

Gov. Polis, CDHS announce Colorado's Behavioral Health Task Force

DENVER - Gov. Polis and the Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS) announced Colorado's Behavioral Health Task Force today. This task force will evaluate and set the roadmap to improve the current behavioral health system in the state. This includes developing Colorado's "Behavioral Health Blueprint" by June 2020 with anticipated implementation of recommendations starting in July 2020.

"Simply put, we need to do a better job serving those Colorado struggling with behavioral health," said Governor Jared Polis. "We can and must do better to transform our system for Coloradans living with a behavioral health condition so they can access affordable, high-quality, and patient-centric treatment. This new task force will be critical in developing a statewide strategy to make these reforms."

Colorado dedicates more than \$1 billion annually to its behavioral health system. Yet, many national rankings place Colorado in the bottom quarter of states when evaluating the quality of behavioral health care provided to residents. Colorado ranked 43rd out of 50 states on Mental Health of America's 2018 rankings for the prevalence of mental illness and access to care. Colorado also has among the highest suicide rates in the country.

"Colorado's behavioral health system is past due for a new blueprint," said CDHS Executive Director Michelle Barnes. "Coloradans who need access to mental health care should not have to struggle to obtain it. I am excited to chair the new Behavioral Health Task Force's effort in creating a plan that provides people with the help they need in a timely and impactful manner."

The task force will include members who represent diverse and balanced perspectives with respect to these issues such as consumers and families who are dealing with mental health issues, key executive agencies representing state and local government, criminal justice experts, advocacy groups, behavioral health experts, and consumers.

Read the full letter [here](#).