



COLORADO
Governor Jared Polis

Ensuring that Coloradans have easy access to mental and behavioral health care services has been a priority for the Polis administration since day one. In 2019, just months after taking office, Governor Polis established the Behavioral Health Task Force, bringing together stakeholders and leaders at the state level, to determine how to best streamline Colorado's behavioral health system in a way that cuts through bureaucracy, increases efficiency, and puts people first. This already urgent issue was made even more so by the global pandemic, which is why Governor Polis and the entire administration partnered with Colorado lawmakers to make historic investments that will transform our behavioral health system, and ensure Coloradans can get the care they need, when they need it.

How the Polis Administration is Supporting Behavioral Health

The administration and legislature created the **Behavioral Health Administration**, as part of the transformational change being made in Colorado's Behavioral Health System by the Polis-Primavera Administration, such as our convening of the Behavioral Health Task Force, the creation of the Behavioral Health Administration, and making key investments with the once-in-a-generation funding as part of American Rescue Plan Act funds leveraged with local and other funds, including opioid settlement dollars, to address structural gaps in our behavioral health continuum.

State Stimulus: \$8.7 million to expand access to mental health sessions through the Temporary Youth Mental Health Services program. (House Bill 21-1258)

- \$1 million to support people who have lost employment as a result of the pandemic access behavioral health benefits and resource navigation services through 2-1-1 (Senate Bill 21-239)

Federal Stimulus: The Polis-Primavera administration has heard from community leaders and stakeholders from across the state that we must seize the opportunity and use this once in a generation federal funding to make transformational change on some of our state's toughest challenges. That's why we chose to invest a significant amount of these funds into our mental and behavioral health system.

- More than 1/3 of federal relief funds are being invested in budget integrity, securing Colorado's budget in the near-term and ensuring essential services, like mental and behavioral health, are not at risk of being cut.
- This year Colorado increased the number of Coloradans who are able to access behavioral health care by investing roughly \$100 million in infrastructure and workforce capacity needs, existing effective programs, as well as addressing and preventing substance use.
- Roughly \$450 million is set aside for the upcoming legislative interim process. Through this process, recommendations will be made to the General Assembly for the 2022

session, with the goal of building a behavioral and mental health system that provides the appropriate level of treatment to every Coloradan who needs care.

Legislative Accomplishments

- HB21-1097 creates the Behavioral Health Administration, as recommended by the Behavioral Health Taskforce, which will provide leadership and help to unify and streamline our state's behavioral health system.
- SB21-137 appropriated \$95,800,000 for various behavioral health programs and services, including:
 - Continuing the Maternal and Child Health Pilot Program;
 - \$4,000,000 for the housing assistance program
 - \$1,600,000 for the recovery support services grant program;
 - \$50,000 for rural behavioral health vouchers;
 - \$200,000 for treatment and detoxification programs;
 - \$200,000 for recovery residence certification;
 - \$10,000,000 to increase access to effective substance use disorder treatment and recovery;
 - \$2,000,000 for services provided to school-aged children and parents by community mental health center school-based clinicians and prevention specialists;
 - \$5,000,000 for Colorado crisis system services in response to the effect of COVID-19 on the behavioral health of Colorado residents, including statewide access to crisis system services for children and youth;
 - \$2,000,000 for behavioral health and substance use disorder treatment for children, youth, and their families;
 - \$1,000,000 for a mental health awareness campaign;
 - \$18,000,000 for the workforce development program;
 - \$26,000,000 for statewide care coordination infrastructure;
 - \$9,000,000 for the county-based behavioral health grant program;
 - \$500,000 for community transition services for guardianship services for individuals transitioning out of mental health institutes;
 - \$5,000,000 for jail based behavioral health services;
 - \$3,250,000 for community mental health centers for unanticipated services and expenses related to COVID-19, including capacity building and strategies to address the direct care workforce for the purpose of increasing access to meet the growing demand for services; and
 - \$5,000,000 for a pilot program for residential placement of children and youth with high acuity physical, mental, or behavioral health needs.
 - \$3,000,000 to the High-risk Families Cash Fund
- HB21-1021 expands support and training for Peer Counselors in order to increase access to substance abuse recovery services
- HB21-1068 requires state regulated private health insurance to cover a preventive, annual mental health wellness exam at no out of pocket cost to the covered person.

- [HB21-1085](#) provides urgent transportation for individuals experiencing a behavioral health crisis.
- [HB21-1130](#) expands the community transition specialist program to individuals who are receiving voluntary behavioral health or substance abuse services.
- [HB21-1276](#) addresses the opioid crisis by authorizing coverage of alternative therapies in lieu of opioid prescriptions, and also requires prescribers to check the Prescription Drug Assistance Program the first time they prescribe a controlled substance for a patient. This bill also requires the Office of Behavioral Health to convene institutions of higher education, nonprofit agencies, and state agencies to gather feedback on evidence-based prevention practices.
- [SB21-239](#) requires the hiring of specialized personnel to Colorado 2-1-1 who can refer individuals to behavioral health services.
- [SB21-129](#) establishes a pilot program in El Paso County that will serve up to 700 veterans by providing free behavioral health services.
- [SB21-154](#) engages Colorado in the federal effort to create a national Suicide Prevention Lifeline Network
- [HB21-1305](#) requires the Office of Behavioral Health to specify the education requirements for licensed addiction counselors, and establishes new clinical supervision requirements for addiction counselors, updates scope of practice for a certified addiction technician and moves addiction counselor continuing competency program back to the Colorado Department of Regulatory Agencies.