

Sep 15, 2019 Sep 15, 2019

## **Mental health and a commitment to the community**

As a mission-driven behavioral health organization, our job is to save lives.

That job can be challenging, because the stigma about mental health often prevents people who struggle with anxiety, depression, addiction, ADHD, bipolar disorder, PTSD, suicidal thoughts, schizophrenia, and other forms of mental illness from reaching out for help. Studies suggest that negative attitudes toward people with mental illness are widespread. Many adolescents describe experiencing stigmatization by family members in the form of distrust, avoidance, pity and gossip. Many others experience stigma from peers leading to social rejection, or from teachers who express fear and underestimate the student's abilities. Even the health profession is not immune, since mental health is not a big priority during training for most physicians and general practitioners.

The shortage of behavioral health providers also limits access to appropriate care and treatment. This is a huge issue, not just here on the Western Slope but across Colorado, and in communities around the country. In fact, a 2016 report released by the Health Resources and Services Administration projected the supply of workers in selected behavioral health professions to be approximately 250,000 workers short of the projected demand in 2025. The need is especially acute in rural areas. The Colorado Rural Health Center reports that 22 Colorado counties do not have a licensed psychologist, and 11 counties have no inpatient mental health beds.

Mind Springs Health is committed to working with our community partners to make sure that the behavioral health safety net is there for those who need it when they need it.

Contrary to unfounded rumors, Mind Springs Health and West Springs Hospital are not going anywhere. As one of Colorado's 17 Community Mental Health Centers, it is our responsibility to provide mental health treatment and emergency services to individuals and families who are low income or not covered by insurance.

We are actively engaged in daily discussions with state and county officials, community partners and other stakeholders to make sure our community has access to appropriate care. This isn't just wishful thinking, it's our promise to our community. We continue to offer a full-range of mental health and addiction services, from emergency services to individual, family, couples and group programs for all ages.

We also offer the only psychiatric hospital between Denver and Salt Lake City. West Springs Hospital's psychiatric and medical care team includes board certified psychiatrists, psychiatric nurse practitioners, and family nurse practitioners who provide acute mental health treatment for

adults and adolescents who need hospitalization. The average length of stay for adults at West Springs Hospital is seven days — 30% less than the national average. Nationally, nearly 20% of patients are readmitted within 30 days of their discharge. At West Springs that number is just 4%.

Here's what you need to know. If you live on the Western Slope and need mental health or addiction related crisis services, call the state-designated toll-free hotline:


1-844-493-8255 or text 'TALK' to 38255.

The bottom line is simple. We know we cannot save every life, but we are determined not to fail the communities we serve. As long as we have the resources to meet the need, we will do everything we possibly can to help people struggling with mental illness receive the care they deserve. That's our mission, and that's our commitment to the community.

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