



**MENTAL HEALTH
COLORADO**

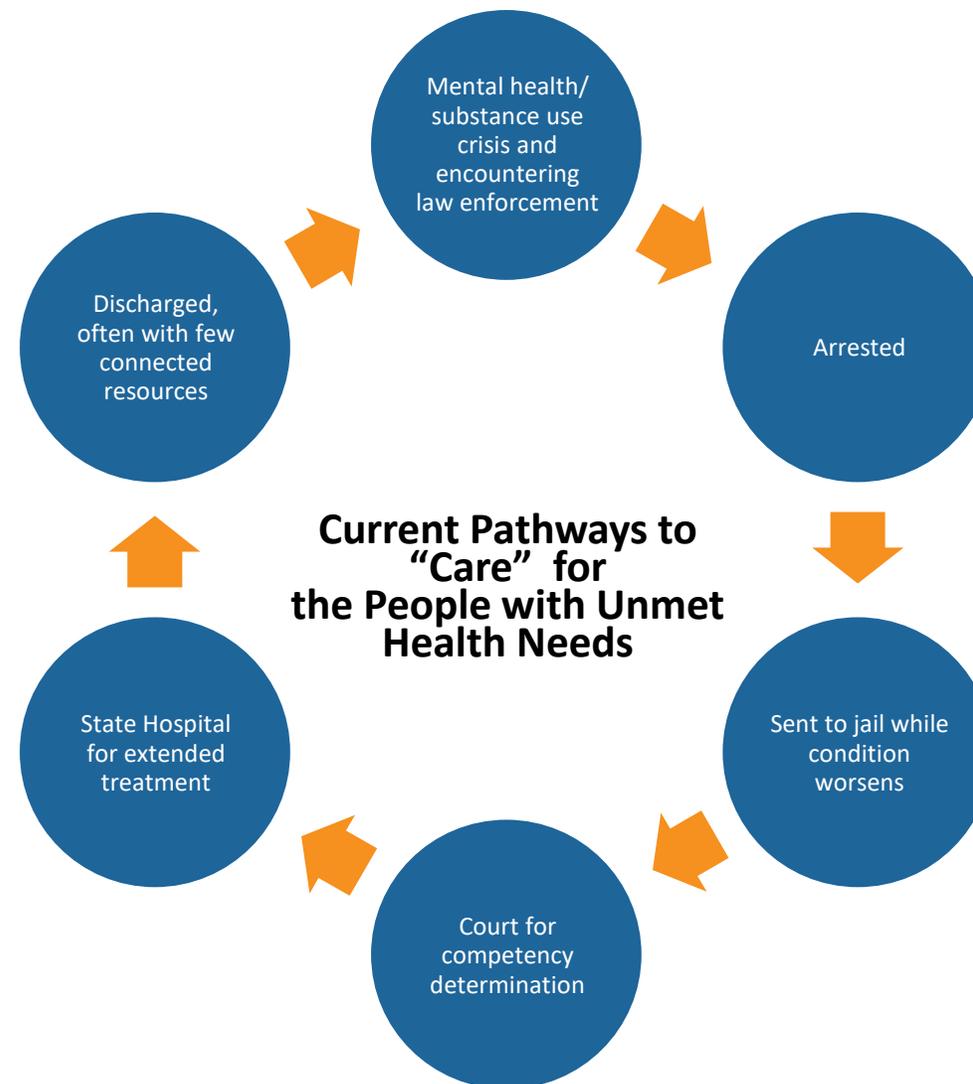
Opioid and Other Substance Use Disorders Study Committee

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The State of the State

- **36.6%** of the incarcerated population have a mental health need
 - Of those individuals, **8.1%** have serious mental illness needs
- **69.4%** have substance use needs
- **460 individuals** are on the competency backlog



Breaking the Cycle Across the State



Treatment on Demand for OUD

- Denver Health implemented a pilot that offered people with OUD to enroll in medically-assisted treatment the same day they came to the ED.
- Paired with assertive community outreach to affected communities to build trust and low-barriers to access care.
- Immediate access to a care team and buprenorphine resulted in a 13% increase in show-up rates to next-day care.



Alternative Response Model

- The Support Team Assisted Response (STAR) program pairs a behavioral health clinician with an EMT to address a mental health crisis and/or substance use needs rather than sending the police.
- Last year, STAR responded to more than 4,700 calls and provided clinical support to 1,100 people.
- A study also found that STAR reduced lower-level crime, more individuals were referred to care, and there was evident cost savings to the city.



Competency Support in the Courts

- The Eighth Judicial District created a special “competency court,” where defendants facing mid-level felony charges are supported by a team of mental health professionals who work together with the judge, defense attorneys, and prosecutors to reduce delays and restore defendants to competency in the least restrictive setting.
- This model has resulted in 159 clients receiving competency evaluations in the community, meaning individuals do not have to wait in jail for this service.



Short-term Supportive Housing

- SAFER Colorado provides short-term housing in a hotel setting with the goals of health stabilization, basic resource access assistance, employment assistance, and next-step housing for unhoused individuals experiencing mental health and/or substance use concerns at risk of or experiencing justice system involvement.
- To date, SAFER has supported 178 individuals in Arapaho County, helping individuals connect with longer-term housing, health care, support and services.

What's Missing

- **Policies – Make it easier to get into treatment in the least restrictive setting**
 - Expedite assertive community treatment and on-demand treatment in a variety of settings (EDs, primary care, pharmacy)
 - Eliminate Cash Bond
 - Disallow restrictive admission criteria in publicly funded detoxes and inpatient facilities
 - End warrant checks in healthcare settings
 - Eliminate laws that criminalize people for symptoms of health conditions and disincentivize people to seek care
 - Long-term inpatient stays for mental health clients enrolled in Medicaid and end the cycle of hospitalization to homelessness (IMD exclusion)
 - A recent cost analysis of removing the IMD exclusion and allowing patients to exceed the 15-day limit projected the annual expense to be **\$7.2 million.**
 - <https://hcpf.colorado.gov/sites/hcpf/files/Final%201115%20IMD%20Fiscal%20Analysis.pdf>
- **Treatment Gaps – Safe and therapeutic locations**
 - **24/7 Crisis/redirection centers specifically created for law enforcement to drop off individuals in lieu of arrest.** Centers would be 27-65 designated and would be run by clinical staff with no law enforcement involvement. Individuals could get set up with services, ongoing care, and care coordination. The center would have the ability to place individuals with higher levels of care if that is appropriate. The State would set admission and discharge criteria.
 - **Peer respite homes** like Afiyah House (<https://wildfloweralliance.org/afiya/>)
 - **Housing** – especially for specific groups like convicted sex offenders
 - **Overdose Prevention Centers**

Bridging the Gap

- HB23-1138 – This legislation created a statutory pathway for individuals to have their charges dropped and instead enter the civil mental health treatment system (voluntary or involuntary treatment). It only applies to individuals found incompetent to proceed.

**We need this pathway for all involved in the criminal justice system
AND we need treatment locations that will serve them.**

In Summary

- Colorado must shift its perspective to reduce barriers to treatment in the least restrictive setting.
- Colorado must focus efforts on the full continuum of care in the right settings at the right time.
- Colorado must prioritize care, not cuffs.

Thank you!

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