



## Tackling Barriers and Making Solutions Happen to Address Placement & Service Needs for High Acuity Youth

**Problem:** Many youth with highly acute behavioral health needs remain in settings that are unable to meet their needs.

**Solution:** We need to identify immediate safe and supportive solutions for these youth, while creating and strengthening a comprehensive placement and service continuum for all Colorado children and youth with highly acute behavioral health needs.

**Purpose of the Group:** Given the amount of workgroups, organizations, agencies and systems needed to make progress on this complex issue, **this high-level working group will specifically tackle barriers to implementing immediate and short-term strategies** developed by the various [ongoing and ad hoc committees and work groups](#) who are addressing different parts of the problem. This high level group will include individuals with authority within each organization and who are solutions-focused, working to solve the issue for the entire system and not just his/her/their agency or organization.

**Meetings to date:** The group has met four times between December 2022-February 2023. Recommendations and next steps will be forthcoming.

**Membership:** Representation from every key part of the systemic problem is required to solve it. Two representatives from each key organization will participate. For counties, hospitals and service providers, it is proposed that a lead for each of the membership organizations participate to be able to represent all of their members, plus one member director.

Organization	Representatives	
	Name	Role

Colorado Department of Human Services	Minna Castillo-Cohen <a href="mailto:minna.castillocohen@state.co.us">minna.castillocohen@state.co.us</a>	Director, Office of Children Youth and Families
	Anne-Marie Braga <a href="mailto:anne-marie.braga@state.co.us">anne-marie.braga@state.co.us</a>	Deputy Executive Director, Community Partnerships
Colorado Department of Health Care Policy and Financing	Michele Craig <a href="mailto:michele.craig@state.co.us">michele.craig@state.co.us</a>	Complex and Supportive Services Section Manager
	Robert Werthwein <a href="mailto:robert.werthwein@state.co.us">robert.werthwein@state.co.us</a>	Senior Advisor for Behavioral Health and Access
Colorado Behavioral Health Administration	Christine (Chris) Meyer <a href="mailto:christine.meyer@state.co.us">christine.meyer@state.co.us</a>	Senior Advisor for Children, Youth and Families
	Yumiko Dougherty <a href="mailto:yumiko.dougherty@state.co.us">yumiko.dougherty@state.co.us</a>	Division Director, Strategy Planning & Engagement
County Human Service Agencies	Heather Durosko <a href="mailto:duroskhe@co.larimer.co.us">duroskhe@co.larimer.co.us</a>	Senior Advisor, Colorado Human Services Directors Association
	Mary Berg <a href="mailto:mberg@co.jefferson.co.us">mberg@co.jefferson.co.us</a>	Director, Jefferson County Department of Human Services
Residential Service Providers	Becky Miller Updike <a href="mailto:becky@voiceforcokids.org">becky@voiceforcokids.org</a>	Executive Director, Colorado Association of Family and Children's Agencies
	Dave Eisner <a href="mailto:deisner@thirdwaycenter.org">deisner@thirdwaycenter.org</a>	Executive Director, Third Way Center
Hospitals	Megan Axelrod <a href="mailto:Megan.Axelrod@cha.com">Megan.Axelrod@cha.com</a>	Manager, Regulatory Policy at Colorado Hospital Association
	Zach Zaslow <a href="mailto:Zach.Zaslow@childrenscolorado.org">Zach.Zaslow@childrenscolorado.org</a>	Interim Vice President of Population Health & Advocacy at Children's Hospital of Colorado

**Background:** Colorado has made tremendous strides over the past decade to support child and family wellbeing and to keep families safely together. In 2022, Colorado saw the lowest number of out-of-home placements in its history, with a total of just 3,662 children and youth in out-of-home care. Of those, just 227 were placed in congregate care. When out-of-home placement is necessary, children and youth must be placed at the lowest level of care that can successfully support any treatment needs. Colorado has increasingly served a new and increasing cohort of children and youth with highly complex medical and behavioral health needs. Indeed, the population of children and youth served in residential facilities has shifted dramatically, resulting in a smaller population but one that requires more intensive staffing, treatment, and care coordination. Colorado has taken several steps to support the existing provider continuum in serving children and youth with highly acute needs, but **work remains to rightsize Colorado's various levels of care to ensure the right services are available in the right places at the right time.**