

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



LARIMER COUNTY COMMUNITY MASTER PLAN FOR BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

## Changing the Paradigm



mental health  
**MATTERS**  
LARIMER COUNTY

Larimer County, Colorado

August 2018

<http://LarimerCountyMentalHealth.info>

# Acknowledgements

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# Executive Summary

Larimer County is taking a bold stand to ensure that our community members have access to critically needed behavioral health resources and services. The County's objective: to facilitate quality behavioral health care to meet the needs of residents, at the right level of care, at the right time, and at the right cost.

Over the last several years, local and national behavioral health experts, Larimer County citizens, and other key stakeholders took a close look at the behavioral health resources and services available in our community, and came to a key finding that should concern everyone:

**While many quality services currently exist in our community, Larimer County does *not* have a continuum of behavioral health treatment and support services that is sufficient to meet the needs of our residents.<sup>1</sup>**

Drilling down into the numbers, that means in 2016, *more than 26,000 Larimer County residents did not get the behavioral health treatment they needed.* These residents—our family members, friends, schoolmates, neighbors, and co-workers—had no choice but to continue to suffer from untreated depression, anxiety, bi-polar disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, alcohol and substance use disorders, and other issues. The cost of untreated behavioral health issues to residents, their families, and every citizen of Larimer County is sobering: poor adolescent development, poor school and work performance, impaired relationships, exacerbated physical health issues, incarceration, increased jail and court costs, and a suicide rate that is among the highest in the U.S.

This report, the *Larimer County Community Master Plan for Behavioral Health: Changing the Paradigm*, lays out a strategic plan to positively impact our community's behavioral health with a 20-year investment in our community. This effort is *not* about growing County government. Instead, through a thoughtful and participatory process, Larimer County will facilitate the implementation of a strategic blueprint to invest in our citizen's health and the health of our County.

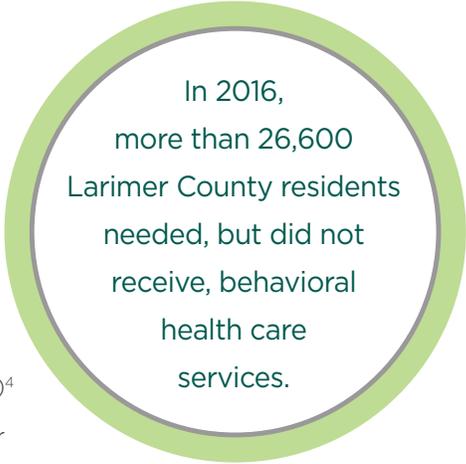


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## The Need for Services is Real

Behavioral health includes promoting well-being by preventing or intervening in mental illnesses as well as substance use disorders (commonly known as addiction). All of these can have a profound influence on well-being and are not rare conditions. Indeed, behavioral health disorders are quite common nationwide and in Larimer County.

- Nationally, 1 in 5 individuals have a mental illness<sup>2</sup>
- Depression is the leading cause of disability worldwide<sup>3</sup>
- In Larimer County, an estimated 41,000 residents have a mental illness and 30,000 have a substance use disorder (and many suffer from both conditions)<sup>4</sup>
- 14% of Larimer County residents report experiencing eight or more days of poor mental health in the previous 30 days<sup>5</sup>



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Behavioral health disorders can take a particular toll on youth:

- Depression has a significant impact on adolescent development and well-being: it can adversely affect school and work performance, impair peer and family relationships, and exacerbate other health conditions, including asthma and obesity<sup>6 7 8</sup>
- Depressive episodes often persist, recur, or continue into adulthood<sup>9</sup>
- Youths who have had a major depressive episode in the past year are at greater risk for suicide and are more likely than other youths to initiate alcohol and other drug use, experience concurrent substance use disorders, and smoke daily<sup>10 11 12</sup>

However, despite all of this, we know that treatment works: 70-90% of individuals with mental illness see an improvement in their symptoms and quality of life after participating in treatment.<sup>13</sup>

## Significant Gaps Exist Within Our Community

Behavioral health issues are complex diseases that require individualized treatment approaches tailored to the person's severity of disease and specific health care needs, just like any other chronic health condition. This requires a system of care that has a range of levels and types of care available to appropriately meet the needs of patients accessing the system. When appropriate levels of care are not available, individuals often go untreated or receive limited or fragmented treatment, resulting in the utilization of more costly services in hospitals, emergency departments, crisis care, and the County jail.

Mental illness and addiction treatment services are tragically underfunded and not available to many residents:

- In 2016, more than 26,600 Larimer County residents needed, but did not receive, behavioral health care services<sup>14</sup>
- In Larimer County, many types and levels of care simply do not exist, payment options are limited including high out of pocket costs or insurance coverage is not available, and long wait times for services are ever present
- Of Colorado youths that had a major depressive episode in the past year,<sup>15</sup> 58.7% did not receive treatment<sup>16</sup>

Although Larimer County has many quality services, it does not currently have the range of services needed, nor does it have a centralized facility or "hub" where crisis and coordinated care can be effectively and efficiently managed for all the residents of Larimer County. A broader care continuum that is both distributed throughout Larimer County, and the communities that compose the County, and available through a centralized facility needs to be available to meet the needs of thousands of residents who need mental health and addiction services.

## Changing the Paradigm

We've known about the growing behavioral health issues and service needs in our County (and the country) for a long time. If the solutions were simple, we would have already fixed these problems. A long-term, multi-pronged solution will require more resources and effort than one organization or municipality can provide. Accordingly, the plan presented in



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this report represents the work of many individuals and organizations that, over the last several years, studied the issues and worked together to develop solutions.

In 2013, as part of Larimer County's most recent 5-year strategic planning process, more than 300 citizens came together to identify the most pressing needs in our community; they identified "public safety and community health" as a core mission and mandate of Larimer County

The Board of County Commissioners resolved to address the complex community challenge of improving mental health and addiction services through the *Larimer County Strategic Plan* covering 2013 to 2018

Perhaps most influential in the design of this plan has been the work of the Community Mental Health and Substance Use Alliance (MHSU Alliance), a partnership of local organizations. Studying the issue with help from a national consulting firm, the NIATx Foundation, the MHSU Alliance produced a comprehensive report, *What Will It Take?: Solutions for Mental Health Service Gaps in Larimer County*. It was their work that produced the key finding that Larimer County does not have an adequate continuum of services

The MHSU Alliance's report recommended the development and expansion of treatment capacity

to provide services for more than 5,000 residents each year, with funds earmarked for a distributed service model through community-based services (including early identification and intervention services, suicide prevention programs, expansion of outpatient services and supportive-housing, and ongoing assistance for those with more intensive needs), and the development of a 24/7 Behavioral Health Services Center, which would become the hub for crisis and withdrawal management (detox) services, as well as coordinated care.<sup>17</sup>

Following the Alliance's seminal report, key stakeholders in Larimer County collaborated to orchestrate this plan, the *Larimer County Community Master Plan for Behavioral Health: Changing the Paradigm*. Those involved included national and local experts, licensed community providers (mental, behavioral and primary care health fields), representatives from municipalities and educational communities, consumers, family members, and other community members.

The collaborators assessed and incorporated nationally recognized best-practice models and continuums of care, such as those from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and the American Society of Addiction Medicine. SAMHSA's Law Enforcement Sequential Intercept model, which offers a framework for interface and diversion, as well as current Larimer County programs, also informed the process.

County staff also held or attended more than 300 meetings with key stakeholders and provided more than 250 community presentations. In addition, more than 600 surveys were completed by community members and behavioral health providers. Among other items, these shareholders repeatedly highlighted meeting the needs of youth, prevention and early identification and intervention services.

### **The Larimer County Community Master Plan for Behavioral Health**

The *Larimer County Community Master Plan for Behavioral Health* establishes a strategic outline for continuous progress and advancement toward improving the community's connectedness, resilience and overall health, lessening inequity in access to care, and ensuring the efficiency of behavioral health services. The plan follows a three-pronged approach:

1. Expand and enrich local behavioral health services across the County (Distributive Services)
2. Facilitate connections between community-based services with services/providers in a centralized facility providing a stronger care coordination system and building transition bridges across providers and services in and outside of the facility (Distributive and In-Facility Services)
3. Build a regional behavioral health facility to provide coordinated care and crisis services (Facility Services)

Within these three approaches, a variety of programs, services, and activities could be funded that will further our goals in the areas of Promotion, Prevention, Treatment, Recovery, Health and Wellness Maintenance, and Support Services.

In addition to outlining the steps above, a significant foundation has been laid for other aspects of the plan:

- The Larimer County Board of County Commissioners earmarked land at the intersection of South Taft Hill Road and Trilby Road for a new behavioral health facility
- A five-year estimated budget has been compiled by the Larimer County Offices of Finance and Budget utilizing significant data gathered through and by Larimer County, the Mental Health and Substance Use Alliance, and the NIATx Foundation
- A resolution describing a proposal for the imposition of a 0.25% County-wide sales and use tax for the purpose of providing mental health care services for residents of Larimer County was referred to the November 2018 ballot by the Larimer County Board of Commissioners in July 2018.

Moving forward with these plans hinges on voter's approval of this new, long-term (20 year) dedicated behavioral health funding stream.

One way or another, we all pay for a lack of comprehensive behavioral health services in our community. With the support of residents, municipalities, and key shareholders, Larimer County intends to change the behavioral health paradigm and facilitate meeting the behavioral health needs of Northern Colorado citizens.



## (Endnotes)

- <sup>1</sup> Mental Health and Substance Use Alliance *What Will It Take?: Solutions to Mental Health Service Gaps in Larimer County*, Executive Summary, page 3.
- <sup>2</sup> June 22, 2018 Retrieved from <https://www.nami.org/Learn-More/Mental-Health-By-the-Numbers>.
- <sup>3</sup> June 22, 2018 Retrieved from <https://www.nami.org/Learn-More/Mental-Health-By-the-Numbers>.
- <sup>4</sup> Mental Health and Substance Use Alliance, 2016 Report.
- <sup>5</sup> Health District of Northern Larimer County, 2016 Health Survey, <https://www.healthdistrict.org/sites/default/files/2016-survey-mentalhealth-factheet-20180313.pdf>.
- <sup>6</sup> Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Office of Applied Studies. (2008). The NSDUH report: Major depressive episode among youths aged 12 to 17 in the United States: 2004 to 2006. Rockville, MD: Office of Applied Studies. Retrieved from <https://ntrl.ntis.gov/NTRL/dashboard/searchResults/titleDetail/PB2009115665.xhtml>
- <sup>7</sup> Van Lieshout, R. J., & MacQueen, G. (2008). Psychological factors in asthma. *Allergy, Asthma and Clinical Immunology*, 4 (1), 12-28.
- <sup>8</sup> Goodman, E., & Whitaker, R. C. (2007). A prospective study of the role of depression in the development and persistence of adolescent obesity. *Pediatrics*, 110 (3), 497-504.
- <sup>9</sup> Weissman, M. M., Wolk, S., Goldstein, R. B., Moreau, D., Adams, P., Greenwald, S., & Wickramaratne, P. (1999). Depressed adolescents grown up. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 282, 1701-1713.
- <sup>10</sup> Shaffer, D., Gould, M. S., Fisher, P., Trautman, P., Moreau, D., Kleinman, M., & Flory, M. (1996). Psychiatric diagnosis in child and adolescent suicide. *Archives of General Psychiatry*, 53, 339-348. Retrieved from <http://archpsyc.ama-assn.org/cgi/content/abstract/53/4/339>.
- <sup>11</sup> Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Office of Applied Studies. (2007). *The NSDUH report: Depression and the initiation of alcohol and other drug use among youths aged 12 to 17*. Rockville, MD: Author.
- <sup>12</sup> Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality. (2016). *Key substance use and mental health indicators in the United States: Results from the 2015 National Survey on Drug Use and Health* (HHS Publication No. SMA 16-4984, NSDUH Series H-51). Retrieved from <http://www.samhsa.gov/data/>.
- <sup>13</sup> June 25, 2018, Retrieved from Mental Health Cooperative, <https://mhc-tn.org/about-mental-illness/facts-stats>.
- <sup>14</sup> Mental Health and Substance Use Alliance *What Will It Take?: Solutions to Mental Health Service Gaps in Larimer County*, Executive Summary, page 3.
- <sup>15</sup> SAMHSA, *Behavioral Health Barometer Colorado, Volume 4*, National Surveys on Drug Use and Health, 2011-2015, page 5.
- <sup>16</sup> SAMHSA, *Behavioral Health Barometer Colorado, Volume 4*, National Surveys on Drug Use and Health, 2011-2015, page 6.
- <sup>17</sup> Mental Health and Substance Use Alliance *What Will It Take?: Solutions to Mental Health Service Gaps in Larimer County*, Executive Summary, page 3.

