

# MENTAL HEALTH

## Overview

A person's physical and psychological health are interrelated. Each affects the other and both are equally important. As more research shows the impact mental health has on physical health, there has been a renewed focus on treating mental health disorders.

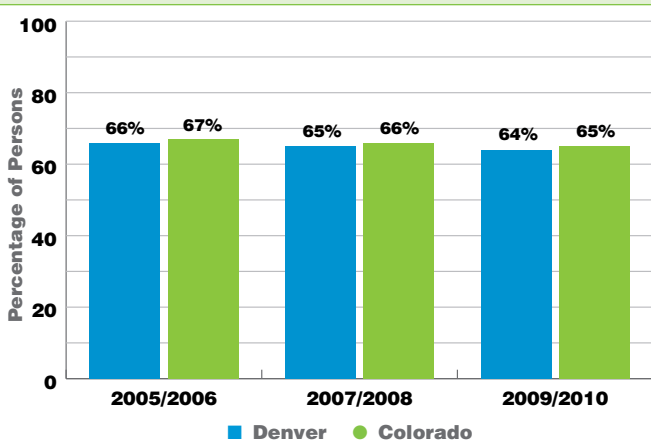
Mental health and substance use conditions are behavioral disorders. They affect the individual, their family, workplace, and community. People of all ages and backgrounds are affected by mental health disorders. Mental health problems affect the post-partum mother, the middle-aged working male, the homeless senior, and the high school star athlete.

Approximately one in four people will experience symptoms of mental health or substance abuse. In Denver, the number of self-reported poor mental health days varies by race and ethnicity (FIGURES 1 AND 2). Persons with lower incomes have more poor mental health days than those with higher incomes (FIGURE 3). Half of all lifetime cases of mental and substance use disorders begin before the age 14. One in five Coloradans need mental health services annually. Of those, less than one-third receive adequate care.<sup>99</sup>

Suicide is the most severe outcome of mental health disorders. Denver and the entire state of Colorado have much higher rates of suicide as compared to the U.S (FIGURES 4). In 2009, Colorado's suicide rate was the highest recorded since 1988 at 18.4 per 100,000 people (940 suicides).<sup>100</sup> Denver's suicide rate that year was 17.4 per 100,000 (101 deaths).<sup>11</sup> The number of deaths from suicide was more than the number of deaths from homicide (41), motor vehicle injuries (44), and influenza and pneumonia (99).<sup>11</sup> For every suicide, six to eight people closely connected to the individual are directly affected by the death.<sup>100</sup> Suicide serves as an example of the "ripple effect" of behavioral health issues in terms of numbers of people affected and the overall cost of inadequate treatment.

FIGURE 1

Percentage of Persons Reporting Zero Days of Poor Mental Health (in the last month) DENVER AND COLORADO, 2005 - 2010



Mental Health has a consistent impact on Denver and Colorado. Since 2005, only two thirds of Denver and Colorado residents report zero poor mental health days in the past month.

SOURCE: Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System

## Cost Facts



Mental illness is the leading cause of workforce disability in the U.S. It results in 217 million days of lost productivity. Substance use costs \$116 billion and untreated mental health conditions cost \$205 billion to society. This is more than many other chronic conditions, such as diabetes, asthma, and arthritis.<sup>102</sup>

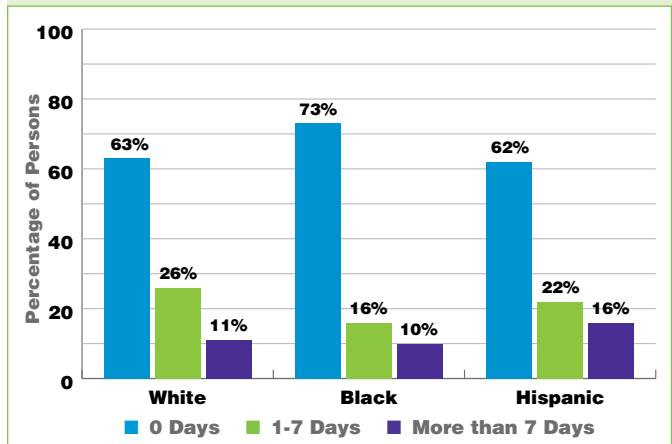
Untreated depression and alcohol use costs Colorado businesses \$2.3 billion per year. This equals \$484 per employee in 2008. When workers with depression were treated with prescription medicines, medical costs declined by \$882 per treated employee per year and absenteeism dropped by 9 days.<sup>102</sup>

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Suicide risk factors include age (highest risk in persons age 40-50), sex (highest risk in men), and race and ethnicity (highest risk in Whites) (FIGURES 5 AND 6). Suicide rates vary in different areas of Denver. Central Denver has the highest suicide rates in the city (FIGURE 7). Finally, individuals with a family history of suicide are 2.5 times more likely to die by suicide than those without such a history.<sup>101</sup>

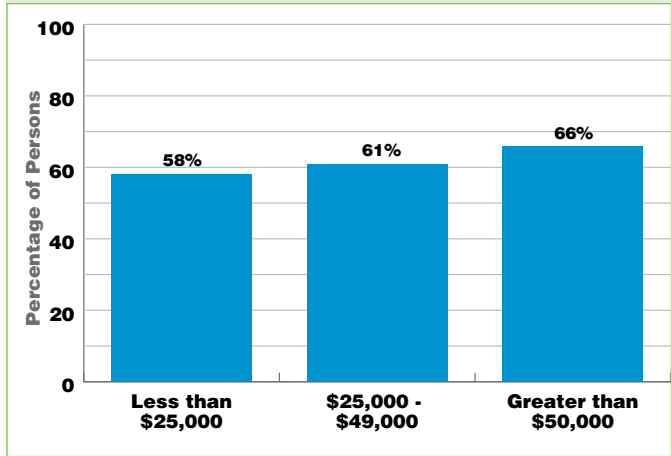
Treating psychological and behavioral problems is preventive and cost-effective. Integrating mental health screening into primary care for both adults and children is important. Incorporating screening into pre- and postnatal care for mothers is vital to the health of the baby. Resources allocated to assisting someone in achieve better mental health will bring a return far greater than the dollars which are spent.

**FIGURE 2**  
**Percentage of Persons Reporting Poor Mental Health Days (in the last month) by Race and Ethnicity DENVER, 2009 AND 2010**



Research has linked mental health to race and ethnicity. Hispanics and Whites have more persons reporting poor mental health days than Blacks.  
 SOURCE: Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System

**FIGURE 3**  
**Percentage of Persons Reporting Zero Days of Poor Mental Health (in the last month) by Income DENVER, 2009 AND 2010**



Research has linked mental health to income and poverty. The percentage of Denver residents reporting zero poor mental health days in the past month is lower in persons with lower income and increases as income levels increase.  
 SOURCE: Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System



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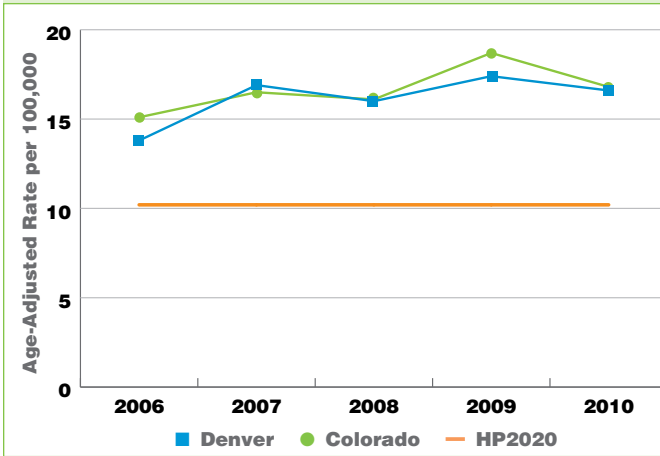
## Local Story

### Project CLIMB: Strengthening Families in Denver

In 2005, Project CLIMB began at Children's Hospital Colorado. CLIMB stands for Consultation Liaison in Mental Health and Behavior. Project CLIMB combines mental health, behavioral, and developmental support with other health services. Mental health providers work side by side with health care providers in their offices. Pediatricians learn to identify and treat common mental health concerns in children. The team offers on-site mental health services for children and their families. Services include depression screening for parents, developmental screening for young children, groups to support families of new babies, individual and family therapy, and referrals to community resources. Nearly 2,000 children and families have been seen at more than 4,000 visits. This program is truly strengthening Denver families.

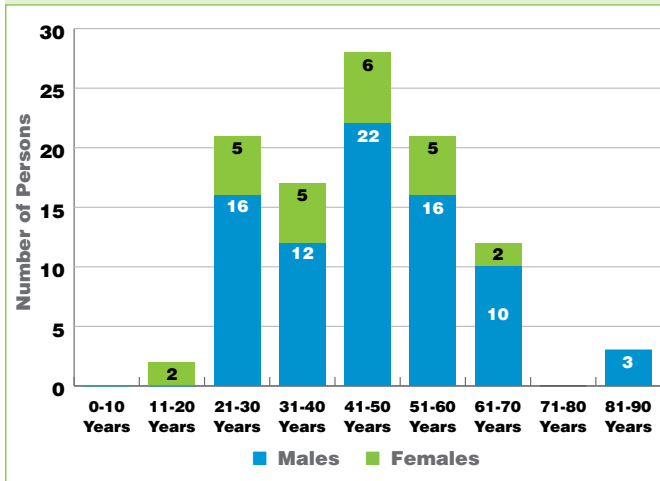
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**FIGURE 4**  
Completed Suicides DENVER AND COLORADO, 2006 - 2010



Denver has a high rate of suicide, with a rate of 17.4 per 100,000 in 2009. The rate does not meet the Healthy People 2020 goal of 10.2 per 100,000 and the national average of 11.5 per 100,000. SOURCE: Vital Records

**FIGURE 5**  
Completed Suicides by Age and Gender DENVER, 2010



Suicides in Denver occur more often in males than females. In 2010, the highest count of suicides was among males 41-50 years old. SOURCE: Denver Office of the Medical Examiner

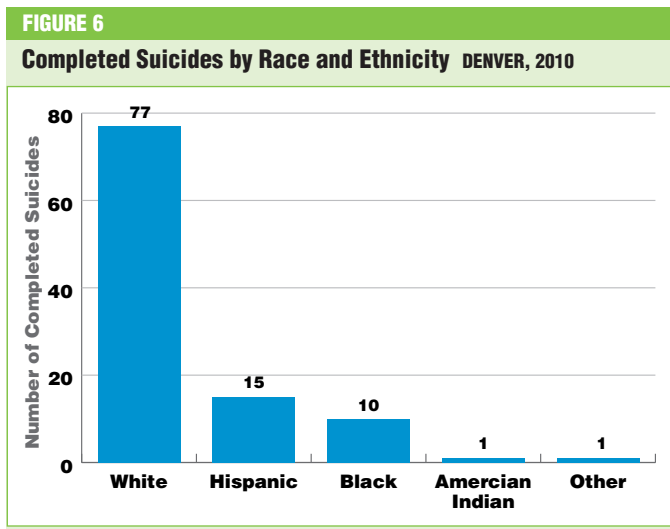
## Comparison Story

### The Colorado Springs Veterans Trauma Court

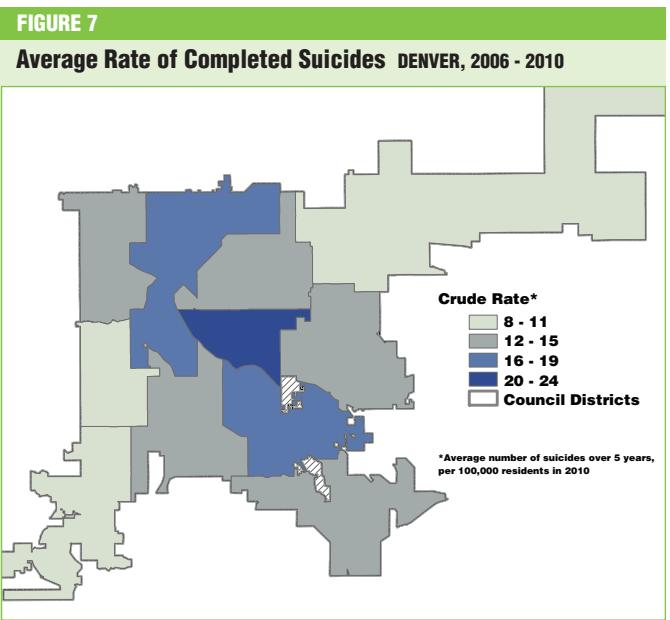
Many veterans have post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Others have traumatic brain injuries (TBI). These injuries can result in reduced inhibitions and poor decision making. Some veterans experience increased impulsivity, decreased memory, increased anger, and increased substance abuse. In 2008, Colorado received a federal grant to divert veterans and other service members with PTSD and TBI into treatment rather than incarceration. The Colorado Springs Veterans Trauma Court has been operational for two years. Preliminary data show that overall health, everyday functioning, social connectedness, and symptoms of PTSD improve within six months of starting treatment. A focus of the program is to share lessons learned with other courts so that other veterans and their families can receive help for PTSD and TBI.<sup>103</sup>



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Suicides are more common in specific populations. In 2010, Denver, suicides were most common in non-Hispanic whites (n=77).  
 SOURCE: Denver Office of the Medical Examiner



Completed suicides occurred in all areas of Denver. The highest rate of suicides in Denver is in District 10.  
 SOURCE: Denver Office of the Medical Examiner



## Did You Know

- Denver Public School students in sixth, eighth, ninth, and eleventh grade students were asked if they felt depressed or sad most days in the past year. In response to the question, 31% of students answered “yes” and 15% answered “YES!”<sup>9</sup>
- The Denver Court to Community program has successfully provided treatment to over 300 incarcerated individuals with both mental illness and substance abuse. In the year following treatment in the program, participants had no physical and psychiatric hospitalizations. Additionally, there was a 67% reduction in arrests and jail days among participants, and 64% of participants became and remained abstinent from substances.<sup>104</sup>
- In Denver County, it is estimated that more than 1,200 mothers will experience post-partum depression annually. Only 15% of these women will receive treatment. Treatment results in better health and improved social and mental development of the child.<sup>105</sup>
- Depression symptoms may be reduced through exercise. Exercise builds confidence, increases social interaction, and helps manage stress.<sup>106</sup>
- Colorado ranks 32nd nationally for publicly-funded mental health care and spends one-third of the national average on care for substance use disorders.<sup>107</sup>