

BCDHHS Report

December 2023



BOULDER COUNTY
HOUSING
& HUMAN
SERVICES



Boulder County Housing and Human Services continues to focus on responding to the increased need for a wide range of supports in our communities in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and economic inflation coupled with already high housing costs across the region. From 2022 to 2023, data continue to show a clear increase in numbers of people served in financial, food, medical, childcare, and housing assistance. This also results in a significant increase in benefits dollars going into these communities.

\$434.8M

Total amount distributed throughout the community from all programs between Jan-Oct 2023

MAJOR BENEFITS PROGRAMS

PROVIDED COUNTY-WIDE | JANUARY THROUGH OCTOBER 2023

Financial Assistance



Adult Financial and Colorado Works

- **\$4.5M** issued directly to program participants
- **\$5M** issued in 2022
- **7.3%** increase from 2022 to 2023



2,874
individuals served

Food Assistance



Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

SNAP funds directly enrich our community by supporting local food purchases



- **\$35M** distributed
- **\$31M** distributed in 2022
- **13%** increase from 2022 to 2023

24,620
individuals served

Child Care



1,200
children served

- **\$10M** distributed to local child care providers
- **\$11.4M** spent in 2022
- **6.2%** increase from 2022 to 2023



Medical Assistance



Health First Colorado and Child Health Plan Plus

- **\$373M** (estimated) distributed
- **\$410.4M** spent in 2022
- **10.5%** increase from 2022 to 2023

78,488
individuals served

Medicaid customer experience survey results, conducted by Community Support in April of 2023

- » **94.80%** respondents reported they were treated with respect
- » **86.40%** respondents reported they received services in a timely manner
- » We received an overall score of **4.17** (with 1 being poor and 5 being great) when asked the overall experience interacting with us

Housing Programs



Boulder County Housing Authority

- **3,070** individuals served
- **1,708** households served

Housing Choice Vouchers

- **2,935** individuals served
- **1,082** households served
- **\$12.8M** paid to local landlords
- **\$12.2M** paid in 2022
- **27.3%** increase from 2022 to 2023

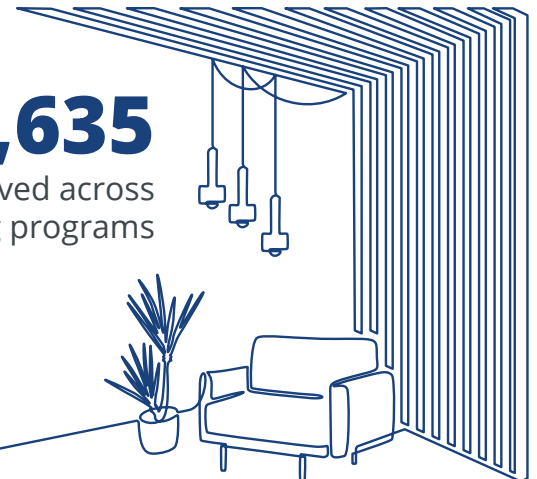
Rent Assistance

- **1,664** individuals served
- **670** households served
- **\$4.5M** distributed to Boulder County residents
- **\$13.6M** spent in 2022
- **60%** decrease (Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) funds exhausted in early 2023)

All Housing Programs Combined

- **3,000** households served
- **\$17.2M** distributed
- **\$25.8M** distributed in 2022
- **19%** decrease (due to exhausted emergency rental assistance funds)

6,635
individuals served across
all housing programs





FOUNDATIONAL VALUES, APPROACHES, AND ACTIVITIES TO SUPPORT BCDHHS 2024 PRIORITIES

Racial Equity

Our Boulder County Housing and Human Services Racial Equity Framework includes five key components that come from data collection, departmental racial equity needs assessments through county Racial Equity Mondays meetings, and review of work done by past and current racial equity groups and committees. These five key components make up Phase 1 of the BCDHHS Racial Equity Framework, titled “Change People”. This first phase is designed to impact behaviors and approaches through support and accountability that align with Boulder County’s racial equity charge as outlined in the county’s Policy 1.06. In this phase we will develop, as teams and individuals, a racial equity lens through which we will engage our deeper work on accomplishing programmatic and systemic changes that will help advance racial equity within Boulder County government.

Staff Engagement

As we have learned in Housing and Human Services, authentic staff engagement is primarily about creating and deepening trust at all levels of our organization. Recent county-wide employee surveys have shown that some staff do not feel safe or comfortable sharing concerns or questions about their work, the organization, or decisions that are made and the processes used to make them. Our engagement work has recently focused on holding conversations through focus groups for both supervisory and non-supervisory staff to share their thoughts and help develop ideas for solutions to the trust issues that we can implement. A recent example of this is development of a set of solutions for work-life balance for staff that are now being explored by the HHS Leadership Team. We are also looking at online platforms to help staff widely recognize and reward each other, share their perspectives as members of specific groups, and have trusted anonymous two-way communication with management.

Community Engagement and Outreach

Boulder County's diverse and vibrant communities deserve the best service we can deliver. We need to better understand how to accomplish this by meeting people where they are, as they want to be supported. In this area we will be working to engage community members and gather information and data around their experiences and interactions with programs we help administer, including SNAP (food assistance). We are collaborating with a contractor to help lead this initiative in addition to creating an internal outreach team to coordinate with the contractor and help ensure a social-determinants-of-health approach to all our outreach and engagement. Both community engagement and outreach will especially be key elements of our five-year strategic planning initiative, which must be informed and co-led by community members as well as the partners who help support them alongside us.

Distributed Leadership

Staff feedback and recent experiences have made it clear how essential it is that all staff are involved in shaping the future of our department. Intersecting with the equity and engagement work is the need for leadership (decision-making, solution identification, and collaboration across teams and programs) to happen at all levels of our organization. To help make this possible, the department's Leadership Team is creating a structure for ensuring trust, support, communication, and resources are available for all staff to feel safe, informed, and able to participate. As part of this effort, the Leadership Team is working to clearly define and create a vision for distributed leadership so staff understand both the opportunities and expectations for participation, in addition to what the process will look like when successful.

Data-Driven Decision Making

Complex decisions around where to put resources and how to invest funds internally and in the community require an understanding of where the biggest needs

are and how the decisions impact them. BCDHHS is committed to collecting and analyzing data to get a view of how and where our work is getting done and where there may be opportunities to make needed changes to improve service delivery or staffing. We are also clear about our need to collect better or more descriptive data, including around race and ethnicity, to help ensure our decisions advance racial equity at all levels of our organization and across all our diverse communities.



Internal Practice and Process Consistency

Boulder County Housing and Human Services is a complex organization that works across a wide range of large and important services, supports, and programs. To achieve this complicated work, we have a variety of processes and procedures that have evolved over the years, and some of them are unclear or inconsistent and/or create inequities across our teams or in how we serve our communities. We are committed to identifying and changing these inconsistent or inequitable practices and processes, informed by the input and distributed leadership of staff at all levels of the organization. Our goal is to share a clear and transparent picture and vision for each of our practices and processes so every member of our staff and community understands how they work and sees their consistency and equity across all we do.

2024 Strategic Priorities

- Implementation of strategic planning.
- Development and implementation of a data and performance framework.
- Implementation of a racial equity framework.
- Alignment of organizational structure to support priorities and goals.

CURRENT FOCUS AREAS

Our Focus on Racial Equity

Our strategic plan for racial equity in HHS, called Racial Equity Framework, focuses on five main parts identified through data, departmental assessments, and input from various racial equity groups. This first phase, “Change People,” aims to shape behaviors and approaches in line with Boulder County’s commitment to racial equity.

Phase 1: Change People

Key components:

1. Create a training program for new and current staff on racial equity, both in-person/virtual and self-paced.
2. Provide racial equity training for supervisors and managers.
3. Establish a Hiring Committee framework to ensure a diverse approach to hiring.
4. Implement our Racial Equity Impact Assessment Tool (REIAT) in our processes and programs, with training for all staff.
5. Develop a comprehensive performance review process for all staff to support growth and provide excellent public service.

Family Supports

High Acuity Placements and Services

We are in the midst of a behavioral health/high acuity crisis both in Colorado and across the United States. For many years, county human services departments have highlighted this crisis, the related impacts on the children and youth we are responsible for keeping safe, and the challenges this crisis creates in terms of placements and longer-term supports. These concerns are being discussed at the state level and have recently received significant media coverage and attention from the governor.

Recent data collected by the Colorado Department of Human Services show an unacceptable number of children and youth spending time overnight in county offices or hotels, or in hospitals, as stopgap measures because placements can’t be found for them in our state. For so many youth who are ready to be “released for placement”, no placement can be found for them. Over the past nine months, between 53 and 73 children and youth were in these circumstances across the state, and this is certainly an undercount, as counties are not always involved in these cases.

These situations are becoming more common, and every one of them is traumatic for children and youth and heartbreaking for those of us who do this work.

We are deeply proud of the people who make it their life’s calling to wade into extremely difficult situations within families and who are struggling to help them with the resources available in our communities. The data make it clear that much more is needed in terms of resources and policy changes for young people and others experiencing a behavioral health crisis. These challenges will not stop us from continuing to do everything we can—including contacting all our partners every day—to find safe, stable, nurturing environments for every young person who needs this help for any length of time.

As is the case with all challenges to the health and well-being of our communities, solutions are up to all of us. We continue to encourage action now at the state and federal levels to address the lack of resources, including funding for more services and treatment beds for young people and others who need them and policy changes to ensure children have access to the treatment and support they deserve.

Increasing or Maintaining Enrollment in Major Eligibility Programs

Since February 2020, our Community Support division has helped 30% more people with SNAP and 38% more with Health First Colorado/Child Health Plan *Plus* due to COVID-19. We received approval for ten more positions for Medicaid in March 2023, but before that, we struggled with delays and benefits were taking 30 to 45 days to process.

Despite optimizing processes and using waivers, we couldn’t consistently meet state metrics. We take pride in serving over 100,000 Boulder County residents annually, but increased workload and staff turnover have caused burnout and are affecting service delivery. To improve, we need more full-time employees for capacity and time for process improvements.

We recently piloted a project to boost SNAP interview attendance and saw a significant increase. We’re now working to scale and implement this with County IT.

Increasing Access to Affordable Housing

Mobile Home Park Outreach Program

We're surveying mobile home parks in Longmont and Lafayette to understand demographics and gather residents' input on using American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding in these parks. We have secured \$2M in Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery Funds (CDBG-DR) from the Department of Local Affairs (DOLA) for mobile homes damaged in the Marshall Fire and Straight-Line Wind Event.

Regional Housing Partnership

The Regional Housing Partnership's (RHP) goal is to make 12% of Boulder County housing permanently affordable by 2035. RHP is planning a Housing Summit in January 2024 to discuss affordable housing and homelessness in Boulder County. We've been actively engaged in discussions on Proposition 123, commitment letter submissions, and provided input on housing legislation.

Supportive Housing Unit

While Emergency Rental Assistance 2 funding was exhausted in August, rental assistance spending is on track, serving 197 households through various programs. We have executed an agreement with DOLA and are working diligently with our Family Resource Centers to develop programming for new Family Bridge Housing funding. Our priorities include enhancing Resident Service, researching down payment programs for first-time homebuyers, and expanding permanent supportive housing for families.

Housing Development Team

All entitlements and permits for Willoughby Corner have been received and we are under full construction now. Leasing will begin in the fall of 2024. We will be conducting community outreach across the county to ensure those in need are aware of and can apply for Willoughby Corner. Visit www.WilloughbyCorner.org for updates.



**WILLOUGHBY
CORNER**

HOME IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD



GROWTH OF BOULDER COUNTY HOUSING AUTHORITY

- BCHA doubled rental units from 463 to 908 since 2012, adding 393 units through private partnerships, totaling 1,228 units.
- Anticipating more growth by the end of 2024 with Willoughby Corner.

Housing Choice Voucher Program Highlights

- As of November 28, 2023, voucher staff have processed 2,827 actions (not including any pending December items), with May having the most significant activity due to a payment standard increase.
- Held 7 large group eligibility intake meetings and numerous other one-on-one individual intake meetings, processing 155 new admissions.
- Achieved a 107% reporting rating with HUD and 101% utilized in the voucher program (1001 out of 991 vouchers leased).
- Submitting an application to HUD's Moving to Work Program in December.

PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATIONS

Family Resource Network

Boulder County Housing and Human Services helps lead and support the county's partnerships with organizations across our communities.

BCDHHS serves as the backbone organization for the Family Resource Network (FRN), a partnership that brings together more than 60 staff from 30 nonprofits, schools, municipal, and county agencies across Boulder County. These partners work to improve planning and coordination across our local safety net. By leveraging our collective strengths and resources, we aim to create better outcomes for children and families. This means ensuring access to safe and stable housing, healthcare, education, and other essential support services.

Our shared identification of systemic needs, gaps, and barriers leads to improvements across the entire system. This approach works to ensure that community members receive the necessary assistance when and where they need it, reduces duplicated efforts, and aligns our work.

For 2023-2024, the FRN has set the following priorities:

Increase housing security and housing access. We're working to prevent displacement and homelessness by coordinating services through the Family Homelessness Subcommittee to support families at risk of or experiencing homelessness. We're also monitoring demand for and availability of rental assistance funds to assist residents in maintaining stable housing through emergency rental assistance. Additionally, we're partnering with the Regional Housing Partnership to advocate for and inform housing policies.

Improve Coordination and Collaboration. Our goal is to effectively share information about safety net services. We're working on creating and coordinating messages to educate and raise awareness. We're also working to enhance our collaboration with the Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Advisory Council (IDDAC) to streamline access.

Support frontline staff and families navigate basic needs. We're exploring adopting a standardized screener and referral form to connect community members with services. Additionally, we're creating process flow maps to simplify access to safety net services and benefits programs, helping frontline staff and families access essential services more easily.

The FRN also oversees the Family Homelessness Subcommittee, which brings together over a dozen nonprofit, school, and government agencies dedicated to preventing and addressing family homelessness. Their focus areas include:

- Jointly designing and implementing a shared assessment tool to establish a uniform approach to evaluating each family's situation;
- Collecting and aggregating data to address service gaps;
- Establishing an annual training program to equip staff with the skills to support families experiencing homelessness; and
- Creating a standardized structure for coordinating our hoteling response, which is the intervention we use locally to house families experiencing homelessness.

IMPACT

Integrated Managed Partnership for Adolescent and Child Community Treatment (IMPACT) Partnership is a collaboration of 14 children, youth, and family serving agencies. HHS serves as the backbone agency for the Partnership and contributes Board of Directors and Partnership leadership, assessment and facilitation,

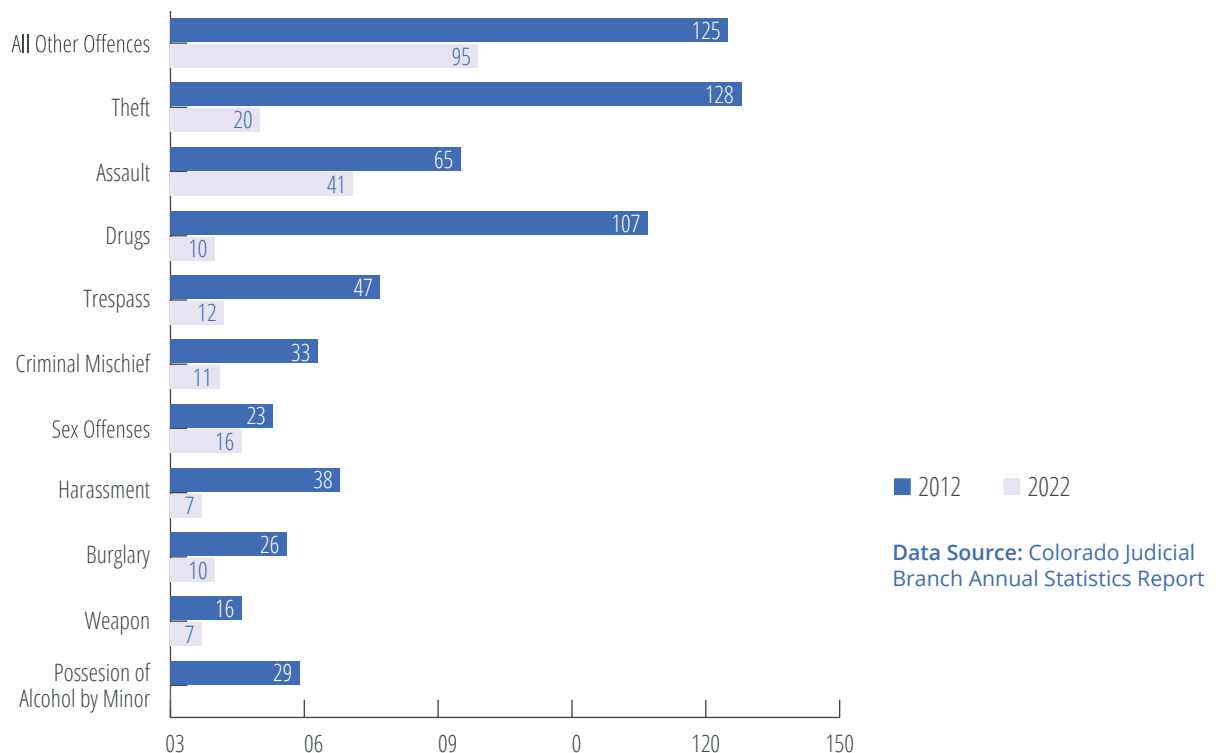
state contracts management, services utilization management, Child Welfare out-of-home placement coordination, data coordination and budget setting and management.

Our Partnerships, Contracts, and Services (PCS) staff also coordinate and manage a complex braided \$3.5 million budget for the following state contracts, programs, and allocations for the Partnership:

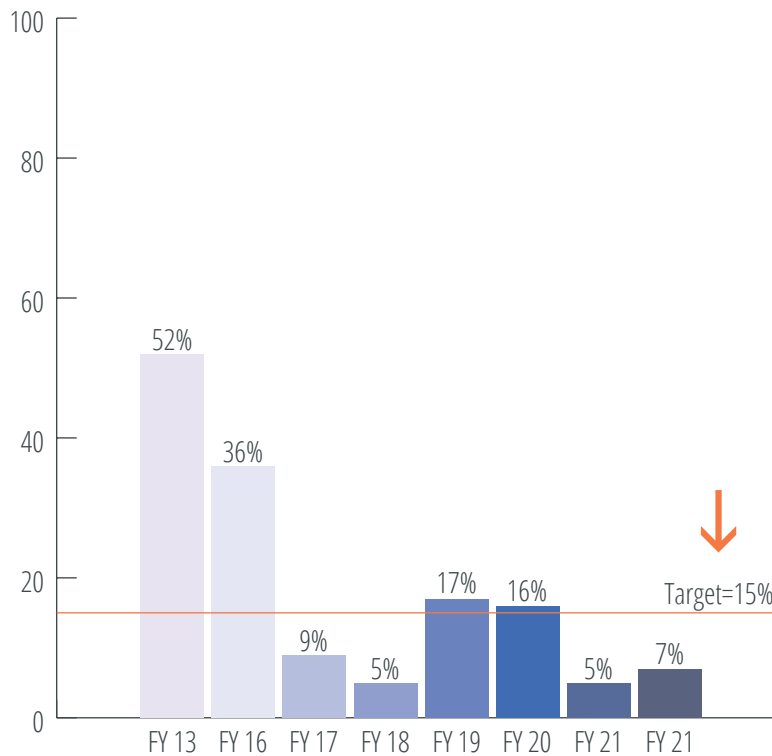
- Colorado Youth Detention Continuum
- Colorado Collaborative Management Program
- Core contract
- Boulder County's Colorado Division of Youth Services Contract

Through strong inter-agency partnerships, a shared philosophy of supporting youth with greater needs to remain safely in the community, and an approach that integrates juvenile justice services with a strong therapeutic service array, robust treatment planning and high-quality care coordination, we have been able to divert more juvenile cases over time, keep low-risk youth off of probation and out of detention, and meet their needs effectively.

Boulder County Juvenile Filings
FY 2012 vs. FY 2022



Reducing Low-risk Youth on Probation
FY 2013, FY 2016-2022

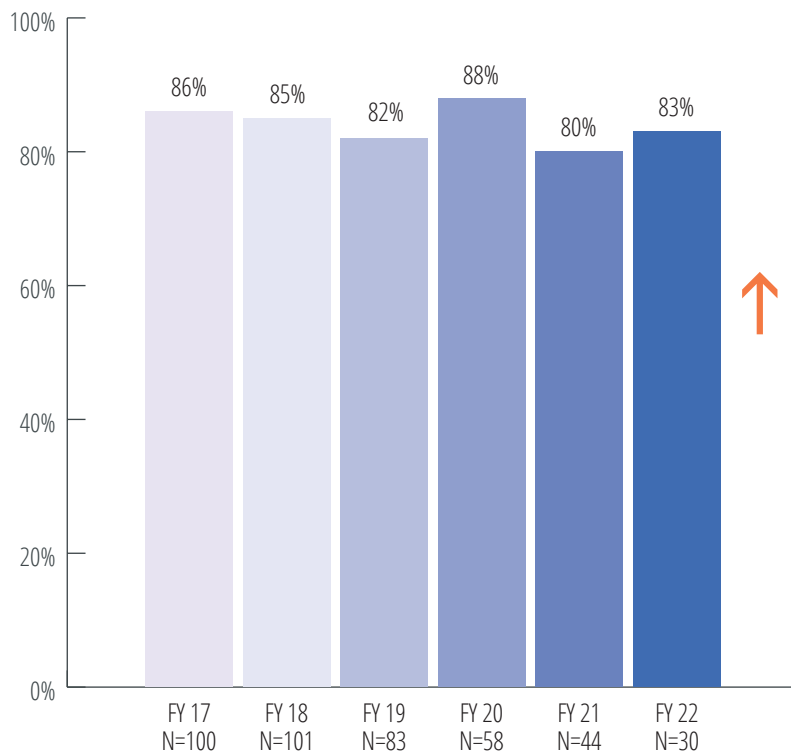


Since FY 12-12, the percentage of youth scoring low-risk on the Colorado Juvenile Risk Assessment (CJRA) Pre-screen who subsequently receive Probation has decreased.

This past year saw a slight increase of 2% compared to FY21.

Data Source: Boulder County Impact ETO Enterprise

Detention Avoidance for Low-Risk Youth
FY 2017-FY 2022



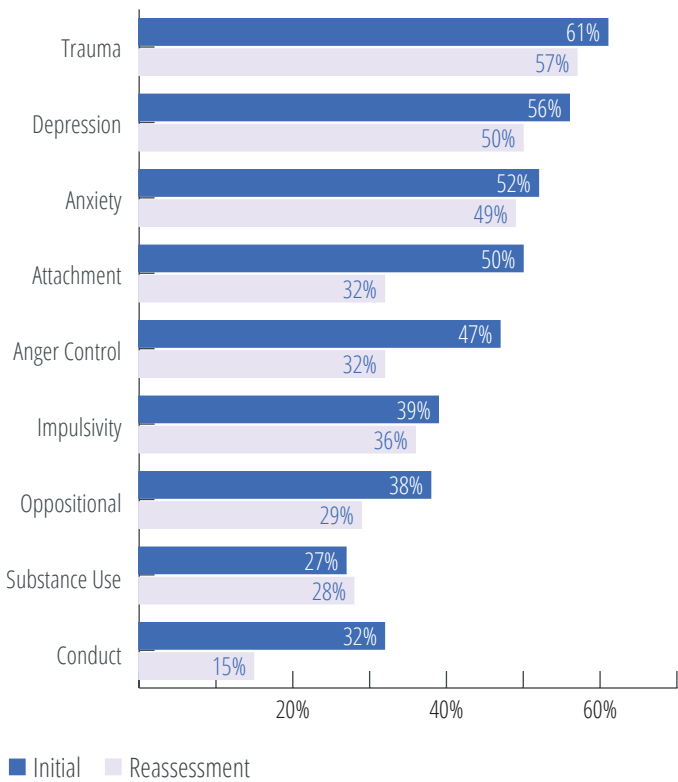
Proportion of youth who were assessed as low risk, who did NOT enter state detention facilities during the year.

Boulder County has seen a largely stable proportion of low risk youth detained over time. The number of youth assessed as low risk entering the system has declined as well.

Data Source: Boulder County IMPACT ETO Enterprise

As part of our Partnership approach, multi-system involved youth may receive a Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) Assessment. Our CANS data show that we are able to effectively decrease the needs of youth involved in our system through appropriate services and supports.

Child & Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS)
 Change in Actionable Needs from Baseline to Reassessment, Behavioral/Emotional Domain
 FY 2016 - FY 2022 | Youth Ages 10-24 | N=304



Includes youth assessed by IMPACT programs, *except for youth diversion*.
 Data Source: Boulder County IMPACT ETO Enterprise

Currently, funding for the IMPACT Partnership is vulnerable to state-level budgetary cuts and decisions. Advocacy for our Partnership at all levels of leadership is essential to ensure the long-term sustainability of our Partnership and our high-quality approach to serving our community's highest-risk youth and their families.



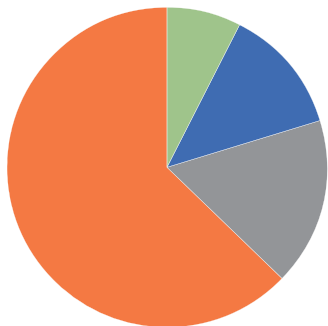
Human Services Safety Net (HSSN) Mill Levy

The Human Services Safety Net (HSSN) Mill Levy, approved by Boulder County in 2010 and re-approved in 2015 for 15 years, combines with General Fund and Health and Human Services funding. This collaboration supports the social safety net through partnerships with non-profit agencies in Boulder County.

In 2023, Housing and Human Services (HHS) administered 50 grants to 32 organizations, aligning with funding priorities established in 2017:

- **Housing and Homelessness Prevention:** Focus on obtaining and maintaining housing, including rental assistance, legal representation, sheltering, and pathways for those experiencing homelessness.
- **Education and Skill Building:** Programs advancing childhood development and academic achievement, such as childcare, academic support, and training for various age groups.
- **Health and Well-Being, including Mental and Behavioral Health:** Support for physical and behavioral health, healthy behaviors, direct health-care services, wellness, food security, and nutrition.
- **Individual and Family Supports:** Services increasing access to meet community needs, improve quality of life, enhance economic stability, and create safe environments. This includes Family Resource Centers, financial assistance, advocacy, legal representation, and social connectivity.

The following chart shows how 2023 grant funds were distributed by priority. For 2023, 64% of HSSN community investments were in the health and wellbeing priority area.



- Health and Wellbeing: \$8,332,585
- Housing and Homelessness Prevention: \$2,255,694
- Individual and Family Support: \$1,691,205
- Education and Skill Building: \$1,015,645

Inside HHS

One of Boulder County Housing and Human Services' top priorities is building and sustaining trust with all members of the communities we serve, especially those who are marginalized or for whom government has been a source of harm. We see how vital our role is in undoing the inequities built into the systems in which we operate and understand that to help ensure Boulder County is a community that lifts everyone equally from where they are, we must commit to being anti-racist in everything we do.

To help fuel this, BCDHHS will soon be developing a clear vision, mission, and priorities for our work through the end of this decade. We intend to include and empower community members and partners to help lead this effort, and to ensure it is linked to the county's overarching strategic priorities.

We also know that for any strategic planning process to be successful, it must be built on a strong foundation of trust, feedback, and transparency internally—with everyone in our organization. Over the past couple of years, several internal staff-led groups and committees have formed organically within BCDHHS to help advance this work in collaboration with the department's leadership. This includes a Non-Supervisory Focus Group Committee, a Family and Children Services Racial Equity Committee, and a Bilingual/Bicultural Group. Additionally, the BCDHHS Equity Council has for many years helped pave the way for this expansion of staff engagement around equity, transparency, and leadership accountability. In their work, these groups are also utilizing the information already gathered through countywide efforts, such as the recent Boulder County racial equity survey.

As part of the internal engagement work, BCDHHS is also exploring online platforms that will help increase transparency and boost the ability of all staff to provide real-time feedback and share concerns, take part in decision-making, and support authentic recognition and rewarding of each others' work. This platform would be interconnected with and informed by the efforts of the internal staff engagement groups and committees and would help support their ongoing growth in distributed leadership across BCDHHS.

Child Support Services

In the fiscal year 2022, child support programs across the nation collected a total of \$30.5 billion, benefiting 1 in 5 children in the United States. In Colorado, the

program gathered \$323.8 million, and specifically in Boulder County, our Child Support Services team played a crucial role in collecting \$10,351,752. Additionally, our team worked hard to establish paternity or child support orders for nearly 4,000 families.

We are excited to continue exploring collaborative efforts with community partners to enhance support for parents, address issues related to language access and reduce legal and non-legal barriers

Recently, the State recognized Boulder County for being one of only four large Counties that met all three of the State C-Stat goals. State C-Stat goals include:

- Initiating 80% of new cases in under 20 days.
- Completing 90% of our order modifications within 120 days.
- Having fewer than 4.8% of our payments to parents on hold for various reasons (Boulder County leads the large ten counties with less than 1%).

Kristin Dubbs Awarded the Reunification Hero of 2023

The Colorado Office of Respondent Parents' Counsel (ORPC), the Colorado Office of Children, Youth and Families (OCYF), and the Colorado Office of the Child's Representative (OCR) jointly celebrated family reunification in Colorado with "Together Today, Stronger Tomorrow: A Reunification Celebration" at the Denver Zoo on June 14th. This event was part of the annual National Reunification Month, dedicated to recognizing those nationwide who contribute to reunifying and supporting families within the child welfare system.

"It takes compassion, commitment, and the support of a dedicated team to keep families together."

—Melissa Thompson
Executive Director of OPRC

Melissa Thompson, Executive Director of ORPC, emphasized the importance of compassion, commitment, and dedicated teamwork in keeping families together. The primary goal of the child welfare system is to reunify children with their families, and positive partnerships among birth parents, caregivers, caseworkers, and older youth enhance the chances of successful reunification.

Chris Henderson, Executive Director of OCR, echoed the sentiment, emphasizing the shared goal of keeping families together when safe and appropriate.

The collaboration between ORPC, OCYF, and OCR to recognize reunification heroes since 2020 continued at the event, where four heroes from different Colorado counties were honored for their significant contributions to the reunification space.

Our very own Family and Children Services Caseworker, Kristin Dubbs was awarded the Reunification Hero Award. Dubbs was recognized for her exceptional work on a complex case involving a medically fragile child, a parent from Kuwait, collaboration with Nurses + Doctors Without Borders, involvement with ICE, and navigating various challenges. Kristin's creativity, ability to think outside the box, and dedication were highlighted, making her the sole caseworker recipient in the state for this award.

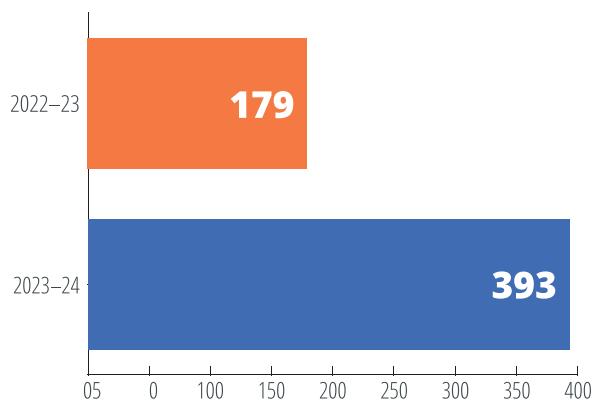


Photo from left to right: Kimberly Strong, Brant McClung, Donovan Holligan, Kristin Dubbs, Darryl Harrington, Julie Kemble, and Tony Ramos



OUR 2024 OMNISALUD ENROLLMENT PLAN

In 2023, Connect for Health Colorado launched OmniSalud, providing affordable health coverage for undocumented Coloradans and DACA recipients through financial assistance known as Silver Enhanced Savings. In its inaugural year, these savings were available for the first 10,000 enrollees, reaching capacity within just ten days. This highlighted the crucial need for us to raise awareness about this valuable resource.

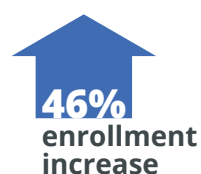


Low-cost OmniSalud Enrollments Completed by BCDHHS | Open Enrollment 22-23, 23-24

Thankfully, Connect for Health Colorado increased the enrollment cap to 11,000 for 2024. In order to enroll as many Boulder County neighbors as possible, we implemented a comprehensive outreach plan:

- **Application Guide:** Crafted a detailed Spanish-language application guide to empower individuals to enroll independently or with trusted sources.

- **In-Person Information Sessions:** Conducted three evening OmniSalud information and health literacy sessions in Boulder, Longmont, and Lafayette during the week of October 17, 2023. Distributed printed guides and encouraged attendees to self-enroll or join walk-in events.
- **Text Messages:** Sent invitations to existing clients and contacts, urging them to attend information sessions or enrollment events, and provided additional details on our website.
- **In-Person Enrollment Events:** Scheduled events on November 1, 2, and 3, utilizing county-secured laptops/network at various locations. The November 3rd event was canceled due to reaching the 11,000-enrollment mark on November 2nd at 2:45 p.m.
- **Communication Outreach and Engagement:** Leveraged traditional open enrollment channels, including media, advertising, municipality communications, and more. Internally, utilized HHS Monday Morning Coffee Newsletter, hosted community partner calls, and engaged with the Family Resource Network. Employed Cultural Broker network engagement and participated in community outreach events such as mobile home park resource fairs and Día de los Muertos celebrations.



Our collective efforts yielded success as we facilitated the enrollment of almost 400 individuals, a **46% increase** from last year, within 36 hours before reaching capacity. This achievement was made possible through the

dedication of almost 30 HHS staff who volunteered their time to support our undocumented neighbors in obtaining coverage.

Additionally, with a total of **1,170 enrollments**, our county had the **third highest number of enrollments in the state.**

COMMUNITY RESILIENCE: MEET BARBARA

My name is Barbara. I grew up with a simple view of life. Raised in California, for me there was my home, school, the beach, my dog and cat, and parents who enjoyed their jobs. A simple family life, sports, work, and friends. My father was a High School Principal and my mother a Nursery School teacher.

I married, moved to Colorado with my husband and had 8 children, excited for a happy life. However, it was not as simple as I hoped it would be. My husband was a carpenter/builder, and his job was not steady. Nor was our home/family life consistent or stable. In 2010, my husband died from cancer.

All I could think at that time was “my husband is gone.” I was left with 4 young boys to raise, no health insurance, no job, foreclosure proceedings on our home, a \$180,000 IRS tax bill, a bankruptcy on our record, and utter despair in my heart. But every morning my boys would look at me, their eyes searching for direction, and I would fake a smile and let my boys know we were going to be ok and that I loved them.

At night, when I was alone, I cried. I was afraid, intimidated, ashamed, downtrodden, depressed, and emotional. How do I raise my boys and care for them, and do it all by myself? I was all they had.

Step by step, inch by inch, I was determined to recreate what I had as a child. After what happened with my husband, first on my to do list was to find health insurance. Seeking and receiving assistance from Boulder County Housing and Human Services was truly a lighthouse in the dark night for me.

I drove to their office, I stood in line, put my name in, and I waited for my turn to speak to someone. How do I ask? How do I explain my situation without bursting into tears?

My name was called by this man who I hoped could guide me. I felt like my life was in his hands.

I felt like miracles began to happen; guide me he did. Gently and with kindness, he listened. He not only let me know how they could help me and my children with health insurance and other services, but he literally filled out the application for me while I sat and answered his questions. He has done so for the last 11 years. My children and I have had health care and have been guided to other services that provided what we needed to live, to rebuild, to feel safe, and to feel a part of this world.



Today, I feel like those that work at the Boulder County Department of Housing and Human Services are family. Because they cared. Because they listened. Because they tried to help and out of pure goodness of heart.

I do sincerely hope that anyone who is struggling, whatever their circumstances may be, will take that jump, that risk, to walk through that door and ask. Because I did and by doing so, today I am stronger, and I am hopeful. I had the chance to rebuild. That fake smile I gave to my children so long ago, is no longer fake. It is genuine and it is heartfelt. I am grateful to those at Boulder County Housing and Human Services who chose a life's work to serve others and give that helping hand every day to people who are in complex situations.

Thank you.

—Barbara



BOULDER COUNTY
**HOUSING
& HUMAN
SERVICES**



Hope for the future, help when you need it.