

Strengthening Colorado's Mental Health System A Plan to Safeguard all Coloradans

Trauma-informed Care

The Department of Human Services is changing the way staff engages with clients and patients. This new way of serving Coloradans is known as Trauma-informed Care.

Trauma-informed Care recognizes that physical interactions with patients can actually trigger reactions related to previous trauma and can cause crisis situations to escalate. Essentially, previous approaches tried to answer the question “What is wrong with you?” whereas Trauma-informed Care compassionately asks “What happened to you in the past?”

Studies show that:

- 90 percent of public mental health clients have been exposed to trauma.
- Up to 66 percent of individuals in substance use disorder treatment report childhood abuse and/or neglect.
- 55 percent to 99 percent of women with substance use disorders have a lifetime history of trauma, and 50 percent of women in treatment have a history of rape or incest.
- Being abused or neglected as a child increases the likelihood of arrest as a juvenile by 59 percent.
- 70 percent of youth in residential placement have had some type of past trauma.

Statewide Trauma-informed care approaches will include:

Trauma support groups – Networks for individuals who have experienced similar traumatic incidents will be available to share experiences and work with individuals in need to help them through the healing process.

Peer Support Specialists – A select group of individuals who have been successfully rehabilitated will be available within the state’s mental health institutes to provide supports to those experiencing mental health crises.

De-Escalation Rooms – A series of remodeled rooms at the mental health institutes will be designed to allow someone experiencing an escalated crisis to calm themselves down. The rooms include calming colors and music and are used in place of aggressive restraints and/or sterile seclusion rooms.

Trauma-informed Care is being introduced throughout CDHS, and already has been shown to reduce the use of restraint and seclusion, as well as instances of patient to staff assault and workers' compensation cases.

The Governor's budget request for Trauma-informed Care is \$911,865. In addition, the Governor's budget request includes \$480,000 for a consolidated mental health/substance abuse treatment computer data system.

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