



Colorado LINKS for Mental Health

Initiative Overview

Mission:

To promote partnerships among state agencies and key stakeholder groups by weaving together existing efforts to create a more coordinated continuum of behavioral health services for Colorado children, youth, and families.

Priorities:

- Integrate existing behavioral health efforts at the state and local level
- Engage family and youth involvement in policymaking
- Streamline and integrate budgets, funding, and finance

Partner Agencies:

- Colorado Departments of:
 - Public Health and Environment
 - Human Services
 - Education
 - Health Care Policy and Financing
 - Public Safety
- Prevention Leadership Council
- Mental Health Planning and Advisory Council
- Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health ~ Colorado Chapter
- Colorado System of Care Collaborative
- Colorado Behavioral Healthcare Council
- Mental Health America of Colorado
- Colorado Child and Adolescent Mental Health Coalition
- Center for Systems Integration

Funding:

- Grant from the Maternal and Child Health Bureau for two years of planning
- Grant from the Colorado Health Foundation for two years of implementation
- Matching funds for specific project components from the Prevention Leadership Council, the Division of Mental Health of the Colorado Department of Human Services, the Child, Adolescent and School Health Unit of the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, and the Exceptional Student Services Unit of the Colorado Department of Education

Activities: Understanding Colorado

- **Crosswalk (2006):** The research on over 80 different agencies, community-based organizations, and councils/collaboratives working on kids' behavioral health and related issues resulted in a crosswalk that mapped overlapping activities and goals.
- **Statewide Survey (2006):** A survey of behavioral health and related system staff asked participants to describe their top priorities in an ideal kids' behavioral health system, helping to establish priority issues to address.
- **Community Meetings (2006):** Five community meetings were held around the state, with over 175 participants, narrowed the priorities and identified how local communities would define the implementation of those priorities.
- **Family and Youth Focus Groups (2006):** Ten focus groups were held around the state and by teleconference helped to understand the key barriers and positive aspects of the kids' behavioral health system from their unique perspectives.
- **Social Network Survey of State Agencies (Yearly):** The network survey helps to quantify the concept of "integration" across 15 key state offices, identifying areas for improved partnership and leadership on kids' behavioral health. It is repeated every year to track state agency partnerships.

Activities: Planning Together

- **BIG Meetings (Yearly):** Each BIG Meeting has been informed by the research steps identified above. These interactive planning and education days have helped to bring together leadership and expertise in the kids' behavioral health system to plan clear and realistic steps in three priority areas to improve outcomes for kids.
- **Action Plan (2007):** Incorporating input from over 400 stakeholders, the LINKS Initiative developed an action plan around the top three kids' behavioral health priorities.

Activities: Implementing Together

- **Implementation of the Action Plan (Ongoing):** With funding from the Colorado Health Foundation, the Initiative is implementing the action plan and focusing on three priority areas to develop sustainable system improvements.
- **Statutory Chairs MOU:** An MOU is being developed between groups with state or federal mandates to work on issues relevant to kids with behavioral health needs. The MOU outlines activities to increase collaboration and communication between groups.
- **LINKING YOU (Ongoing):** To keep the many different planning groups connected and informed about each others' efforts, the LINKING YOU email provides monthly updates on key activities underway in the kids' behavioral health system. Any planning group can include their updates in the email, which is sent to hundreds of statewide behavioral health stakeholders.
- **Guidebook to Interagency Planning Efforts (Ongoing):** Identified by the BIG Meeting I participants as a needed resource, the guidebook helps interagency efforts to partner as they address specific issues in the kids' behavioral health system and related systems. The guidebook is updated twice a year and includes over thirty different interagency planning efforts.