

Colorado Providers Association

An Association of Providers Working in Substance Abuse Prevention, Intervention, Treatment and Recovery

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Substance Abuse Fact Sheet

- Substance use disorders are a leading cause of death (over 100,000 deaths annually).
- One in four deaths are attributable to alcohol and other drugs.
- Deaths from drug overdose have become the leading cause of injury death in the United States.
- Excessive alcohol use is the 3rd leading lifestyle-related cause of death in the United States.
- Barely 10% of the 23 million Americans who suffer from an SUD receive any specialty care even though SUDs are chronic diseases that can be effectively prevented and treated, and tens of millions of people are living in recovery from addiction.
- Prescription drug misuse afflicts 7 million Americans, and narcotic painkiller overdoses kill 40 every day.
- 25% of hospitalizations are directly related to substance use and/or mental health disorders.
- Three quarters of the over 7 million people in the criminal justice system have a substance use disorder and/or had alcohol or drugs in their systems at the time of arrest.
- Colorado has more significant challenges with substance addiction than most other states. Colorado ranks above the national average in every measurement for illicit drug and alcohol use and addiction. It ranks among the top ten worst in most categories when compared to other states and jurisdictions
- Treatment for substance use disorders is as effective as the treatment of other chronic diseases, saving hundreds of thousands of lives and yielding enormous cost savings for the health care, criminal justice, child welfare and social services systems.
- People in recovery from addiction face an overwhelming array of discriminatory and counter-productive barriers as a result of their addiction and/or criminal histories that make it very difficult for many to obtain employment, housing, education, benefits and other necessities of life.
- Overall, the costs of addiction are staggering. According to the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) and SAMHSA, **excessive drinking and illicit drug use cost the United States more than \$422 billion** in lost productivity and public health and safety expenses. Some estimates suggest that federal, state and local government spending as the result of SUDs annually tops more than \$460 billion.

Marijuana and Substance Abuse in Colorado

- Marijuana can be an addictive substance for both adults and adolescents.
- Legalization diminishes the perception of marijuana risks among youth.
- Marijuana can impair the neurological development of children and fetuses.
- 10% of people who use marijuana become dependent. 1 in 6 who start using in their teens become dependent. 25% of daily users become dependent.
- Marijuana involved in 20% of treatment admissions in Colorado.

Recommendations

- Support surveillance that allows the state to collect data about the affects of legalization.
- Support programs that address marijuana and other potential addictive substances including alcohol, tobacco, prescription drugs and illicit drugs.
- Support evidenced-based solutions in substance abuse prevention, intervention, treatment and recovery.
- Direct substance abuse treatment funding through Colorado's block grant funding system.
- Support existing programs and infrastructure.

Specific Opportunities to Support Prevention

1. Expand funding for the Healthy Kids Colorado Survey to examine relationships across multiple health behaviors such as the correlation between marijuana use and school performance.
2. Fund educational activities to provide information about the potential impacts of marijuana.
3. Fund local communities with grants to implement evidence-based prevention programs for underage marijuana, alcohol, prescription drug and illicit drug misuse.
4. Fund the Collaborative Management Program to support prevention, intervention and treatment of marijuana use.
5. Increase the availability of school health professionals through grants to public schools to address mental health and substance abuse prevention.
6. Expand Tony Grampsas Program Youth Services grants that target the use of marijuana, alcohol and other drugs by Colorado youth.
7. Support the Colorado Access to Recovery (ATR) Program to increase community support so that people who leave substance abuse treatment programs can continue recovery in their communities.
8. Fund the SBIRT Colorado program to help identify opportunities to improve early intervention and treatment.

Specific Opportunities to Support Treatment

1. Increase funding for substance abuse treatment through the existing Managed Service Organizations (MSOs).
2. Expand funding for the full range of SUD services at levels that cover the actual costs of treatment.
3. Leverage Proposition AA revenue to expand federal matching dollars for Medicaid and improve SUD benefits.

About COPA

The Colorado Providers Association (COPA) is a nonprofit trade association that represents providers of substance abuse prevention, intervention, treatment and recovery services. Since 1994, COPA's mission has been to provide education about substance use disorders, cultivate leadership, improve resources and promote effective use, integration and coordination of services.

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