

Background

- Colorado ranks 46th out of 50 states and District of Columbia for prevalence of mental illness and access to care for adults in children¹
- Our state ranks 50th in prevalence of mental illness, but 17th in terms of access to care¹
- Between 2020 and 2024, suicide rate in Colorado was 21.93/100k, in Chaffee County it was near double (40.64)²
- 23.2% of Upper Arkansas Valley residents reported 8+ days of poor mental health in the past month, and 15.4% needed care and could not get it. 39.6% cited not being able to get an appointment, and 55.9% cited cost³
- Every county in Colorado (except Larimer County) is considered a mental health professional shortage area⁴

Methods

- Chaffee County Behavioral Health Coalition (CCBHC) was formed in January 2025
- Joined Communication, Access to Care & Stigma Reduction workgroup
- Set goals of improving behavioral healthcare in Chaffee County
 - Improve Chaffee Resources website, promote resource in community areas
 - Identify areas of need
 - Define communication strategies
- Developed needs assessment survey to send out to local behavioral health providers in Chaffee County (e.g. physicians, psychologists, LCSWs, LPC)

Results

We conducted a survey to gather insights from **behavioral health providers** serving **Chaffee County**. The goal was to better understand the current landscape of behavioral health services in the region, including the populations served, common challenges, and effective communication strategies for reaching those in need.

- Survey was sent to Chaffee County behavioral health providers, data was collected from July 11th to July 25th with a total of 27 responses with 17 completed surveys (63.0% completion).

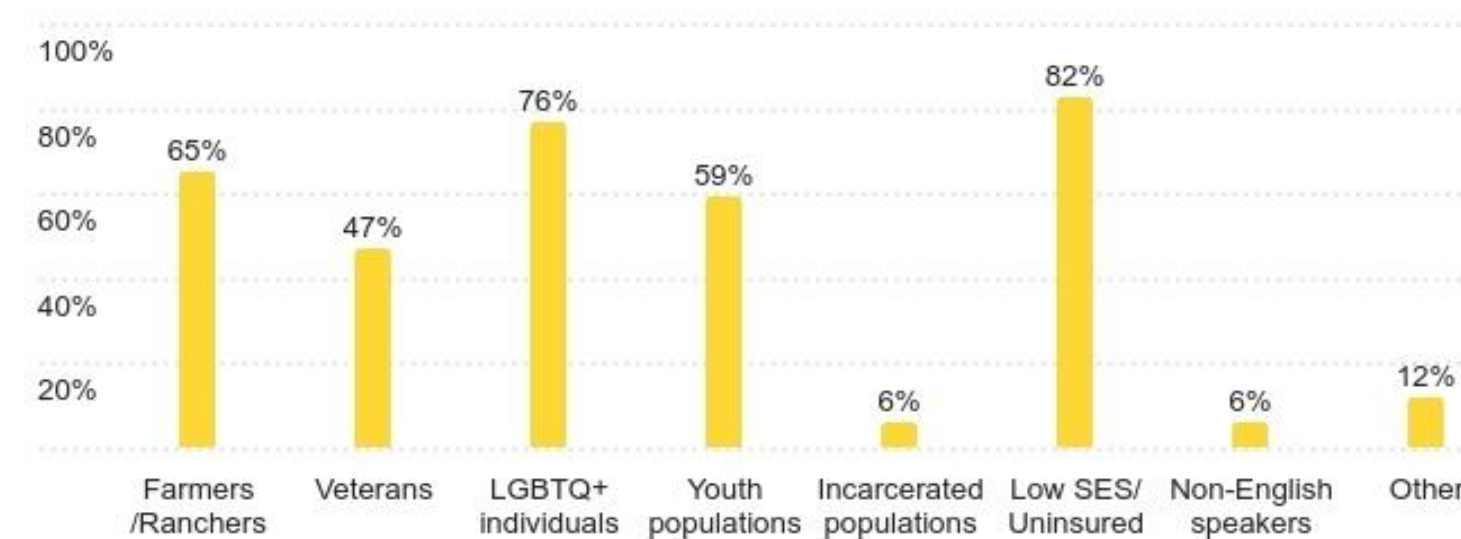


Figure 1: Populations Served by Chaffee County Behavioral Health Providers



Figure 4: Chaffee Resources flyer distributed and placed in patient rooms in Salida Health Center

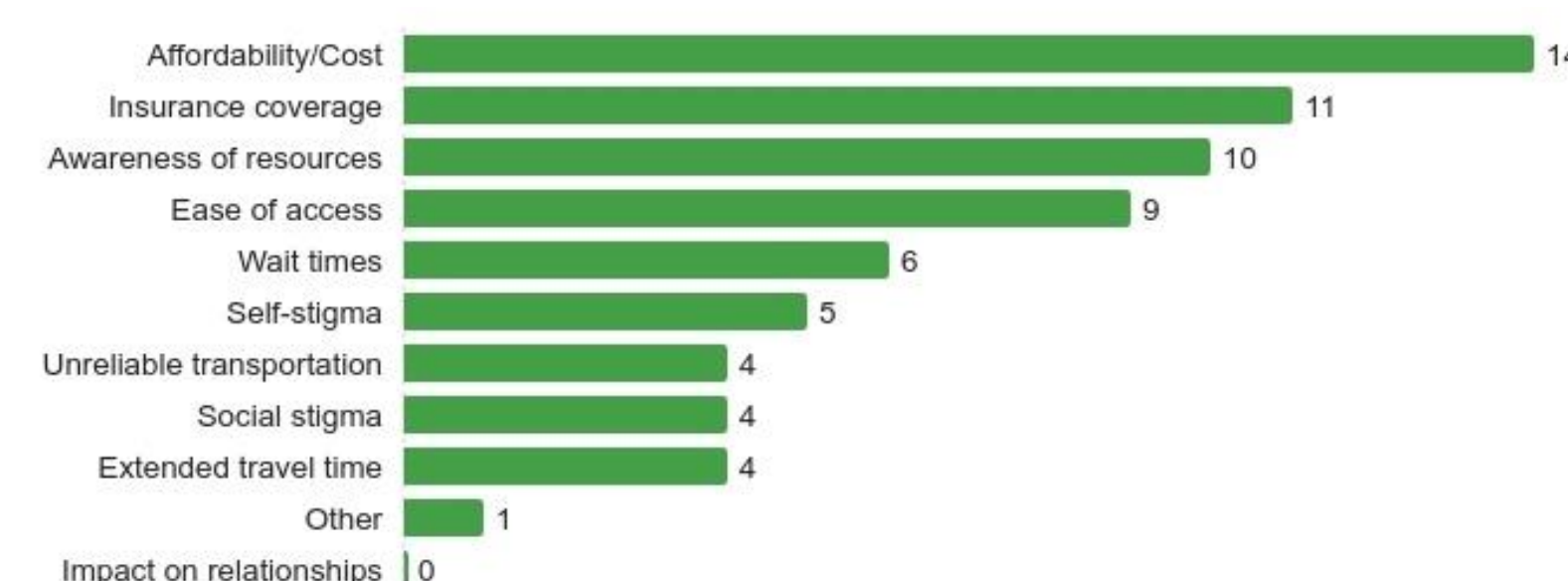


Figure 2: Provider's perspective on factors that have made it difficult for patients and clients to find or access behavioral health services in Chaffee County



Figure 3: "How has cost of behavioral healthcare affected your patient or client's ability to seek treatment? Select all that apply."

"What strategies or improvements do you recommend to enhance access to mental health and substance use services in our community?"

- Reduce cost of services, financial aid, grant funding
- County-wide list of behavioral health providers
- Increase access for in-person services
- PSAs on crisis services
- Community partnerships

"In your experience, what communication channels are most effective for reaching community members?"

- Word of mouth 11x
- Website/Social Media 4x
- Local events 3x
- PCPs 2x

Conclusions

- Colorado's paradox of high access to care but high prevalence of behavioral health problems suggests that access alone is insufficient to reduce disease burden.
- Rural populations are disproportionately affected for rates of behavioral health outcomes and face additional barriers including affordability, awareness of resources, social stigma, and physical accessibility to resources.

Current & Future Directions

- CCBHC secured \$50k grant towards improving Chaffee Resources website
- Set up two billboards on HWY 50 for Chaffee Resources to increase recognition of resource
- CCPH peer specialist in SHC
- Use survey data to better target communication avenues to reach more community members
- Promote Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic model (e.g. SolVista) in rural areas
- Advocate for increased Medicaid/Medicare expansion

Citations

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