & CEO



ACCESS TO HOUSING, SUPPORTS, AND SERVICES CONTINUED

 Indicates primary Mental Health Colorado bill

HB21-1275: Medicaid Reimbursement for Services By Pharmacist

Allows pharmacists to be eligible for reimbursement of long-acting injectables under the medical assistance program. This bill will help improve health outcomes and access to health care, address workforce shortage issues, and save taxpayer dollars across multiple intersecting systems.

HB21-1097: Establish Behavioral Health Administration

Creates a Behavioral Health Administration (BHA) to lead, promote, and administer Colorado's behavioral health priorities. This was a top priority in Governor Polis' Behavioral Health Task Force Recommendations.

HB21-1130: Expand Transitional Specialist Program

Expands the community transition specialist program by redefining "high-risk individual" to allow more individuals to access program services. The bill also expands facilities that can access program services. Mental Health Colorado passed the original legislation that created the community transition specialist program. It supports individuals with a mental health or substance use condition who are transitioning out of care and need additional supports such as housing.

HB21-1166: Behavioral Health Crisis Response Training

Establishes a training and treatment model for those, particularly in rural Colorado, who work with individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and co-occurring behavioral health needs.



During the bill signing ceremony for Senate Bill 21-154, Governor Jared Polis shakes hands with Mental Health Colorado President & CEO Vincent Atchity.



ACCESS TO HOUSING, SUPPORTS, AND SERVICES CONTINUED

 Indicates primary Mental Health Colorado bill



SB21-154: 988 Suicide Prevention Lifeline Network



Representative
Lisa Cutter



Representative
Matt Soper



Senator
Chris Kolker



Senator
Cleave Simpson

Colorado's suicide rate is one of the highest in the nation, especially for youth. Studies show most suicide attempts are made within three hours or less of someone having suicidal thoughts, and some in as little as 5 minutes. Colorado needs a fast and easily accessible support system for individuals in need of immediate mental health and substance use services and supports. The proposed bill would enact federal legislation establishing the 9-8-8 crisis response number and creates a sustainable funding option for receiving and responding to those calls in the community, resulting in \$12 million annually to support the crisis hotline and correlating crisis response..



What an incredible journey, a tremendous thank you to you Moe and everyone for your unique commitment and contribution to advancing this critical mental health resource in Colorado. 988 is going to elevate and braid into the phenomenal work of our colleagues in behavioral health for so many years and save countless lives in the future. My heart is full with gratitude and appreciation for each of you.

- Abe Laydon, Douglas County Commissioner



[Left to right] Representative Lisa Cutter, Governor Jared Polis, and Mental Health Colorado Director of Advocacy Moe Keller during the bill signing ceremony for Senate Bill 21-154.



SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES

 Indicates primary Mental Health Colorado bill

Strong, healthy families are vitally important to strong, healthy individuals. Education, childcare, stable housing, meaningful employment, and access to health care are all essential to family well-being.

HB21-1068: Insurance Coverage Mental Health Wellness Exam

Requires that health plans cover annual mental health wellness exams, performed by qualified mental health care providers, comparable to the coverage for an annual physical wellness exam.

HB21-1121: Residential Tenancy Procedures

Extends the period of eviction notices and actions and prohibits residential landlords from increasing rent more than once in a 12-month period.

SB21-039: Elimination of Subminimum Wage Employment

Phases out subminimum wage for employers who are authorized to pay less than the minimum wage to employees whose earning capacity is impaired by age, physical or mental disability, or injury.

SB21-194: Maternal Health Providers

Places new requirements on certain health care providers, health benefit plans, and Medicaid related to pregnant persons. The birth of a child is one of the most intense and emotional experiences in one's life. Childbirth trauma and low-quality perinatal services can be significant stressors and triggers for perinatal mood and anxiety disorders, including anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and even psychosis. High-quality perinatal care reduces the prevalence of perinatal mood and anxiety disorders.



WELLNESS IN AGING

 Indicates primary Mental Health Colorado bill

From childhood to old age, the quality of our lives depends on our mental health. Every phase of life brings its own challenges and opportunities for continuing mental growth and development.

SB21-075: Supported Decision-Making Agreement

Allows an adult with a disability to enter into a decision-making agreement with a member of the supportive community to assist the individual in accessing, understanding, and communicating any relevant life decisions.

HB21-1119: Suicide Prevention, Intervention & Postvention

Broadens Colorado's suicide prevention efforts to include intervention and postvention. Importantly, it will help ensure training and education for health care providers, first and last responders, and educators, and develop a plan for follow-up care for suicide attempt survivors who are treated in an emergency department.



REDUCED HARM FROM DRUGS AND ALCOHOL

 Indicates primary Mental Health Colorado bill

Drugs and alcohol have been a part of our landscape throughout history. From childhood onward, we thrive if we can reap their benefits while reducing their potential for great harm.

HB21-1276: Prevention Of Substance Use Disorders

Makes several changes to state law concerning the prevention of opioid and other substance use disorders and ensure responsible practices for the prescribing of benzodiazepines. When prescribing benzodiazepines, prescribers must check to see that other medicines that could threaten the patient's life have not already been prescribed. The bill also creates prescribing limits for benzodiazepines and extends the prescribing limits for opioids.



Governor Polis, Mental Health Colorado Director of Advocacy Moe Keller, Mental Health Colorado President & CEO Vincent Atchity, HB21-1276 bill sponsors, and partners gather as Governor Polis officially signed HB21-1276 into law.

SB21-122: Opiate Antagonist Bulk Purchase and Standing Orders

This bill would make it easier to purchase opiate antagonists to increasingly reduce the harms from opiates.

SB21-137: Behavioral Health Recovery Act

This omnibus bill allocates money to a number of valuable mental health and substance use programs, improving access to quality care, supports, and services. This bill dedicated over \$100 million into the behavioral health system and created a pathway for the state to dedicate over \$500 million in America Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding through the behavioral health interim task force.



DECRIMINALIZE MENTAL HEALTH

 Indicates primary Mental Health Colorado bill

As many of those working in law enforcement understand more clearly than most, the criminal justice system is often the first and only – and completely inappropriate, ineffective, and costly – response to people’s need for mental health and substance use care. Building health care capacity and supportive housing so that we can disentangle mental health and criminal justice will improve equity and health outcomes, save taxpayer dollars, and enhance community well-being.

HB21-1085: Secure Transportation Behavioral Health Crisis



**Representative
Julie McCluskie**



**Representative
Colin Larson**



**Senator
Jeff Bridges**



**Senator
Jim Smallwood**

In a mental health or substance use crisis, many Coloradans are transported by law enforcement in handcuffs or by ambulance. This dramatic and inappropriate response exacerbates crises and can be perceived as a public shaming of people with mental health and substance use conditions. HB21-1085 proposes a more appropriate, less costly response by creating a regulation to provide transportation services, different from patrol cars or traditional ambulance services, for individuals experiencing a mental health crisis.

“ People who need mental health care should be transported with the same consideration as people who need any other kind of health care. By establishing a better way of transporting people in a mental health or substance use crisis, we’ll save taxpayer dollars, decrease the chances of escalating a crisis, and most importantly, prioritize the well-being of people with mental health or substance use conditions.

- Vincent Atchity, President and CEO of Mental Health Colorado

HB21-1030: Expanding Peace Officers Mental Health Grant Program

Creates the “Guard Training and Standards Act” that would create standards and regulations for private security guards and require private security guards to obtain a license to practice.



DECRIMINALIZE MENTAL HEALTH CONTINUED

 Indicates primary Mental Health Colorado bill



HB21-1211: Regulation Of Restrictive Housing In Jails



Representative
Judy Amabile



Senator
Pete Lee

As with many other states in the nation, individuals with serious mental health conditions are entering the criminal justice system at alarming rates, often as a result of unmet health needs. Not only are individuals with mental health conditions more likely to be incarcerated longer, they are also more likely to be placed in solitary confinement while in jail. This bill ends the use of solitary confinement in Colorado jails for people with specific health conditions. The practice of solitary confinement has detrimental impacts on individuals with health conditions such as mental health disorders and dementia. Multiple studies have shown that the psychological stress created from solitary is comparable to the distress of physical torture.



“As a psychiatrist, the most disturbed patients I have ever examined are prisoners I encountered in solitary confinement settings. Suicide is epidemic in solitary confinement because of the despair the isolation induces.”

-Dr. Terry Kupers, author of *Solitary* and expert in mental health in correctional settings



DECRIMINALIZE MENTAL HEALTH CONTINUED

 Indicates primary Mental Health Colorado bill

SB21-066: Juvenile Diversion Programs

Makes changes to the current juvenile diversion program to reduce harm from juvenile involvement in the justice system.

SB21-138: Improve Brain Injury Support In Criminal Justice System

Creates a pilot program to determine whether a brain injury program would improve outcomes for offenders. The bill would also identify and support individuals with a brain injury in the criminal justice system.



Mental Health Colorado State Policy Director Lauren Snyder (Right) with HB21-1211 bill sponsors Senator Pete Lee (Left) and Representative Judy Amabile (Center).



END SHAME AND DISCRIMINATION

 Indicates primary Mental Health Colorado bill

Mental health — like physical health — is part of who we are. Increasingly, we need to be understanding and compassionate with ourselves and others.

HB21-1119: Suicide Prevention, Intervention, And Postvention

Broadens Colorado’s suicide prevention efforts to include intervention and postvention. Importantly, it will help ensure training and education for health care providers, first and last responders, and educators, and develop a plan for follow-up care for suicide attempt survivors who are treated in an emergency department.

HB21-1122: First Responder Interactions Persons with Disabilities

Establishes a commission in the attorney general’s office that will work to improve first responder training concerning interactions with persons with disabilities.

Study Area: In February 2021, Mental Health Colorado in collaboration with the Office of Behavioral Health started a stakeholder process to outline best practices when individuals are placed on an involuntary hold. Individuals who are placed on involuntary mental health holds often experience traumatic and discriminatory practices that lead to further harm. Colorado needs to reassess what happens to consumers during and after an involuntary civil commitment to ensure better treatment and outcomes for that individual. We expect legislation to be moved forward in the 2022 session.

LEGISLATION WE OPPOSED

These bills did not pass



HB21-1038: Concealed Handguns on School Grounds

This bill would have removed the limitation of current law that prohibits a concealed carry permit holder from carrying a concealed handgun on public elementary, middle, junior high, or high school grounds. We opposed this bill because permitting more concealed weapons on school grounds does not contribute to safety or to greater health or peace of mind.



HB21-1098: Civil Liability for Extreme Risk Protection Orders

This bill would have created a civil cause of action for a person who suffers injury or damages as a result of not being able to use a firearm to defend himself, herself, or his or her family as a result of a temporary extreme risk protection order or an ongoing extreme risk protection order. We opposed this bill, as it was an attempt to erode the effectiveness and authority of extreme risk protection orders, which we have championed in past legislative sessions.

LOOKING AHEAD TO 2022 AND BEYOND

MENTAL HEALTH COLORADO WILL PRIORITIZE:

- **Ensuring that funding and resources for mental health and substance use remain a priority** in the aftermath of the global pandemic.
- **Working closely with partners and stakeholders in every corner of the state** to ensure that Mental Health Colorado truly represents the voices of all Coloradans.
- **Formulating a legislative agenda that represents inclusive coalitions** of Colorado's mental health and substance use allies in every sector.
- **Prioritizing prevention and early intervention** throughout the lifespan.
- **Disentangling mental health and criminal justice** — jails and prisons should not be the state's largest psychiatric facilities. Coloradans need care, not cuffs.
- Ensuring that every Coloradan understands that **mental health and physical health are connected.**

SCORECARD: REPRESENTATIVES

REPRESENTATIVE	HB21-1021	HB21-1085	HB21-1211	HB21-1258	SB21-137	SB21-154	SCORE
Amabile, Judy (D)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	100
Bacon, Jennifer (D)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	100
Baisley, Mark (R)	X	✓	X	X	X	X	17
Benavidez, Adrienne (D)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	100
Bernett, Tracy, (D)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	100
Bird, Shannon (D)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	100
Bockenfeld, Rod (R)	✓	✓	X	X	X	X	33
Boesenecker, Andrew (D)	A	✓	A	✓	✓	✓	100
Bradfield, Mary (R)	✓	A	X	X	✓	✓	60
Caraveo, Yadira (D)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	100
Carver, Terri (R)	X	✓	X	A	X	X	20
Catlin, Marc (R)	✓	✓	X	✓	X	✓	67
Cutter, Lisa (D)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	100
Daugherty, Lisa (D)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	100
Duran, Monica (D)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	100
Esgar, Daneya (D)	A	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	100
Exum, Tony (D)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	100
Froelich, Meg (D)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	100
Garnett, Alec (D)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	100
Geitner, Tim (R)	X	✓	X	X	X	✓	33
Gonzales-Gutierrez, Serena (D)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	100
Gray, Matt (D)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	100
Hanks, Ron	X	✓	X	X	X	✓	33
Herod, Leslie (D)	✓	A	✓	✓	✓	✓	100
Holtorf, Richard (R)	✓	✓	X	✓	X	✓	67
Hooton, Edie (D)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	100

✓ indicates **yes**, X indicates **no**, A indicates **absent**

SCORECARD: REPRESENTATIVES

REPRESENTATIVE	HB21-1021	HB21-1085	HB21-1211	HB21-1258	SB21-137	SB21-154	SCORE
Jackson, Dominique (D)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	100
Jodeh, Iman (D)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	100
Kennedy, Chris (D)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	100
Kipp, Cathy (D)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	100
Larson, Colin (R)	✓	✓	X	✓	X	✓	67
Lontine, Susan (D)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	100
Luck, Stephanie (R)	X	X	X	X	X	X	0
Lynch, Mike (R)	✓	✓	X	✓	X	✓	67
McCluskie, Julie (D)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	100
McCormick, Karen (D)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	100
McKean, Hugh (R)	✓	✓	X	X	X	✓	50
McLachlan, Barbara (D)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	100
Michaelson Jenet, Dafna (D)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	100
Mullica, Kyle (D)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	100
Neville, Patrick (R)	X	✓	X	X	X	X	17
Ortiz, David (D)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	100
Pelton, Rod (R)	✓	✓	X	✓	X	✓	67
Pico, Andrews (R)	✓	✓	X	X	X	X	33
Ransom, Kim (R)	X	✓	X	X	X	X	17
Rich, Janice (R)	✓	✓	X	X	X	✓	50
Ricks, Naquetta (D)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	100
Roberts, Dylan (D)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	100
Sandridge, Shane (R)	X	✓	X	X	X	X	17
Sirota, Emily (D)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	100
Snyder, Marc (D)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	83
Soper, Matt (R)	X	✓	X	X	X	✓	33
Sullivan, Tom (D)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	100
Tipper, Kerry (D)	✓	✓	✓	A	✓	✓	100

✓ indicates **yes**. X indicates **no**. A indicates **absent**

SCORECARD: REPRESENTATIVES

REPRESENTATIVE	HB21-1021	HB21-1085	HB21-1211	HB21-1258	SB21-137	SB21-154	SCORE
Titone, Brianna (D)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	100
Valdez, Alex (D)	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	83
Valdez, Donald (D)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	100
Van Beber, Tonya (R)	X	✓	X	✓	X	✓	50
Van Winkle, Kevin (R)	X	✓	X	✓	X	✓	50
Weissman, Mike (D)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	100
Will, Perry (R)	✓	✓	X	✓	X	✓	67
Williams, Dave (R)	X	X	X	X	X	X	0
Woodrow, Steven (D)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	A	100
Woog, Dan (R)	✓	✓	X	X	X	A	40
Young, Mary (D)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	100

✓ indicates **yes**, X indicates **no**, A indicates **absent**

SCORECARD: SENATORS

SENATOR	HB21-1021	HB21-1085	HB21-1211	HB21-1258	SB21-137	SB21-154	SCORE
Bridges, Jeff (D)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	100
Buckner, Janet (D)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	100
Coleman, James (D)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	100
Cooke, John (R)	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	83
Coram, Don (R)	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	83
Danielson, Jessie (D)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	100
Donovan, Kerry (D)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	100
Fenberg, Stephen (D)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	100
Fields, Rhonda (D)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	100
Garcia, Leroy (D)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	100
Gardner, Bob (R)	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	83
Ginal, Joann (D)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	100
Gonzales, Julie (D)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	100
Hansen, Chris (D)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	100
Hisey, Dennis (R)	✓	✓	X	✓	X	✓	67
Holbert, Chris (R)	X	✓	X	✓	X	✓	50
Jaquez Lewis, Sonya (D)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	100
Kirkmeyer, Barbara (R)	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	83
Kolker, Chris (D)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	100
Lee, Pete (D)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	100
Liston, Larry (R)	✓	✓	X	✓	X	✓	67
Lundeen, Paul (R)	X	✓	X	✓	X	✓	50
Moreno, Dominick (D)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	100
Pettersen, Brittany (D)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	100
Priola, Kevin (R)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	100
Rankin, Bob (R)	✓	✓	X	✓	A	✓	80
Rodriguez, Robert (D)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	100
Scott, Ray (R)	✓	✓	X	✓	X	✓	67

✓ indicates **yes**, X indicates **no**, A indicates **absent**

SCORECARD: SENATORS

SENATOR	HB21-1021	HB21-1085	HB21-1211	HB21-1258	SB21-137	SB21-154	SCORE
Simpson, Cleave (R)	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	83
Smallwood, Jim (R)	✓	✓	X	✓	A	✓	80
Sonnenberg, Jerry (R)	✓	✓	X	✓	X	✓	67
Story, Tammy (D)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	100
Winter, Faith (D)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	100
Woodward, Rob (R)	✓	✓	X	✓	X	✓	67
Zenzinger, Rachel (D)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	100

✓ indicates **yes**, X indicates **no**, A indicates **absent**



**MENTAL HEALTH
COLORADO**

**COME BACK TO SEE WHAT WE
ACCOMPLISH NEXT YEAR!**



@MentalHealthColorado



@MentalHealthCO



@CO_MentalHealth



Mental Health Colorado



Join the Brain Wave!

Mental Health Colorado's statewide network of advocates dismantling barriers to mental health and substance use care and working to create healthier minds across the lifespan.

Learn more: mentalhealthcolorado.org/jointhewave