

Fund the Safety Net

The problem: The state's budget shortfall will force legislators to make difficult choices among critically important programs and services. While recognizing the value of other government functions, we respectfully note that safety net behavioral health provider rates have never kept pace with inflation. The cost of delivering care has increased still more because of the need to comply with a complex new state regulatory structure. In addition, funding for the Behavioral Health Administration (BHA) has not been adjusted to reflect the addition of new providers, new services, and new requirements. Finally, the new Medicaid Prospective Payment System (PPS) for behavioral health providers—while a welcome move in the right direction—needs ongoing refinement to ensure it accurately reflects the cost of care.

Our ask of legislators:

- Protect existing behavioral health provider rates; ensure they are not reduced in these difficult budget times.
- Ensure that progress on coverage and critical benefits for behavioral health is maintained.
- Ensure that the state's new behavioral health system is funded adequately.
 - Work with the BHA to conduct a thorough actuarial study to determine the precise long-term costs of implementing the new behavioral health system, including potential risks, the impact of inflation, and potential sources of new revenue if additional funding is required. This will ensure adequate funding is allocated to support its successful and sustainable operation.
 - As Colorado heads toward implementing new contracts for Medicaid managed care entities (regional accountable entities, or RAEs) and behavioral health coordinating entities (behavioral health administrative service organizations, or BHASOs), ensure that funding is prioritized for direct services and that Colorado is making efficient use of funding for administrative purposes.
 - Work with BHA and HCPF to identify ways for current budgets to go further—e.g., by reducing the regulatory infrastructure that creates news costs for the state as well as providers.
 - Monitor the impact of the new Medicaid PPS on safety net providers' ability to deliver services.
- Ensure all who qualify for Medicaid are enrolled.
 - Enable comprehensive behavioral health providers to become Medicaid eligibility determination or enrollment sites.
- Maximize federal funds.
 - Monitor HCPF's development of the implementation plan for Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics (CCBHCs) (pursuant to HB 24-1384) to draw down additional federal Medicaid matching funds.
 - Partner with state agencies and the Colorado congressional delegation to protect Colorado's Medicaid system from any federal funding or program changes that would jeopardize funding or eligibility.