



Protect Patient Access to Prescribed Mental Health Treatments

Support the Medicaid Prior Authorization Prohibition Act (SB24-110)

The Problem – Payers Push Patients Off Critical Mental Health Treatments

Patients living with serious mental health conditions in Colorado rely on access to new and innovative treatments to address their symptoms. However, public and private payers are increasingly imposing restrictive utilization management (UM) policies that hinder access to often lifesaving or life-altering drugs.



- **Prior authorization** requires a review of a patient's health record that determines whether the prescribed drug will be dispensed. Payers often second-guess a health care provider's judgment and may not consider a patient's medical history.
- **Step therapy** requires patients to try a drug and have it fail to demonstrate effectiveness before proceeding to the next medication. Step therapy almost always requires initial generic drug usage, undermining physician's clinical judgment and patient preferences.⁴

Utilization management policies hurt patients and undermine medical decisions made by experienced physicians by:

- **Decreasing patient adherence** to often critical mental health treatments.
- **Increasing medical costs over time**¹ by eclipsing any expected savings from reduced medication use.
- **Driving patients to higher-cost settings**, including hospitals⁷ and ERs.⁸
- **Contributing to "increased incarceration rates** for people with serious mental illnesses."⁹
- **Leading to negative clinical outcomes for patients**.² Studies show that removing UM policies for patients with mental health conditions decreases hospital admissions and emergency care costs.³

The Solution – Support the Medicaid Prior Authorization Prohibition Act (SB24-110)

Colorado must streamline the way we treat serious mental health conditions by encouraging innovative solutions. Fortunately, State Senators Robert Rodriguez and Barbara Kirkmeyer recently introduced the Medicaid Prior Authorization Prohibition Act (SB24-110). This much needed legislation will:



- **Remove prior authorization and limit step therapy protocols.**
- **Lead to increased overall health outcomes** for patients suffering from mental health conditions.
- **Create significant savings in the healthcare system** and improve patient quality of life.
- **Ensure individuals with mental health conditions get the antipsychotic medication** that their health care provider believes is the right treatment for them.

SB24-110 builds on recent momentum from the passage of HB23-1130, which limits step therapy to a single trial and failure. Colorado Medicaid members should have the same medication access protections as Coloradans with commercial health plan coverage.

Join These Organizations in Supporting SB24-110:



Why It Matters:

Coloradoans Impacted by Serious Mental Health Conditions

2,574,969

Coloradoans live in a community that does not have enough mental health professionals.

945,000

Coloradoans have a mental health condition, **242,000** of which are considered serious conditions.³

9,846

Coloradoans are homeless and **1 in 4** live with a serious mental health condition.

1,282

lives were lost to suicide in Colorado in 2020 and 237,000 adults had thoughts of suicide.

By the Numbers:

Colorado Ranks Near the Bottom for Mental Healthcare Access

46th for prevalence of adults reporting an unmet treatment need.¹²

37th for the number of adults that did not receive proper treatment.

45th in the 2022 Mental Health America Overall Ranking: State of Mental Health in America.

26th in access to care.

41st for prevalence of adults with serious thoughts of suicide.

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