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This newsletter is a new service from the Colorado Behavioral Healthcare Council. This information will help improve awareness, understanding and support for the thousands of our friends, family, and co-workers who face behavioral health issues today and the thousands of other people who will face these challenges in the future. This newsletter will help us all learn more about the issues and opportunities that face Colorado's citizens and policymakers.

Healthcare Integration Showing Promise In Colorado

Emerging Trend Reducing Costs, Improving Access and Quality of Care

Several healthcare providers across Colorado are embracing the trend of greater collaboration among physicians, psychiatrists, and other mental health professionals. These innovative partnerships, which focus on treating the whole person and in some cases the entire family, are demonstrating the many benefits of integrated healthcare.

Research has shown that when physicians and psychiatrists collaborate on patient care, it improves access, patient satisfaction, provider satisfaction, patient adherence, clinical outcomes, maintained improvement, cost effectiveness, and cost offsets. To realize these benefits, Colorado's community mental health system is forging new relationships with physicians, pediatricians, and substance abuse providers across the state to serve the need and capitalize on the opportunity.



Integrated healthcare promotes access, earlier interventions, and coordinated treatment. It also improves outcomes, while making effective use of scarce public resources.

"People with untreated mental illness consume much more medical care than the average individual," said George DelGrosso, Executive Director of the Colorado Behavioral Healthcare Council (CBHC). "Many people who have a physical condition, such as heart disease or cancer, often are grappling with a mental disorder such as depression, which complicates the recovery and adds to the overall treatment cost. As Colorado evaluates ways to improve healthcare coverage and services, greater healthcare integration represents an enormous opportunity."

People with severe and persistent mental illness often have co-morbid conditions, such as diabetes, heart disease, or alcoholism that go undetected, yet complicate the care of this population, DelGrosso said. As a result, these patients are driving up the cost of the healthcare system and they have shorter life spans on average than people without mental illness.

Plus, most people who are covered by Medicaid must visit separate health providers for help with substance abuse, mental health, and physical health issues. This fragmentation often is expensive and the care is not as effective, which compounds the problems over time.

Colorado's community mental health system has developed numerous partnerships across the state to deliver integrated healthcare programs in rural and urban settings. Future editions of this newsletter will explore examples of collaboration and integration between our community mental health centers and others in the healthcare community, including physicians, hospitals, long-term care facilities, and others. It also will explore programs and partnerships with our public schools, courts, probation, law enforcement, and others.

For more information about these topics and others, please contact the Colorado Behavioral Healthcare Council at 303-832-7594.

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CBHC is a nonprofit membership organization that represents Colorado's statewide network of community behavioral healthcare providers (including 17 community mental health centers, two specialty clinics, and five behavioral health organizations). Members contract with the State of Colorado and work together to provide comprehensive, community-based behavioral and psychiatric services to more than 83,000 people across the state. CBHC members provide a network of skilled therapeutic and community resources to meet the mental health need of individuals and families. Thousands of people, once isolated and disabled by mental illness, are now leading productive and satisfying lives thanks to Colorado's award-winning community mental health system. For more information, visit www.cbhc.org.

Please forward this newsletter to your friends, family, and colleagues who might benefit from this information.