

**Pitkin County Behavioral Health Strategic Planning  
Partner Meeting Minutes  
Wednesday, June 11<sup>th</sup>, 2025, 11am – Noon (Virtual)**

This meeting was the continued conversation with partners across Pitkin County to discuss the behavioral health strategic planning process. Approximately 20 people participated online. This document reflects the discussion at a high level. The accompanying slides are [here](#); and the recording is [here](#).

### **Overview of Behavioral Health Strategic Plan Development**

Summer Gathercole, along with her colleague Yumiko Dougherty, reviewed the agenda for the meeting, which included providing an update on the progress made and some initial recommendations that will be reflected in the strategic plan. Summer discussed the imminent launch of BHASOs on July 1st, which will oversee various behavioral health services, and mentioned the acquisition of Mind Springs by Health Solutions West, indicating that West Springs Hospital will not reopen. Summer also noted upcoming changes in state regulations affecting detox centers.

Summer emphasized the need to focus on incremental steps in the strategic plan for Pitkin County's behavioral health system, building on current efforts. Yumiko outlined five main recommendations: establishing a coordinated resource navigation system, enhancing intensive case management, strengthening the continuum of care, expanding access to services, and developing a skilled behavioral health workforce.

### **Overview of Strategic Plan Recommendations**

Yumiko outlined the components of the strategic plan recommendations, which include definitions, models, and frameworks for various service types. She noted the necessity for additional design and planning, as well as the importance of providing cost estimates and data indicators for measuring impact. The recommendations will also include both ideal and incremental approaches to implementation.

### **Strengthening Treatment and Recovery Services**

Yumiko highlighted the need to strengthen treatment and recovery services in light of reduced inpatient care options. Emphasis was placed on building local alternatives and structured interventions to support individuals in the community. Additionally, there was discussion about expanding consultation models and integrated care to improve access to psychiatry and substance use disorder treatment.

### **Recommendations for Expanding Access to Mental Health Services**

Summer highlighted the limited acceptance of commercial insurance by providers in Pitkin County, which poses a hardship for those unable to pay out of pocket. To address this, recommendations include identifying incentives for providers and leveraging the Counseling Compact to allow licensed counselors

to practice across state lines. Additionally, the Child and Youth Mental Health Treatment Act (CYMHTA) was mentioned as a funding source for non-Medicaid children in need of services.

### **Strategies for Enhancing Behavioral Health Workforce and Access**

Summer discussed the importance of addressing the behavioral healthcare workforce shortage and proposed strategies to incentivize both current and future professionals. Suggestions included early education initiatives to encourage interest in behavioral health careers and support for existing professionals facing burnout. Additionally, maximizing the impact of the Mental Health Fund and leveraging online platforms for service delivery were highlighted.

Summer also highlighted the significance of Colorado-based virtual platforms for connecting individuals, particularly those with busy lives. She also addressed a possible goal of formalizing and expanding the peer support network in Pitkin County, noting that new funding opportunities are being explored. One of the meeting participants shared insights about Garfield County's initiatives to engage high school students in healthcare professions through shadow days and internships.

### **Governance Structure Options Discussion** (Approximately 33:18 in the video)

Yumiko outlined two governance options for behavioral health initiatives in Pitkin County, focusing on centralized coordination. The first option features county-led governance with an advisory group, while the second suggests a neutral backbone organization to enhance collaboration. Summer added that there is no pre-identified backbone organization, and an RFP would be necessary to define expectations for this role. Feedback from participants is encouraged to finalize the governance structure.

Yumiko highlighted the necessity of clear communication about the various work groups and their charges. Summer proposed a quick poll using Zoom's reaction buttons to assess preferences between two options. Jenny and Jordana were invited to share insights on previous structures, emphasizing the importance of ensuring that the lead entity is well-resourced for effective oversight and decision-making.

Yumiko led a voting exercise on two governance options, asking participants to rate their preferences on a scale from zero to five. The first option, which involved county governance with an advisory group, garnered mostly scores of three and above, suggesting a general openness to the idea. In contrast, the second option, featuring a neutral backbone entity, received less favorable feedback.

### **Updates on BHASO Launch and Behavioral Health Initiatives**

The launch of BHASOs is scheduled for July 1st, and applications for regional councils are currently open, allowing community representation in behavioral health. HCPF has also drafted a system of care for Medicaid members under 21 diagnosed with mental health disorders, stemming from a 2021 lawsuit, with plans to share it publicly after quality assurance.