

**Pitkin County Behavioral Health Strategic Planning
Partner Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, February 12th, 2025, 11am – Noon (Virtual)**

This meeting was the continued conversation with partners across Pitkin County to discuss the behavioral health strategic planning process. Approximately 40 people participated online. This document reflects the discussion at a high level. The agenda for the meeting is [here](#); the accompanying slides are [here](#); and the recording is [here](#).

Welcome, Introductions, and the Day’s Objectives

- Summer Gathercole of SHG Advisors (SHG) kicked off the meeting by welcoming the attendees and asking them to put their name & affiliation in the chat box. Yumiko Dougherty, partnering with SHG, also introduced herself.
- Yumiko briefly reviewed how (1) the existing partners & collaboratives, and (2) the data, plans & initiatives will be integrated into this work. SHG will engage all partners to develop a shared vision, identify the strategic priorities, determine the leadership/governance structure, and explore how to continue to coordinate funding. After reviewing the timeline, Yumiko shared how the community has been engaged to date: 12 interviews completed, 3 interviews scheduled, and 6 focus groups are scheduled. SHG has been invited and has attended 5 partner meetings to date. The general focus groups are scheduled for February 28th (9-10:30am) and March 6th (2:30 – 4pm). Registration info can be found on the [Landing Page](#).

Shared Vision for Pitkin County Behavioral Health

- Yumiko reminded participants of the exercise from the December 2024 meeting where people were asked to share their vision for behavioral health in Pitkin County. Yumiko shared a word cloud that reflects the words highlighted most often during the exercise:



Yumiko then reviewed the infrastructure components that have been identified as a result of that exercise: (1) Funding, (2) Comprehensive Model, (3) Care Coordination, (4) Partnerships & Collaboration, and (5) Workforce. These components will guide our conversations in the coming months, and topics we will dig into in more detail.

Yumiko also highlighted the focus areas that will also be included in future discussions: (1) Access; (2) Substance Use; (3) Housing; (4) School-Based; and (5) Insurance. Several priority populations were also identified: (a) Marginalized populations; (b) Children, Youth, and Families; (c) Older Adults; and (d) Inmates leaving custody; those within the justice/incarceration system

Focus Topic: Behavioral Health Workforce

Summer provided a very brief overview of several national workforce initiatives. Details on those initiatives we highlighted can be found [here](#). She also noted that the National Council for Mental Wellbeing is holding a [Workforce Solutions “Jam”](#) on February 18th, 11am - Noon MT.

In the State of Colorado, Summer highlighted that the Department of Health Care Policy & Financing (HCPF) is hoping to launch a Workforce Capacity Center as part of its proposed System of Care. Additionally, the Behavioral Health Administration has an online Learning Management System called [OwnPath](#) that offers online classes on a variety of topics. The Colorado Workforce Development Council (CWDC) is also focusing on behavioral health and launched a Behavioral Health Care Sector Partnership in 2024. CWDC offers a Behavioral Health Career Pathway to provide insights into entry level, mid-level, and advanced careers in the field.

Summer reviewed that, per data provided by the Department of Public Health & Environment, Pitkin County is in a workforce shortage area. She notes that there is a Health Service Corps Scholarship for Addiction Counselors and that applications for the next round are available March 1st – 30th, 2025.

Summer and Yumiko opened up the discussion and asked the meeting participants to share what they know about local workforce initiatives in Pitkin County. Chris Elliot from Aspen School District talked a bit about their work with youth who may not be college-bound. The school district has been enhancing their career and technical education programming and also aligning with CMC in regard to its trade degrees and industry standard programs.

Sarah Fedishen from Colorado Mountain College (CMC) reviewed the myriad of efforts they are making to address the behavioral health workforce needs. CMC offers a Bachelors in Human Services at a number of their campuses and currently have about 350 students enrolled in that program. Those students are well positioned to on and get their Masters in Clinical or Mental Health if they are interested in doing so. CMC also offers Certified Addiction Technician (CAT) classes in the fall. CAT students can take advantage of financial aid and receive college credit. CMC offers Certified Addiction Specialist (CAS) classes in the spring; students receive a certificate. CAT and CAS both require field experience. CMC is promoting paid internship. There is also a partnership with local high schools so that those high school students can begin to get some college credit.

They were not able to stay on the call, however Yumiko highlighted that Valley Settlement is offering peer support in the maternal mental health area.

When asked what people would like to see in terms of workforce, the following was shared:

- Rocky Mountain Health Plans – as the RAE – is responsible for the network of providers who will be delivering care (under the aforementioned System of Care and beyond). RMHP is considering incentives and supports for the workforce. More info to come.
- Mountain Voices Project (MVP) is trying to secure funding to create a pipeline to help students/people who are curious about the behavioral health field and want to explore being a peer specialist. The training is often unpaid so MVP is exploring how to address that financial challenge.
- It was noted that the high cost of housing and high cost of living in Pitkin County is often prohibitive for students.
- Supervision is critical. There is a possibility that supervision could take place virtually, and it is worth exploring.
- The jail has GED workbooks but not a teacher. This makes it challenging for inmates who cannot read but want to earn their GED. Volunteers might be able to help address this gap.

Updates from the State

Summer very briefly reviewed some activities taking place at the State level:

- The BHA released an Request for Information (RFI) to seek information from safety net providers on the operational costs and funding needs associated with the provision of safety net services.
- The BHA is also holding meetings to review the updates to rule drafts related to CYMHTA on February 19th and 25th.
- HCPF received a \$1M CCBHC planning grant.
- A few new pieces of legislation related to behavioral health have been introduced.

Updates from Mind Springs

Hans Lutgring from Mind Springs provided an update on some of their work.

Next Steps and How to Stay Involved

Summer and Yumiko encouraged the attendees to continue to participate in the monthly meetings. They also asked that people participate in a one-on-one interview or a focus group, and encouraged people to invite them to their pre-existing meetings.

The next meeting is Wednesday, March 12th from 11am – noon. Additional details can be found on the [landing page](#).

After the Meeting

Summer sent the following email with links to all of the documents/initiatives referenced during the meeting:

Many thanks to everyone who participated in the Pitkin County Behavioral Health Strategic Planning monthly partner meeting yesterday.

We haven't had a chance to pull the meeting notes together yet, but we did want to share all of the documents and links that were referenced:

General:

- The [meeting recording](#) and [PowerPoint](#) have been uploaded to our [landing page](#).
- The landing page also includes registration links for the focus group meetings taking place on [Friday, February 28th](#) from 9-10:30am and [Thursday, March 6th](#), 2:30 - 4pm. Please note that the focus groups are for individuals/organizations who have not otherwise participated in a one-on-one interview or topic-specific focus group with SHG Advisors.

Workforce Topics:

- More details on some of the national workforce initiatives we highlighted can be found [here](#).
- The National Council for Mental Wellbeing is holding a [Workforce Solutions "Jam"](#) on February 18th, 11am - Noon MT. This is part of a monthly series.
- We talked a bit about the Behavioral Health Medicaid System of Care that is being developed by Health Care Policy & Financing for children and youth. The plan includes establishing a Workforce Capacity Center. General information about the system of care can be found [here](#). The final plan is not yet public.
- The OwnPath Learning Hub is [here](#). The classes are free so take advantage of them!
- An overview of the Behavioral Health Care Sector Partnership managed by the Colorado Workforce Development Council (CWDC) is [here](#).
- Information on Behavioral Health Career Pathways developed by CWDC is [here](#).
- Information from the Colorado Department of Public Health & Environment on how to apply for the scholarship program for addiction counseling training is [here](#). **(Applications are open from March 1st - 30th, 2025).**

Behavioral Health Meetings:

- The BHA is holding meetings to provide an overview of the revised [rule drafts](#) related to the Children and Youth Mental Health Treatment Act (CYMHTA). The meetings are [February 19th from 4-5pm](#) and [February 25th from 10:30-11:30am](#).

Legislation:

- Visit [this webpage](#) to search for legislation related to behavioral health, mental health, and substance use. After you conduct the search, be sure to select "2025 Regular Session" from the dropdown menu to view bills that have been proposed this year.



The next Pitkin County Behavioral Health Strategic Planning monthly partner meeting is Wednesday, March 12th from 11am - noon. You can register [here](#). We will add the agenda to the landing page and the calendar invitation a few days prior to the meeting.

Thank you so much!