



Your voice for healthier minds across the lifespan for all Coloradans

April 2025

MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH

May is Mental Health Awareness Month. Mental health, like physical health, is something we all have, and we all need access to housing, healthcare, supports and services across our lifespans to thrive.

At Mental Health Colorado, we envision a Colorado where mental health is viewed and treated with the same importance as physical health, where people of all ages, backgrounds and economic status have access to the resources and support they need to thrive mentally and physically, and where health-based discrimination and harm are eradicated.

We work tirelessly to educate stakeholders including caregivers, community members, legislators and law enforcement, about mental health conditions, factors contributing to mental health, and how we can all work together to build a healthier Colorado. As a non-partisan, statewide organization, we work across aisles and across city and county boundaries to advocate for the wellbeing of all Coloradans. **We are stronger together, and together we turn awareness into action.**

We invite you to join us in honoring Mental Health Awareness month by following our activities on social media, helping others care for their mental health by sharing information, and making a gift to support Mental Health Colorado to help create a future where mental health is understood and treated with the same importance as physical health, and where all Coloradans have access to the support they need to thrive. Together, we can pass laws, change practices and build a movement to support healthier minds across the lifespan.

And... ***gifts made in May will be DOUBLED!***

Our generous partners at Alpine Bank support the well-being of our Colorado Community and have offered to match up to \$15,000 in donations to Mental Health Colorado in recognition of Mental Health Awareness Month.



[linked <https://www.mentalhealthcolorado.org/donate/>]

We thank you for all you do to support health and well-being in Colorado and look forward to turning awareness into action together in May.



Dear Friends of Mental Health Colorado,

Over the past month, we've shared a series of flyers outlining the rights of individuals navigating mental health and substance use care in Colorado. You've read them, shared them, asked questions, and made sure the people in your lives have access to information that could change everything in a moment of crisis.

Thank you.

We launched this campaign because too many Coloradans enter the mental health system without a map and without knowing what they're entitled to, what they can ask for, or how to protect themselves and their loved ones. These flyers offer a place to begin.

Here's a final look at what we shared this month:

- **Parity-** Equal coverage for mental and physical health
- **Patient Rights-** Dignity, consent, and privacy in care
- **Children & Minors-** Rights of young people and families
- **Involuntary Mental Health Services-** Legal protections in crisis

- **Substance Use Emergencies-** Understanding involuntary commitment and the right to compassionate treatment

[\[Access all flyers here \(English\)\]](#) [\[\(Spanish\)\]](#)

If you haven't had a chance yet, we hope you'll take a moment today to share these resources one more time- on your social media, in your place of work, with your family, your classmates, your friends. You never know who might need them.

And as always, if you have feedback, suggestions, or stories to share, we're listening. We will continue to update these materials as policies evolve—and as your insights shape what needs to be said more clearly.

Thank you for your partnership in promoting healthier minds across the lifespan for all Coloradans.

Vincent

Partnering with Lawmakers to Prioritize Mental Health



We're thrilled to share that **HB25-1293: Drug Overdose Education & Opioid Antagonists in Schools** passed the Senate committee with unanimous support! This critical legislation will help ensure that Colorado students and school staff have access to opioid antagonists—medications that reverse overdoses—and the education needed to save lives in moments of crisis.

This is a meaningful step toward preventing overdose deaths and fostering safer school environments across the state. Thank you to these incredible legislators and to everyone working to advance health and safety for all Coloradans. #CareNotCuffs

Pictured here: Mental Health Colorado's Vice President of Government Affairs, Wendy Buxton-Andrade, with State Senators Byron Pelton and Marc Snyder

In The News



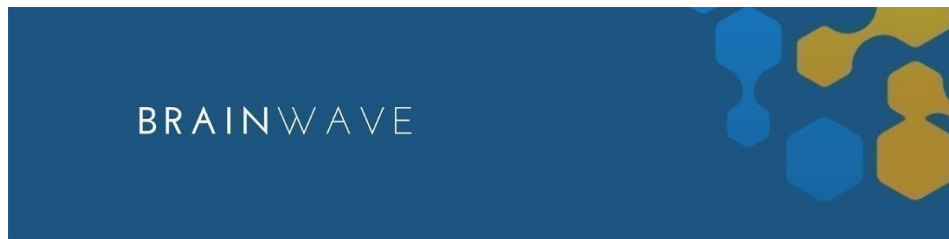
'The right approach to protect our kids from the overdose crisis | OPINION'

‘Colorado ranks among the five worst states in the nation for youth with substance use disorder, according to [Mental Health America’s 2024 state rankings report](#). We’re failing our kids when it comes to substance use, and they’re paying a terrible price. We need to meet our school-aged children where they are, with evidence-based education, prevention resources, and care, equipping them with the tools and knowledge they need to make more informed decisions about substance use and to look out for their peers.’

[Read the Full Article](#)

The Brain Wave Policy Corner

Legislative & Policy Updates on Mental Health in Colorado



1. Lawmakers Override Governor’s Veto on Social Media Regulation Bill

Colorado legislators successfully overrode Governor Jared Polis's veto of a bill aimed at protecting minors from harmful content on social media platforms. The law mandates that large social media companies remove flagged accounts involved in illegal activities, such as firearm and drug sales or sex trafficking, and cooperate promptly with law enforcement. This marks the first veto override in Colorado since 2011. [Learn more here.](#)

2. Expansion of Behavioral Health Crisis Response Initiatives

Senate Bill 25-042 was introduced to enhance Colorado's behavioral health crisis response system. The bill proposes increasing reimbursable inpatient mental health care days from 15 to 60 and requires the Behavioral Health Administration to report on discharge reasons for emergency mental health holds. Additionally, it calls for the establishment of a stakeholder group to identify and share effective crisis response models across communities. [Learn more here.](#)

3. Standardization of Insurance Coverage for Mental Health Care

House Bill 25-1002 was signed into law, ensuring that insurance companies use transparent, evidence-based criteria when determining coverage for mental health services. This legislation codifies the federal Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act into state law, requiring equal coverage for mental and physical health services. [Learn more here.](#)

4. Efforts to Remove Stigmatizing Language from Medical Licensing Applications

House Bill 25-1176 is under consideration to eliminate stigmatizing questions about mental health treatment from Colorado's medical licensing applications. The bill aims to encourage healthcare professionals to seek mental health care without fear of professional repercussions. [Learn more here.](#)

5. Supreme Court to Hear Challenge to Colorado's Conversion Therapy Ban

The U.S. Supreme Court agreed to hear *Chiles v. Salazar*, a case challenging Colorado's 2019 law banning conversion therapy for minors. The outcome could have significant implications for state regulations on professional conduct and LGBTQ+ youth protections. [Learn more here.](#)

6. Implementation of Trauma-Informed Practices in Schools

Senate Bill 25-027 requires the Office of School Safety to develop trauma-informed best practices for school safety drills. Recommendations are to be submitted by June 30, 2026, focusing on training school personnel and conducting drills in a manner sensitive to students' mental health needs. [Learn more here.](#)

7. Regulation of Student Communication Device Use in Schools

House Bill 25-1135 mandates that all public and charter schools in Colorado implement policies by July 1, 2026, governing student use of communication devices during the school day. The goal is to reduce distractions and support students' mental well-being. [Learn more here.](#)

8. Enhancement of Drug Overdose Education in Schools

House Bill 25-1293 requires the State Board of Education to adopt high school health education standards addressing drug overdose risks and prevention. The bill also authorizes the board to accept funding to support the implementation of these standards. [Learn more here.](#)

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Thank Your Legislators!

Passing laws to promote healthier minds across the lifespan takes collective effort—and your advocacy made a difference. Now that some key mental health legislation has passed, it's time to thank the lawmakers who championed these important changes. Visit our Policy Action webpage for sample thank-you messages, legislator contact info, and tips on how to show your appreciation.

[\[CLICK HERE\]](#)

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A View from Washington, D.C.



1. Proposed Cuts to LGBTQ+ Youth Suicide Prevention Services

The Trump administration's draft budget proposes eliminating funding for the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline's LGBTQ+ Youth Specialized Services, which has handled over 1.2 million crisis contacts since its inception in 2022. Advocates warn that this move could endanger LGBTQ+ youth, a group already at higher risk for mental health challenges. [Learn more here.](#)

2. Justice Department Explores Involuntary Hospitalization Policies

The U.S. Department of Justice is considering strategies to address homelessness and mental illness, including the potential for increased involuntary hospitalization. This initiative aligns with broader efforts by the administration to clear homeless individuals from public spaces and shift federal homelessness strategies. [Learn more here.](#)

4. Federal Rule Strengthens Mental Health Parity Enforcement

A new federal rule updates standards for the Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act, aiming to ensure that insurers and health plans do not impose greater limitations on behavioral health services compared to other medical care. This move seeks to improve access to mental health treatment for individuals with private health insurance. [Learn more here.](#)

5. Bipartisan PEER Support Act Introduced

Senators Tim Kaine (D-VA) and Jim Banks (R-IN) introduced the Providing Empathetic and Effective Recovery (PEER) Support Act, bipartisan legislation aimed at supporting mental health care and substance use disorder recovery. The bill seeks to elevate peer support specialists—individuals with lived experience—to assist others in recovery, addressing workforce shortages and enhancing access to care. [Learn more here.](#)

6. Mental Health in Aviation Act Reintroduced

The Mental Health in Aviation Act was reintroduced to destigmatize mental health care within the aviation community. The legislation directs the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to update mental health policies, ensuring that pilots and air traffic controllers can seek necessary mental health care without fearing professional repercussions. [Learn more here.](#)

7. States Shift Toward Involuntary Treatment Policies

Several states, including California and New York, are moving toward more conservative approaches to mental health policy, such as increasing the use of involuntary commitment for individuals with severe mental illness. This shift is driven by public frustration over visible homelessness and addiction, prompting a reevaluation of existing mental health and drug policies. [Learn more here.](#)

Impact Section

BUILDING A MOVEMENT

Mental Health Colorado is building a movement for Coloradans' well-being by uniting advocates, amplifying living/lived experience, and partnering with community organizations to drive meaningful change across Colorado. Highlights of our movement-building in 2024:

- 1,500+ Brain Wave advocates statewide
- 100+ testimonies provided
- 200+ emails sent to legislators
- 40+ local news features across CO
- 20+ interns from around the country
- 70+ organization and corporate partners

At Mental Health Colorado, we are dedicated to passing laws, changing practices, and building a movement to promote healthier minds across the lifespan for all Coloradans. Last month, we highlighted how we're changing practices—reshaping systems through education, innovation, and

collaboration. This month, we're spotlighting how we're building a movement to amplify these efforts and drive lasting change.

In 2024, more than 1,500 Brain Wave advocates united to advance mental health priorities across the state. We provided over 100 testimonies, sent 200+ emails to legislators, and earned more than 40 news features to raise awareness about critical mental health issues. Our network expanded with over 70 organizational partners and more than 20 interns from across the country, strengthening the foundation for a healthier future.

By empowering advocates, amplifying lived experience, and fostering strong community partnerships, we are building a movement for mental health that is stronger than ever. Next month, we'll share a look ahead at the work still to come. Thank you for standing with us.

Events

Natural Medicines in Our Communities: Conversations on Psychedelic Therapies

SPEAKER:
Lt. Sarko Gergerian
Police Officer and Therapist

Saturday May 3
UCCS Kettle Creek Lodge
Colorado Springs, CO

4-5pm Reception for law enforcement, first responders, military & veterans, healthcare professionals, policymakers

5-7pm Public talk and reception

Lt. Sarko Gergerian is a MAPS-trained MDMA therapist and was featured in the Netflix documentary How To Change Your Mind. With all the hype around psychedelics, as well as public safety questions regarding regulated access to psilocybin mushrooms, what about the risks, concerns, and questions that many people still have around them? In this open public forum, let's have a real conversation about what the growing use of psychedelics means for all of us and our communities. We hope you will join us!

Scan to RSVP 

  thenowaksociety.org/events

Join us on **Saturday, May 3** for an exclusive event co-hosted by The Nowak Society and Healing Advocacy Fund.

Private Event for law enforcement, military, and veterans (1-3pm) – A deep dive into mental health and trauma in law enforcement with **Lt. Sarko Gergerian**, an active police lieutenant and mental health counselor.

Public Talk & Reception (4-7pm) – Mingle with colleagues and leaders before the public talk with Lt. Sarko kicks off.

This is a chance to connect, learn, and explore the future of mental health care with our local Colorado community!

RSVP & Register Now! <https://www.thenowaksociety.org/events>

Questions? Reach out to **Lisa** at lisa@nowaksociety.org



PORTRAIT OF AN UNQUIET MIND

Presentation & Concert
Explore the interior mind of those struggling with bipolar disorder.
Featuring world-renowned jazz artists.
This event is free & open to the public.

 **MONDAY, MAY 5**
7:00 PM

 **CU ANSCHUTZ**
EDUCATION 2 SOUTH
AUDITORIUM - ROOM 1102

 **SCAN HERE**
RSVP & more information



 **PRE-CONCERT RECEPTION**
5:30-6:30PM in Education 2 South Lobby

IN COLLABORATION WITH

 Center for Bioethics and Humanities
UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO ANSCHUTZ MEDICAL CAMPUS

 College of Arts & Media
UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO DENVER

 Access and Campus Engagement
UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO DENVER

 Center for Faculty Development & Advancement
UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO DENVER | ANSCHUTZ MEDICAL CAMPUS

President's Innovation Fund for Development and Support
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CU Denver



Join us on May 5th to be part of the world premiere of *Portrait of an Unquiet Mind*, an innovative exploration of mental illness through music, featuring world-renowned jazz artists Joe Farnsworth (drums), Sean Jones (trumpet), Patrick Bartley (alto saxophone), Paul Cornish (piano), Reuben Rogers (bass), and Sara Caswell (violin), who will lead our string orchestra. This powerful event also features GRAMMY-winning producer Mark Rabideau and composer Shelbie Rassler.



Guidelight

Together We Rise
Community Hike for Mental Health

Join us for a community hike, followed by snacks, refreshments, and an optional guided meditation led by Jess Tota, LPC, at SOL Mental Health.

 Friday, May 9th
8:30 - 10:30 am MT

 Matthews/Winters Trailhead
Golden, CO
Parking available onsite

 <https://bit.ly/COMentalHealthHike>

Scan to donate to
Mental Health Colorado 

Join us for a morning of movement, connection, and mindfulness in honor of Mental Health Awareness Month! We'll gather at Matthews/Winters Trailhead for a community hike, followed by snacks, refreshments, and an optional guided meditation led by Jess Tota, LPC, at SOL Mental Health. Optional donations will directly support Mental Health Colorado's advocacy for healthier minds across the lifespan.

[Register here!](https://bit.ly/COMentalHealthHike)

DENVER BUSINESS JOURNAL

WOMEN'S HEALTH SUMMIT

PRESENTED BY  Intermountain
Health



**SEAWELL BALLROOM
AT THE DCPA**

1350 Arapahoe St,
Denver, CO 80204

MAY 15, 2025

11:00AM -1:00PM

Empower your health, career, and well-being at the Women's Health Summit, an exclusive event designed to inspire, connect, and elevate women in the workplace.

Mental Health Colorado is proud to share an exclusive opportunity to attend the **2025 Women's Health Summit**, presented by Intermountain Health and hosted by the *Denver Business Journal*.

This powerful half-day event will bring together health leaders, policymakers, and advocates to explore the future of women's health care in Colorado and beyond.

Date: May 15, 2025

Location: Seawell Ballroom, Denver Center for the Performing Arts

Discount Code: *MHC30* for 30% off your ticket

Learn more and register: [2025 Women's Health Summit](#)



Mental Health Colorado is proud to be a Community Partner for Psychedelic Science 2025, the world's largest conference on psychedelic medicine, research, and community

building — happening June 16–20 in Denver, CO!

Ready to join thousands of scientists, health professionals, advocates, and changemakers from around the world? Use our **promo code MHC15 for 15%** off your registration!

[Register here!](#)

A special thank you to our 2025 Elite Sponsor, Rocky Mountain Health Plans, and 2025 Leader Sponsor Signal Behavioral Health Network!



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[If so, CLICK HERE!](#)

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