



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

**January 2025**

**LEAD (Legislative Education & Advocacy Day) 2025 will be on March 5<sup>th</sup>!**



**[REGISTER HERE](#)**

Join us for our **31st Annual Legislative Education & Advocacy Day (LEAD)** as we unite advocates, legislators, and community partners to champion mental health policy. This impactful event is an opportunity to advocate for meaningful change, engage directly with policymakers, and foster a community dedicated to advancing Care, Not Cuffs!

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**In The News**



## **‘16th Street Mall Stabbing Suspect’s Path Marked by Mental Illness, Homelessness, Drug Use’**

*Shelly Bradbury | 1/26/25 | By The Denver Post*

The Bridges program is only a few years old in Colorado and has been heralded as a pioneering approach to the oft-fraught intersection of mental health care and the justice system.

“Bridges is one of the most promising things we have going,” said Vincent Atchity, president and CEO of [Mental Health Colorado](#). “But this is really difficult work, so it should also come as no surprise that it is not always going to work.”

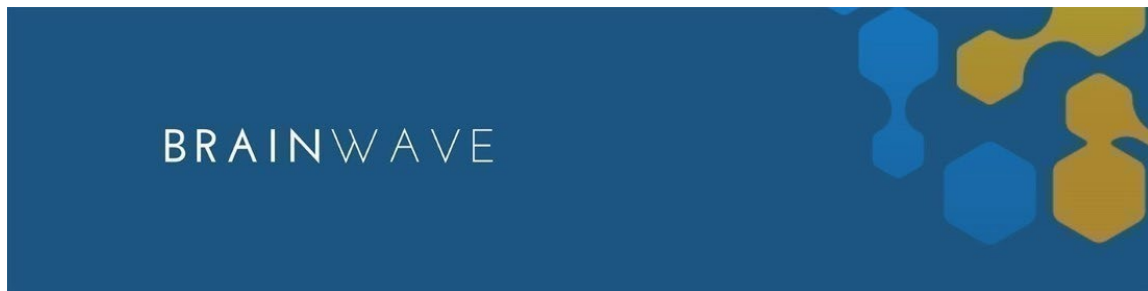
A Bridges liaison was appointed to Caudill’s cases in September.

[Read the Full Article](#)

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### **The Brain Wave Policy Corner**

*Legislative & Policy Updates on Mental Health in Colorado*



#### **Strengthening Behavioral Health Crisis Response (SB25-042)**

Senate Bill 25-042 aims to enhance Colorado’s behavioral health crisis response system. The bill mandates the Department of Public Safety and the Behavioral Health Administration to convene a stakeholder group to improve mobile crisis response services. Additionally, it requires state agencies to analyze reimbursement gaps in crisis care and propose funding solutions by 2027. To ensure continuity of care, the bill also establishes that facilities can only discharge individuals on emergency mental health holds if they no longer meet the criteria for such a hold. ([Colorado Legislature](#))

#### **Mental Health Parity & Insurance Reform (HB25-1002)**

House Bill 25-1002 seeks to strengthen mental health parity by requiring insurers to use

transparent, evidence-based criteria when making coverage decisions. The legislation also incorporates federal parity laws into state law, ensuring that mental health services receive the same level of coverage as physical health care. These measures aim to reduce out-of-pocket costs for families and improve access to essential mental health treatment. ([Colorado Health Plans](#))

### **Expanding Youth Behavioral Health Access**

A new legislative initiative advances efforts to streamline access to behavioral and complex health care for young Coloradans. The bill builds upon existing programs like I Matter, which offers free therapy sessions to youth in need. By improving coordination among healthcare providers and expanding access to services, the legislation aims to address gaps in mental health care for children and adolescents. ([Colorado House Democrats](#))

### **Psychedelic Therapy Legalization & Local Restrictions**

As of January 1, Colorado has officially legalized therapeutic psilocybin use for mental health conditions, including depression and PTSD. However, local municipalities, such as Colorado Springs, have imposed zoning restrictions on healing centers, limiting their proximity to certain areas. These restrictions have sparked debates, particularly among veterans advocating for the therapy's benefits in treating PTSD and other mental health conditions. ([The Guardian](#))

### **Affirmation of Conversion Therapy Ban**

Colorado's law banning conversion therapy for minors was reaffirmed as constitutional on January 6, reinforcing the state's commitment to protecting LGBTQ+ youth from harmful and discredited practices. The ruling confirms that licensed mental health professionals cannot engage in conversion therapy, upholding existing protections for young people across the state. ([Colorado Attorney General](#))

*These developments reflect ongoing efforts to expand access, ensure equity, and strengthen protections in mental health care across Colorado.*

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## **A View from Washington, D.C.**



### **Executive Order Restricting Gender-Affirming Care**

On January 28, President Trump signed an executive order terminating federal funding for healthcare services that support gender transitions for individuals under 19. The order directs federal insurance programs, including TRICARE and Medicaid, to exclude coverage for gender-affirming care and encourages legal actions against such practices. Major medical organizations, including the American Medical Association, oppose the order and affirm the medical necessity of gender-affirming care. Legal challenges are expected as human rights groups mobilize against this policy shift. ([Associated Press](#))

### **Changes for Transgender Individuals in Federal Prisons**

A new federal directive mandates that transgender women in federal prisons be placed in men's facilities and bars them from receiving gender-affirming medical care. This policy has resulted in immediate relocations and reports of mistreatment. Civil rights groups, including the ACLU, have filed lawsuits, arguing that the directive violates constitutional protections and significantly increases risks of violence against transgender inmates. ([Reuters](#))

### **Updated Behavioral Health Crisis Care Guidance**

On January 15, SAMHSA released updated national guidance to enhance behavioral health crisis response. The recommendations emphasize the continued development of a coordinated crisis care system, including crisis call centers, mobile crisis teams, and crisis stabilization facilities. The guidance also highlights equity in crisis care, focusing on accessibility for underserved populations. ([HHS](#))

### **Mental Health Parity & Addiction Equity Rule**

A new federal rule strengthens the Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act, requiring insurers to cover mental health and addiction services at levels comparable to physical health care. The rule explicitly includes protections for conditions like eating disorders and autism spectrum disorder. However, a lawsuit filed by employer groups challenges the regulation, arguing that it imposes excessive mandates and may increase costs. ([Psychiatry Online](#), [Reuters](#))

### **New Rules for Telemedicine Prescribing**

The DEA introduced new telemedicine regulations regarding the prescribing of controlled

substances without in-person visits. The rules aim to balance increased access to necessary medications while implementing safeguards to prevent misuse. Healthcare providers are encouraged to review the new regulations to ensure compliance while maintaining patient care. ([American Medical Association](#))

*These updates highlight major shifts in national mental health policy, with significant implications for access to care, patient rights, and healthcare provider practices.*

## **A Strong Start for All Children Requires Care, Not Cuffs**

### ***The Lasting Impact of HB17-1275 ‘Restrict Restraints on Public School Students’***

Category	Details/Impact
<b>Purpose</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduce and regulate the use of physical restraints and seclusion in public schools</li> </ul>
<b>Key Provisions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prohibits prone (face-down) restraints</li> <li>Requires written incident reports</li> <li>Mandates annual reviews of restraint/seclusion incidents</li> <li>Establishes formal complaint processes for parents and students</li> </ul>
<b>Reporting Requirements</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Schools must document every restraint or seclusion incident within 1 day</li> <li>Reports must be shared with parents/guardians within 5 days</li> <li>Annual restraint review reports required by each district and submitted to the Colorado Department of Education (CDE)</li> </ul>
<b>Data Transparency</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mandated collection of data on the use of restraints</li> <li>Shifted discipline reporting to student-level data as of the 2023-2024 school year</li> </ul>
<b>Behavioral Policies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourages the use of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) to prevent situations requiring restraints or seclusion</li> </ul>
<b>Training Requirements</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School staff must receive appropriate training to ensure proper behavior management practices and avoid the use of prohibited restraints</li> </ul>
<b>Enforcement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Introduced accountability measures through the formal complaint process and oversight</li> </ul>
<b>Broader Outcomes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improved safety for students, particularly those with disabilities</li> <li>Enhanced transparency and parental involvement</li> <li>Established statewide consistency in restraint and seclusion practices</li> </ul>

**In 2017, Mental Health Colorado played a key role in the development and passage of HB17-1275**, groundbreaking legislation designed to protect students from harmful and excessive disciplinary practices in schools. This bill was a crucial step toward decriminalizing mental health conditions in children and ensuring that schools implement supportive, evidence-based interventions rather than punitive measures.

HB17-1275 established strict regulations on the use of physical restraints and seclusion in public schools, prohibiting prone (face-down) restraints, requiring timely incident reporting, and mandating annual reviews of restraint and seclusion practices. Additionally, it introduced measures to improve data transparency, enforce accountability, and train school staff in Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) to prevent crisis situations. These reforms have been vital in promoting safer, more inclusive learning environments—particularly for students with disabilities—while ensuring families have a voice in addressing concerns.

As part of our broader mission to decriminalize mental health and advance the principles of *Care, Not Cuffs*, Mental Health Colorado championed HB17-1275 alongside advocates, families, and policymakers. The impact of this legislation continues to be felt today, fostering greater transparency, parental involvement, and statewide consistency in discipline policies. By shifting away from punitive practices and toward compassionate, evidence-based approaches, Colorado is leading the way in protecting the rights and well-being of all students.

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## Events

### Pride in Public Health Summit



**When:** Friday, February 7<sup>th</sup>, 2025

**Where:** Anschutz Health Sciences Building (1890 Revere CT., Aurora, CO)

**\$30 per person**

*Registration includes parking and meals.*

**[REGISTER]**

Envision: You—in partnership with the Colorado School of Public Health—will be co-hosting this event bringing together educators, students, activists, providers, advocates, community leaders, and many more to explore the intersections of the LGBTQ+ community and public health, mental health, and wellness. Together, we'll work to develop strategies that will help improve the overall health and wellbeing of the LGBTQ+ community.

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### 2025 Colorado Suicide Prevention Advocacy Action Day

**When:** February 19, 2025, from 9:00 AM – 1:00 PM MST

**Where:** Colorado State Capitol (200 E. Colfax Ave., Denver, CO)

A blue poster with a sunburst pattern. At the top is the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) logo, which includes a megaphone and the text "American Foundation for Suicide Prevention" and "ADVOCACY ACTION DAY". Below the logo, the text reads "2025 Advocacy Action Day" in large yellow letters, followed by "Colorado State Capital - West Foyer", "March 12, 2025", "9:00 am - 1:00 pm", and the URL "https://afsp.quorum.us/event/2025COSPD/". At the bottom are logos for SPCO, Mental Health Colorado, NAMI Colorado, and the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention.

**2025 Advocacy Action Day**  
Colorado State Capital - West Foyer  
March 12, 2025  
9:00 am - 1:00 pm  
<https://afsp.quorum.us/event/2025COSPD/>

SPCO MENTAL HEALTH COLORADO NAMI Colorado American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

**Register by February 12, 2025!**

[Sign Up Here](#)

This free event is your chance to learn about mental health policy, receive advocacy training, and meet with legislators to push for meaningful change. Whether you're an experienced advocate or new to the movement, your voice matters!

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