



# 2018 LEGISLATIVE REPORT

Mental Health Colorado led the fight this year to make Colorado a national leader in the prevention and treatment of mental health and substance use disorders. One million Coloradans experience a mental health disorder each year—and less than half get the care they need.

## ACCESSING TREATMENT

When our proposed treatment bills are in place, Coloradans will be able to:

- Access a one-stop shop to navigate the insurance system (**HB 18-1357**)
- Obtain mental health services for their children without giving up custody of them (**HB 18-1094**)
- See a psychologist licensed in other states, and Colorado psychologists can now see clients in other states (**HB 18-1017**)

Some proposals fell short, including lowering the age a minor can receive therapy without parental consent from age 15 to 12 (**HB 18-1177**).



## EMERGENCY AND DIVERSION

Our state has turned the criminal justice system into a warehouse for people with mental health and substance use disorders. More than 5,000 Coloradans with a severe mental illness are now behind bars. We backed efforts to divert individuals from that system by making it easier for them to receive community treatment (**SB 18-249** and **SB 18-251**).

## ENDING THE CYCLE

Each year, 35,000 Coloradans are placed on a 72-hour emergency mental health hold. But when those 72 hours are up, many never get the care they need. Lack of follow-up care creates a cycle of crisis that **SB 18-270** aims to end.

Beginning Jan. 1, 2019, a statewide transition specialist team will help individuals experiencing a mental health emergency find housing or residential placement and follow-up services.

## PREVENTING SUICIDE

Colorado's suicide rate—one of the highest in the country—has risen 34 percent in less than 20 years. Youth suicide in our state is now the leading cause of death in children ages 10 to 14.

We fought to end a practice that contributes to psychological distress in LGBTQ individuals (**HB 1245**), address gaps in the state's suicide prevention plan (**SB 18-153**), and create a crisis and suicide prevention training program in schools (**SB 18-272** and **HB 18-1416**).

## "RED FLAG" LAWS

One of our top priorities we urged the legislature to address: making it harder for people who pose a danger to themselves or others to get guns. A “red flag” bill would allow courts to order the temporary removal of firearms from the homes of individuals at risk of suicide or violence (**HB 18-1436**).

Nine other states have enacted similar laws. Connecticut saw one suicide diverted for every 10 guns removed.

Despite law enforcement support, bipartisan sponsorship, and appropriate measures taken to protect due process rights, the bill failed in the state Senate. A “red flag” law will remain a priority for Mental Health Colorado in diverting suicide.



*Representative Alec Garnett, Mental Health Colorado President and CEO Andrew Romanoff, and Colorado sheriffs gather to show their support for HB 18-1436.*



*Governor John Hickenlooper signed five substance use treatment bills in May 2018. Supporters left to right: Rob Valuck, Lt. Gov. Donna Lynne, Senator Kevin Priola, Representative Cole Wist, Senator Tim Neville, Representative Jonathan Singer, Senator Cheri Jahn, Senator Jack Tate, Representative Brittany Pettersen, Representative Chris Kennedy, and Senator Larry Crowder*

## SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER

More than 900 Coloradans died from overdoses in 2017—the most the state has ever seen. Many Coloradans seeking treatment are rejected and left to suffer withdrawal symptoms or relapse alone. Mental Health Colorado supported 4 bills that will:

- Allow schools to apply for grants to cover behavioral health services, including substance use disorder treatment (**HB 18-1003**)
- Offer inpatient and residential treatment for substance use disorders (**HB 18-1136**)
- Improve payment and coverage for substance use treatment (**HB 18-1007**)
- Expand access to behavioral health care providers (**SB 18-024**)