

Mental Health and Substance Use – Position Statement

Introduction and Background

Since its inception, Caring for Colorado has valued and prioritized mental health. Through initiative and responsive grantmaking, we have consistently funded community-based, comprehensive mental health support that promotes mental wellness, prioritizes accessibility for all populations and advocates for improved mental health systems, services and coverage.

Our understanding of mental health is guided by the following:

- Mental health is fundamental to overall health.
- Mental health includes our emotional, psychological and social well-being.
- A mental health disorder/illness is a health condition that negatively impacts well-being.
- Mental and physical health are interconnected and are of equal importance.
- Mental health exists across the lifespan and should be supported at every stage.
- Mental health and access to mental health services are negatively impacted by systemic factors, including racism, classism, heterosexism, ableism and other forms of oppression.
- Mental health disorders can be prevented with comprehensive social and emotional support.
- A range of supports and practices should be considered in addressing mental health needs.
- Substance use disorders often co-occur with mental health disorders but can be experienced independently.
- Addiction is a chronic brain disease.
- Mental health and substance use disorder recovery are possible with accessible, comprehensive support.
- The mental health and substance use disorder workforce requires substantial investment in order to meet the demand for services and effect change.

Alignment with Caring for Colorado Foundation’s Purpose, Values and/or Focus Areas

Caring for Colorado funding is informed by our community engagement. Mental health and substance use continue to be of top priority and concern in communities across Colorado. Early adverse experiences are a significant contributing factor to the development of mental health and substance use disorders. Our grantmaking is directed toward prevention and early intervention efforts that aim to strengthen the factors that reduce the risk of experiencing a long-term mental health or substance use condition. We prioritize access to services, education and social connection for children and their caregivers.

Caring for Colorado Foundation’s Position

- We believe that all people have the right to mental health and substance use services and that the system should be comprehensive, promote accessibility and reduce barriers to effective person-centered care.
- We recognize mental health promotion, prevention and early intervention are critical to reducing harm and fostering long-term health and we believe they should be a primary focus of public investment.

- We know that people with mental health and/or substance use disorders are disproportionately impacted by the criminal justice system and that mass incarceration negatively affects all of us, especially children and youth. We support advocacy efforts that promote equitable access to treatment and encourage prevention and early intervention.
- We support services that are strengths-based, grounded in current best practices, prioritize community voice, promote equity and reduce stigma.
- We support organizations that recognize that mental health exists in the context of relationships such as family and peers and incorporates these relationships into services.
- We believe addiction should be recognized as a chronic medical condition. We also believe addiction is impacted by a complex interplay of individual, societal and environmental factors and that all factors should be reflected in approaches to treatment.
- We believe that prevention of and recovery from mental health and substance use disorders is possible and that services should be comprehensive, long-term and aim to increase protective factors and decrease risk factors.

Potential Use of this Statement

Caring for Colorado actively supports the prevention and early intervention of mental health problems and substance use disorders for children, youth and families in Colorado. We will use this position on mental health and substance use to reinforce our grantmaking values and the use of our funds toward perinatal, early childhood, youth and family-centered services. We will recognize this position in public comments and factor it into decisions to join collective actions, support public policy and invest in community-based work.

References:

Mental Health and Substance Use Disorders (2019, December 6) Retrieved from www.mentalhealth.gov
Brain and Addiction (2019, December 6) Retrieved from www.teensdrugabuse.gov
Policy Issues and Statements (2019, December 6) Retrieved from www.mhanational.org
Compromising Our Children's Futures (2019, December 19) Retrieved from www.ccjrc.org