



Your voice for healthier minds across the lifespan for all Coloradans

March 2025

Know Your Rights

Dear Friends of Mental Health Colorado,

Having rights and civil liberties protections is good for our mental health in the best of times. In the worst of times--in moments of crisis, when we are distressed patients and distressed families of patients seeking the best possible care and health outcomes--knowing what our patient's rights are, and knowing how to advocate for those rights, may be exactly what secures a better outcome and provides some comfort.

During the month of April, we will be sharing guidance regarding Patient's Rights and Patient's Rights flyers that Mental Health Colorado has prepared for statewide use.

As your consumer advocacy organization, we want to be sure you know your rights, and we hope that, as a member of our consumer advocacy network, you will help make sure others know their rights, too. So, please share widely!

Accessing top-notch mental health care is no easy feat—and in a time of acute crisis and immediate need, the experience of seeking care may seem bewildering and frightening. These Patient's Rights flyers provide a baseline that may be comforting and reassuring for individuals needing care, for families and loved ones supporting and advocating for them, and for providers of care.

We'll introduce and explain each of these in the coming weeks. They're all available [here on our website](#) (if you can't wait to see and share!).

If you have stories to share about good care or bad, or questions about the best way to share these flyers, or which ones to share, we're happy to discuss...please just reply to this email.

If you have changes or updates to suggest regarding any of these flyers, or feedback to share, please let us know. We will offer a revised version as policies and practices change, and as feedback becomes substantial.

Wishing you all well...and appreciative for all you do to contribute to healthier minds across the lifespan for all Coloradans.

Vincent

Legislative Education & Advocacy Day (LEAD) 2025 – THANK YOU!



Over 70 people came together at the Colorado State Capitol for Legislative Education & Advocacy Day (LEAD) on March 5th to advocate for Care, Not Cuffs! Thank you to all advocates who participated and thank you to our expert panelists who presented on Care, Not Cuffs, and how we can create pathways to health for individuals, children, families and communities.

The event was a huge success, with many senators and representatives engaging with Brain Wave advocates and listening to folks' living/lived experiences with mental health. These stories are important and impactful, and we are honored to partner with you to promote healthier minds across the lifespan for all Coloradans!

Do you want to be part of our statewide network of grassroots advocates? Join the Brain Wave!

[\[click here\]](#)

House Minority Caucus Lunch & Learn



On March 19, our CEO, Vincent Atchity, and VP for Government Affairs, Wendy Buxton-Andrade, met with the Colorado House Minority Caucus to discuss opportunities to advance mental health policy. We are grateful to Rep. Anthony Hartsook, Rep. Lori Garcia Sander, Rep. Rebecca Ross-Keltie, & Rep. Matt Soper for their dedication to the health and well-being of Coloradans across the lifespan!

In The News



‘Nearly 500 Behavioral Health Workers in Colorado Have Been Laid Off in the Past 3 Months’

Jennifer Brown | 3/13/25 | The Colorado Sun

The 48-bed hospital was operating at a loss, with only about 30 beds filled on average over the past six years and had come [under intense scrutiny in recent years](#) over patient care. The hospital opened in 2005, and in 2016 built a new \$34 million facility funded partly from donations and grants, including from the Colorado Health Foundation.

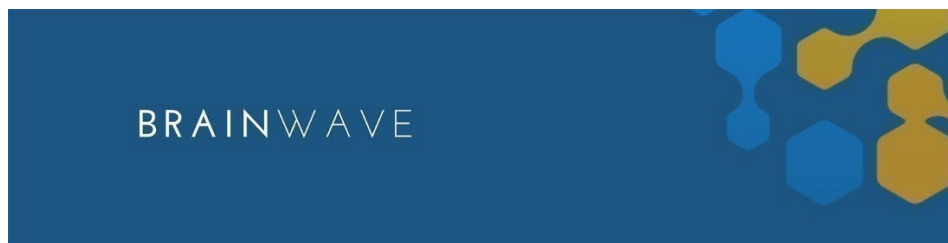
“It is with a heavy heart that we announce the upcoming closure of West Springs Hospital,” hospital officials said in a [news release](#) announcing the closure. “This decision was not made lightly, and we understand the profound impact it will have on our patients, staff, and community.”

Vincent Atchity, president of Mental Health Colorado, called the closure a “disaster for the health needs of the people of the Western Slope.”

[Read the Full Article](#)

The Brain Wave Policy Corner

Legislative & Policy Updates on Mental Health in Colorado



- **Enactment of Mental Health Parity Law:** On March 20, 2025, Governor Jared Polis signed [House Bill 25-1002](#), bipartisan legislation aimed at reducing health care costs by standardizing insurance coverage determinations for mental health care. This law mandates that insurance companies use transparent, evidence-based criteria when deciding coverage for mental health services, advancing parity with physical health care. Learn more here. [<https://www.colorado.gov/governor/news/governor-polis-signs-bills-law-44>]
- **Behavioral Health Crisis Response Recommendations:** The Colorado General Assembly passed [Senate Bill 25-042](#), which requires the Department of Public Safety, in collaboration with the Behavioral Health Administration, to identify and publicize existing resources and model programs for responding to behavioral health crises. The bill also addresses reimbursement shortages and gaps within the continuum of care for behavioral health crisis response. Learn more here. [https://leg.colorado.gov/bills/sb25-042?utm_source=chatgpt.com]
- **Supreme Court Review of Conversion Therapy Ban:** The U.S. Supreme Court agreed to hear a case challenging Colorado's 2019 ban on conversion therapy for minors by licensed mental health professionals. The outcome could have significant implications for the state's ability to regulate such practices. Learn more here.

[\[https://www.cpr.org/2025/03/10/scotus-colorado-conversion-therapy-ban-explained/\]](https://www.cpr.org/2025/03/10/scotus-colorado-conversion-therapy-ban-explained/)

- **Proposed Regulation of Social Media to Protect Youth Mental Health:** Colorado lawmakers introduced [Senate Bill 25-086](#), bipartisan legislation designed to compel social media companies to monitor and curb illegal activities on their platforms, such as drug advertisements and pornography, with the goal of improving youth mental health. The bill mandates prompt cooperation with law enforcement and requires companies to report their actions. Learn more here.

[\[https://www.axios.com/local/denver/2025/02/25/colorado-social-media-protections\]](https://www.axios.com/local/denver/2025/02/25/colorado-social-media-protections)

- **Implementation of Psychedelic Therapy:** Following voter approval, Colorado has begun implementing psychedelic therapy, specifically psilocybin, for conditions like depression and PTSD. This development has sparked discussions and tensions, particularly in conservative regions of the state, regarding access and regulation. Learn more here.

[\[https://apnews.com/article/colorado-psilocybin-psychedelic-therapy-legal-ptsd-veterans-99fc5a0703d85daa0903d5a2b2acc9be\]](https://apnews.com/article/colorado-psilocybin-psychedelic-therapy-legal-ptsd-veterans-99fc5a0703d85daa0903d5a2b2acc9be)

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Contact Your Legislators!

Passing laws requires active and timely emails and calls from voters like you. Your voice can influence new laws to promote healthier minds across the lifespan for all Coloradans. Check out our Policy Action webpage for step-by-step instructions on how to contact your legislators, sample email language and more.

[\[CLICK HERE\]](#)

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

Advocacy Opportunities

Make Your Voice Heard: Help Shape Colorado's Behavioral Health Future

The Behavioral Health Administration (BHA) is conducting a Statewide Needs Assessment to inform its strategic planning for behavioral health services and programs—and your voice is essential.

This important project will assess what's changed since the 2020 needs assessment, identify current strengths and gaps in services, and guide the future of behavioral health in Colorado. Join one of the upcoming public forums to share your insights and lived experiences:

Open Forum: Wednesday, April 9 | 2:00–3:30 PM | [Register here](#)


A View from Washington, D.C.



- **Finalization of Mental Health Parity Rules:** The Biden administration implemented new rules to enforce the Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act (MHPAEA), requiring insurers to provide mental health coverage on par with physical health coverage. These rules aim to address ongoing issues where insurers have evaded existing regulations, ensuring equitable access to mental health services. Learn more here. [https://www.commonwealthfund.org/blog/2025/new-federal-rule-can-help-ensure-patients-get-behavioral-health-care-they-need?utm_source=chatgpt.com]
- **Reauthorization of the Dr. Lorna Breen Health Care Provider Protection Act:** The American Dental Association (ADA) and other organizations urged Congress to reauthorize this bipartisan legislation dedicated to preventing suicide and reducing occupational burnout, mental health conditions, and stress among health care professionals. Learn more here. [<https://www.oralhealthgroup.com/dental-governance-regulations/ada-urges-congress-to-reauthorize-lorna-breen-bill-to-tackle-mental-health-burnout-among-healthcare-workers-1003985250/>]
- **AMA Push for Mental Health Parity Enforcement:** In March 2025, the American Medical Association renewed its advocacy for stronger enforcement of MHPAEA, calling on lawmakers to hold insurers accountable and reduce preventable deaths from untreated mental health and substance use disorders. Learn more here. [<https://www.ama-assn.org/health-care-advocacy/advocacy-update/march-21-2025-national-advocacy-update>]

- **Release of 2025 National Guidelines for Behavioral Health Crisis Care:** SAMHSA issued updated national guidelines to help states and providers build equitable, accessible, and high-quality crisis response systems for people experiencing behavioral health emergencies. Learn more here. [<https://library.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/national-guidelines-crisis-care-pep24-01-037.pdf>]
- **Telehealth Policy Extensions from HHS:** In March 2025, the Department of Health and Human Services extended key flexibilities for telehealth, including allowing Medicare patients to access services from home and maintaining provider eligibility for rural health clinics and FQHCs. These changes will remain in effect through September 2025. Learn more here. [<https://telehealth.hhs.gov/providers/telehealth-policy/telehealth-policy-updates>]

Making an Impact: 'Changing Practices' for Healthier Minds



CHANGING PRACTICES

Mental Health Colorado works to shift systems, reshape care delivery, and advance access through collaboration, education, and innovation. Highlights of changing practices in 2024:

Care Not Cuffs	Supporting Providers	Empowering Consumers
<p>Safer Housing: Offers housing and wraparound services for justice-involved individuals with co-occurring health conditions.</p> <p>Jail Diversion Program: Partnered to launch a community-based alternative to incarceration for people on Colorado's mental health competency waitlist.</p>	<p>Serious Mental Illness Training: Created a person-centered training with embedded lived experience stories to enhance provider compassion and competency.</p> <p>Workplace Toolkit: Released a mental well-being resource for employers across industries to build healthier workplaces.</p>	<p>Know Your Rights: Published patient rights resources covering minors, involuntary care, parity, and autonomy—putting vital protections in public hands.</p> <p>Internship Program: Providing experience to students in social work, policy, law, and public health to cultivate the next generation of health advocates.</p>

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 spotlighted the legislative victories we secured in 2024. This month, we're highlighting how we're changing practices—ensuring that policy wins are implemented effectively and equitably across Colorado.

In 2024, Mental Health Colorado, as part of our Care Not Cuffs effort, helped launch Safer—a supportive sheltering and jail diversion program for justice-involved individuals with mental health conditions. We developed a new person-centered training for providers on Serious Mental Illness and released a mental well-being toolkit for employers to build healthier workplaces. We also expanded access to critical information and opportunity—developing Know Your Rights resources and growing our internship program to prepare the next generation of health advocates.

Through education, innovation, and collaboration, we’re reshaping systems to better serve all Coloradans. Next month, we’ll share how we’re building the movement to amplify these efforts. Thank you for being part of the change.

To continue supporting this important mission, please consider making a contribution today or becoming a monthly sustaining donor for as little as \$5/month. Every dollar counts in our shared mission to increase access to housing, healthcare, supports and services and end health-based discrimination. [Donate here!](#)

Events



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

- Access and Campus Engagement
UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO DENVER
- Center for Faculty Development & Advancement
UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO DENVER | ANSCHUTZ MEDICAL CAMPUS
- Center for Bioethics and Humanities
UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO ANSCHUTZ MEDICAL CAMPUS
- President's Innovation Fund for Development and Support
CU Anschutz
Office of Research Services
CU Denver
- College of Arts & Media
UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO DENVER
- ROCKLEY Family FOUNDATION

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.



The banner features the Denver Business Journal logo at the top left, followed by the event title "WOMEN'S HEALTH SUMMIT" in large, colorful letters. Below the title is the "PRESENTED BY" logo for Intermountain Health. To the right is a QR code and the event details: "SEAWELL BALLROOM AT THE DCPA", "1350 Arapahoe St, Denver, CO 80204", "MAY 15, 2025", and "11:00AM -1:00PM". A blue and purple gradient bar at the bottom contains the text: "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 (either the \$95 early bird rate or \$125 standard rate). *Early bird pricing ends April 4, 2025—act soon!*

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

A special thank you to our 2025 Elite Sponsor, Rocky Mountain Health Plans!



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