



*Your voice for healthier minds across the lifespan for all Coloradans*

**February 2025**



**Legislative Education & Advocacy Day (LEAD) 2025: *Less Than One Week Away***

- **When:** Wednesday, March 5, 2025, starting at 7:30 AM
- **Where:** First Baptist Church Denver, 1373 N. Grant St., Denver 80203
- **What to Expect:** Advocacy workshop, meetings with lawmakers, and panel discussions.

**Haven't registered yet?** There's still time to secure your spot: [Register now.](#)

The focus of our Legislative Education and Advocacy Day 2025, “**Care, Not Cuffs – Strong Start for All Children and Support for Families,**” is a call-to-action amplifying voices advocating for a Colorado where the health of children and families is a top priority for public safety and justice. Did you know that families with strong support systems experience lower rates of mental health crises and justice-involvement?

Together, we can create a Colorado where every family thrives. [Register now](#) to LEAD, and advocate for “Care, Not Cuffs.”

[\[REGISTER NOW\]](#)

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## In The News



### **Perspective: Countering Colorado’s Opioid Crisis**

*Wendy Buxton-Andrade | 2/9/25 | The Gazette*

“The opioid epidemic has evolved from an issue of overprescription and subsequent abuse of legal medications to an elaborate, organized criminal enterprise incorporating the manufacture, trafficking, and distribution of illicit fentanyl — often mixed, knowingly or unknowingly, with other, less potent street drugs. The ongoing challenge is further complicated by the introduction of new variants and concoctions — such as the mixing of illicit fentanyl with a type of horse tranquilizer (a deadly compound known as “TRANQ”) which compromises the effectiveness of Narcan and other opioid antagonists used as an emergency treatment to reverse the effects of an overdose.

There are no silver bullets: the opioid crisis is a complex, multifaceted problem that requires a holistic, interdisciplinary approach to address, integrating public health, the Attorney General’s Office, local governments, service providers, the courts, law enforcement, mental health professionals and others, all working in concert towards a common goal.”



[Read the Full Article](#)

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### **Colorado Needs HB 1002 to Ensure Fair Access to Mental Health Care**

*Vincent Atchity | 2/26/25 | The Daily Sentinel*

“House Bill 25-1002 is a critical step toward ensuring that mental health care is treated with the same urgency, transparency and fairness as physical health care. By establishing a clear, standardized definition of “medical necessity” in alignment with evidence-based clinical standards, this bill will help ensure that Coloradans receive the care they need and are already paying for.

Too many Colorado families are being denied essential mental health care based on arbitrary or opaque insurance standards. A Kaiser Family Foundation analysis found that nearly 20% of all medical necessity denials involved mental health or substance use disorder services, even though these services make up just 5% of overall health care spending. This disparity is not just an

administrative issue — it is a matter of life and death in a state that has one of the highest rates of youth and adults with serious thoughts of suicide.”

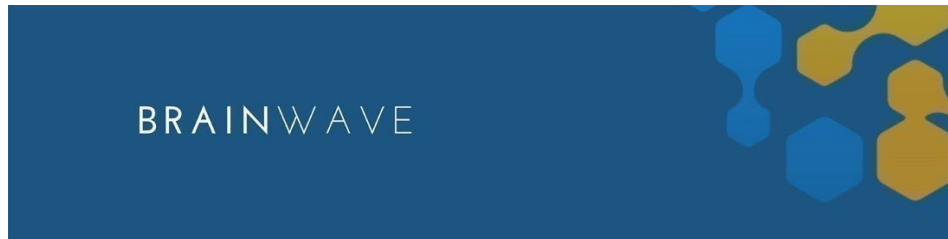


[Read the Full Article](#)

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## The Brain Wave Policy Corner

### *Legislative & Policy Updates on Mental Health in Colorado*



#### **1. Strengthening Mental Health Parity**

The Colorado House passed [House Bill 25-1002](#), requiring insurance companies to cover mental health services on par with physical health services. The bill enforces transparent, evidence-based criteria for coverage determinations to prioritize medical necessity.

#### **2. Streamlining Youth Behavioral Health Services**

[House Bill 25-1003](#) was approved to create the Children with Complex Health Needs waiver. This bill simplifies access to care for children with severe medical and behavioral health challenges by consolidating multiple waivers.

#### **3. Enhancing Behavioral Crisis Response**

The [Senate Bill 25-042](#) focuses on improving crisis response by requiring the Department of Public Safety to collaborate with the Behavioral Health Administration. It seeks to expand co-responder and mobile crisis response programs.

#### **4. Addressing Medicaid Funding Concerns**

Colorado health care providers have raised alarms over potential [federal Medicaid cuts](#), which could impact access to mental health services for vulnerable populations.

#### **5. Legal Challenge Against Federal Mental Health Policy**

Colorado has joined a multi-state lawsuit against [Executive Order 14187](#), which threatens to restrict federal funding for hospitals providing gender-affirming care. The lawsuit aims to protect access to comprehensive mental health services for LGBTQ+ youth.

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## A View from Washington, D.C.



### 1. Establishment of the "Make America Healthy Again" Commission

On February 13, 2025, President Trump issued an executive order creating this commission to address childhood chronic diseases, including mental health conditions.

### 2. Introduction of the PEER Mental Health Act

Representative Becca Balint introduced a federal bill to award grants for training teachers, school personnel, parents, caregivers, and students in mental health first aid. This legislation aims to equip communities with the ability to recognize and respond to mental health conditions in children and adolescents.

### 3. Confirmation of Robert F. Kennedy Jr. as HHS Secretary

The Senate confirmed Robert F. Kennedy Jr. as the Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS) in February 2025. His stance on vaccines and alternative treatments has sparked discussions about potential shifts in mental health policies under his leadership.

### 4. Temporary Block of Executive Order on Gender-Affirming Care

A federal judge issued a temporary restraining order against President Trump's executive order restricting gender-affirming healthcare for minors under 19. This ruling has significant implications for the mental health and well-being of transgender youth.


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## Making an Impact: Passing Laws to Promote Healthier Minds

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. This month, we're highlighting the policies we've championed in 2024, transforming health care through legislative action.

Last session, we helped make youth mental health care more accessible by securing the permanent expansion of the I Matter program (SB24-001), ensuring free therapy sessions for young people. We also tackled health-based discrimination with measures like HB24-1355, which establishes a community-based alternative to competency proceedings, and SB23-176 & SB24-117, which ban BMI-based insurance denials and the sale of youth diet pills. Additionally, new laws like SB24-175 expand perinatal care coverage, further reinforcing mental health as a priority in health policy.

By advocating for and securing these legislative wins, we are paving the way for a future where every Coloradan has access to the care and support they need. But passing laws is just one part of our mission. Next month, we'll focus on how we're changing practices to ensure these policies translate into real-world impact. Your support makes this work possible. Join us in building a healthier future for all!

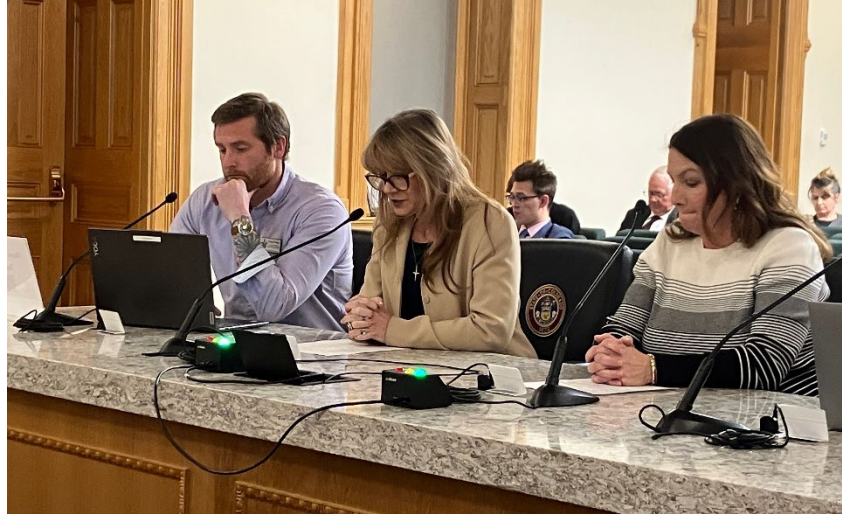


## PASSING LAWS

Mental Health Colorado has advocated for policies, bringing together legislators, community leaders, consumers and companies to pass laws. Highlights of legislation passed in 2024:

Access to Care	Ending Health-Based Discrimination	Supports for Serious Mental Illness
<p><b>SB24-001:</b> Made "I Matter" permanent: 6 free therapy sessions for youth</p> <p><b>HB24-1038:</b> requires state agencies to develop a system of care for children and youth with complex behavioral health needs</p>	<p><b>HB24-1355:</b> connects individuals with wraparound care and establishes a community-based alternative to competency proceedings</p> <p><b>SB23-176 &amp; SB24-117:</b> banned BMI-based insurance denials &amp; restricted youth diet pills; required state regulation of care facilities</p> <p><b>HB24-1285:</b> requires schools to include weight, height, or body size based-bullying in prohibited bullying behaviors .</p>	<p><b>HB24-1217:</b> clarifies what is allowable within federal privacy laws for family members and caregivers to communicate with treating providers</p> <p><b>SB24-175:</b> expands coverage for perinatal care and requires the medical services board to create rules on the coverage for over-the-counter choline supplements</p>

[Learn About This Year's Legislation](#)



*Mental Health Colorado's Vice President of Government Affairs, Wendy Buxton-Andrade, testifies in support of HB25-1220.*

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*Help us continue passing laws, changing practices, and building a movement for mental health.  
Every donation fuels our advocacy and expands access to care for all Coloradans.*

**[DONATE BUTTON]**

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### **Call for Participants: Early Childhood Mental Health Research Study**

Do you serve young children in Colorado? The Urban Institute, in partnership with the Colorado Department of Early Childhood, is seeking participants for a Community Advisory Board (CAB) to help shape research on early childhood mental health consultation (ECMHC).

They are looking for:

- Family childcare providers
- Friend, family, and neighbor care providers
- Childcare providers in rural Colorado
- Family members whose children participated in ECMHC

CAB members will meet twice a year (virtually) through 2029 and receive a \$75 gift card per engagement if not otherwise compensated.

[Apply Here by March 7](#)

For questions, contact [ECMHC\\_REACH@urban.org](mailto:ECMHC_REACH@urban.org).

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## Events

### Colorado Suicide Prevention Advocacy Day – March 12

In collaboration with AFSP Colorado Chapter, the Suicide Prevention Coalition of Colorado, and NAMI Colorado, we are excited to cohost the Colorado Suicide Prevention Advocacy Day on March 12, 2025, at the Colorado State Capitol in Denver. This free event aims to engage advocates, mental health professionals, and community members in discussions with state legislators to strengthen mental health initiatives statewide.

**Date:** March 12, 2025

**Location:** Colorado State Capitol, Rotunda

**Time:** 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM

***Lunch provided***



#### What to Expect:

- Advocacy training & briefings on key legislation
- Pre-arranged meetings with state officials
- A chance to make a meaningful impact on mental health policy

**[Register Here by March 10](#)**

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### Healthier Minds & Safer Housing

At Mental Health Colorado, we understand that stable housing is foundational to mental health and well-being. Our Safer Housing program provides short-term housing and wraparound care to support individuals with lived/living experience of mental health and/or substance use conditions as they reintegrate into health, community, and stability.

These residents are not only rebuilding their lives but also finding moments of joy and connection along the way. Recently, residents worked together to create an incredible snow sculpture of an angel outside the housing facility.



With housing, peer support, and access to essential services, participants in our Safer Housing program have the opportunity to heal, grow, and build new beginnings. Their journeys remind us that with the right support, recovery is possible.

[Support Safer Housing](#)

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**Community Spotlight: Thank you, Dopamine Management Department!**



Mental Health Colorado is grateful for the support of [Dopamine Management Department](#), a local brand that blends creativity, self-expression, and community impact. Offering clothing inspired by exploration of self and the world around us, Dopamine Management Department designs and prints their limited, small batch drops right here in Denver, Colorado!

We are honored that 5% of their profits are being donated to Mental Health Colorado, directly supporting our work to promote healthier minds across the lifespan.

**Explore their collections and support their mission at [dmd-shop.com](https://dmd-shop.com).**

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A special thank you to the David & Laura Merage Foundation!



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**Do you shop at King Soopers?**

**[If so, CLICK HERE!](#)**

*Every time you shop, a portion of your purchase can benefit Mental Health Colorado.*