



**THE CENTER FOR MENTAL HEALTH VISITS STATE CAPITOL TO ASK LEGISLATORS TO HELP INCREASE ACCESS TO BEHAVIORAL HEALTHCARE**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE** – Montrose, CO – January 15, 2020 – The Center for Mental Health will be at the State Capitol building on Wednesday, January 15, 2020 for Colorado Behavioral Healthcare Council (CBHC) annual Lobby Day at the Capitol. This signature day for CBHC highlights the importance of Colorado’s community behavioral health system which includes The Center for Mental Health. The Center for Mental Health provides critical behavioral health services to the residents of Delta, Gunnison, Hinsdale, Montrose, Ouray, and San Miguel counties. During meetings with legislators, The Center for Mental Health will discuss mental health and substance use disorder needs with the hope of gaining support for local efforts.

This year, the Lobby Day at the Capitol will be focusing on the severe need to strengthen the system’s workforce through increased reimbursement, salaries, and retention strategies such as student loan forgiveness. Over the past 21 years, community provider inflationary increases have fallen so far behind that providers have lost more than 36.7% of their spending power as compared to the inflation rate across our state. Additionally, compared to state employee salary survey increases, community providers have lagged by 33.5%. As this issue has continued to worsen over the years, it has caused a shortage of behavioral health providers who serve our most vulnerable populations. It is crucial that efforts be taken to close this funding gap.

The Center for Mental Health will also be lobbying to increase opportunities to expand Mental Health First Aid, an eight-hour course which teaches the signs and symptoms of someone in a behavioral health crisis. Proposed legislation would appropriate funding to the Colorado Department of Education to contract for a train-the-trainer program designed to increase behavioral health training opportunities for K-12 educators and faculty. The Center for Mental Health is very pleased that this legislation will be a top priority as the bill, SB20-001, was the first to be introduced in the Senate in 2020.

The Center for Mental Health looks forward to meeting with legislators during the first days of the 2020 legislative session to ensure that Coloradans in our service area can access excellent and affordable behavioral health care. To learn more about the legislative efforts, visit [www.cbhc.org](http://www.cbhc.org).

**The Center for Mental Health is a nonprofit organization seeking to promote mental health and well-being. It provides behavioral healthcare services through more than ten facilities across 10,000 square miles serving the residents of Delta, Gunnison, Hinsdale, Montrose, Ouray, and San Miguel counties. Visit [www.centermh.org](http://www.centermh.org) to learn more.**

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