



2020
Annual
Impact
Report

Colorado LGBTQ+ Mental Health
and Substance Abuse Disorder Initiative

envision-you.org



The Mission of Envision:You

is to support, educate, and empower members of Colorado's LGBTQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer/questioning) community who are living with a mental health and/or substance use disorder. To actuate its mission, Envision:You educates the public about, and builds awareness of, mental health and substance use disorders and treatments; provides education, training, and resources to expand the availability of culturally affirming treatment services; and advocates for changes to local and state-wide policies to advance equity for LGBTQ+ individuals living with mental health and substance use disorders. Envision:You prioritizes collaboration with partners and allies to enhance training, research, education, and resources to support LGBTQ+ Coloradans in achieving optimal mental health and wellbeing.



OVERVIEW

Envision:You 2020 Annual Impact Report Summary

LGBTQ+ Virtual Behavioral Health Support Program

Provided LGBTQ+ individuals impacted by COVID-19 with four, no-cost telehealth sessions. More than 700 people were provided with teletherapy. This program came out of an Envision:You statewide research survey looking at how Colorado's LGBTQ+ community was impacted by COVID-19.

How to Have the Talk

Statewide public awareness campaign that provides community members with the resources and language to offer support to a loved one struggling with a mental health challenge.

Envision:You LGBTQ+ Behavioral Health Provider Training Program

Training program designed to help direct service professionals develop new skills in providing culturally relevant and affirming behavioral health services to LGBTQ+ individuals.

Colorado Behavioral Health & Wellness Virtual Summit

Annual educational conference that unites clinicians, educators, researchers, and policymakers, empowering them to transform the behavioral health field by collaborating on innovative solutions to pressing mental health issues and disparities. We served over 500 people through 30 workshop sessions.

Public Affairs

With Brandeberry-Mckenna Public Affairs we elevated our profile with members of the Colorado General Assembly, the Governor's office, and key members of the Polis administration. Our leadership also met with legislators, cabinet officials, and partner organizations to advance mental health equity and improve outcomes for Colorado's LGBTQ+ community.

Looking Ahead to 2021

This year, we are implementing two initiatives focused on Technology & Innovation and Equity & Inclusion, demonstrating our commitments to both creativity and exploration, as well as to equitably serving QBIPOC and other multiply marginalized LGBTQ+ folks. Additionally, in partnership with Out Front Magazine, we will have a comprehensive insert in their May Mental Health Edition that highlights LGBTQ+ mental health concerns, stories from people with lived experience, interviews with prominent leaders, and LGBTQ+ affirming resources and services available across Colorado.



INITIATIVE

LGBTQ+ Virtual Behavioral Health Support Program



In 2020, we launched the Envision:You COVID-19 Behavioral Health Support Program, which provided LGBTQ+ individuals who have been affected by COVID-19 with up to four, no-cost telehealth sessions with a mental health clinician from a designated service provider from the Colorado Health Network, Khesed Wellness, or YouthSeen. More than 700 people were provided with teletherapy as a result of this program. As the devastating circumstances of the coronavirus pandemic persist and individuals are struggling to maintain good mental health, Envision:You will consider seeking additional funding to further expand this vital program.

The telehealth program was a response to data from a statewide research survey conducted in April 2020 to determine how members of Colorado's LGBTQ+ community were responding to the COVID-19 emergency. Respondents from 25 Colorado counties identified various struggles and needs, including a loss of support systems, barriers to behavioral health care (e.g., lack of insurance), and housing instability. Additionally, virtual focus groups and individual interviews were conducted in collaboration with our research partner OMNI Institute to gain further insight into how the community was managing during unprecedented circumstances. View the report [here](#).



INITIATIVE

How To Have The Talk Campaign



The goal of the How to Have the Talk campaign is to initiate supportive and caring conversations about mental health between friends and family members of LGBTQ+ individuals. To date, more than 30,000 individuals have viewed social media advertising connected to the campaign and print advertising has reached more than 50,000 people. More than 1,700 individuals were connected to the campaign through direct eNewsletter outreach. In 2021, live performances featuring drag performers modeling 'How to Have the Talk' will be performed in queer spaces, How to Have the Talk tip cards will be distributed statewide, and materials promoting the initiative will be prominently displayed at various PRIDE events across Colorado. The campaign will also launch Spanish language advertising to reach a wider audience. Intentional inclusive outreach is incredibly important to this effort. The initiative is made possible as a result of funding from Colorado COVID Relief Fund, Rose Community Foundation, and Caring for Denver Foundation.

Content for the campaign was developed with extensive input from members of the LGBTQ+ community to ensure its messaging resonates with its intended audience. View the landing page for this campaign at www.how-to-have-the-talk.org.



INITIATIVE

Envision:You LGBTQ+ Behavioral Health Provider Training Program

The training program is designed to help registered and licensed mental health clinicians, addiction counselors, and certified peer specialists develop new skills and gain critical knowledge to enhance the delivery of quality, culturally relevant and affirming behavioral health interventions for members of the LGBTQ+ community. In 2020, we piloted the Training Program for official launching in Q1 of 2021.

Level One: Constitutes a 90-minute on-demand, online training featuring dynamic content to include randomized testing that an individual must pass before signing up for the Level Two course.

Level Two: This is an eight-hour, comprehensive training offered either as a webinar split into two, 4-hour days or as an in-person 8-hour training. The interactive format ensures participants are engaged in the content, have the opportunity to interact with presenters and other participants, and leave feeling inspired and ready to provide affirming behavioral health services to members of the LGBTQ+ community.



Levels 1 and 2 of the Envision:You LGBTQ+ Behavioral Health Provider Training Program are designed to help participants:

1. Increase understanding of history, stigma, and disparities of the LGBTQ+ population;
2. Increase knowledge and understanding of LGBTQ+ affirming and inclusive language, along with the unique experiences and traumas of LGBTQ+ people;
3. Develop a foundation that allows for deeper exploration of best practices and considerations for behavioral health providers working with LGBTQ+ clients;

Continued on next page



Envision:You LGBTQ+ Behavioral Health Provider Training Program Continued

4. Increase understanding of the importance of using an intersectional lens in understanding LGBTQ+ clients' experiences and identities;
5. Enhance awareness of personal and systemic biases, how they influence institutional settings, and how to mitigate them within institutions to treat a diverse client base;
6. Expand knowledge on the cultural role of substance use among LGBTQ+ folks;
7. Identify and build understanding of the structural and administrative barriers that prevent LGBTQ+ individuals from receiving culturally responsive care in order to create more inclusive behavioral healthcare settings; and
8. Outline standard behavioral health practices that are particularly impactful when working with LGBTQ+ individuals.

Through the piloting of this program, we trained over 28 clinicians and direct care staff on how to provide competent and compassion-driven services to LGBTQ+ folks. Requiring and evaluating feedback from participants has been, and will continue to be, vital to the success of this program. **Click here** to learn more.



INITIATIVE
**Colorado Behavioral Health
& Wellness Virtual Summit**



The 2020 Colorado Behavioral Health & Wellness Summit united clinicians, educators, researchers, and policymakers, empowering them to transform the behavioral health field by collaborating on innovative solutions to pressing mental health issues and disparities. Through the exploration of revolutionary ways to spearhead systemic change, participants were motivated to discover new tools and resources while inspiring one another to discuss practical strategies for advancing interdisciplinary research, evidence-based practices, and radical diversity and inclusion within the behavioral health field.

The Summit's Opening Night included a keynote speech from Vic Vela of Colorado Public Radio and a panel discussion with Dr. Don Stader M.D., Dr. Apryl Alexander, Dr. Carl Clark, M.D., Representative Leslie Herod, and Vincent Atchity. The Summit's 30 sessions were streamed entirely online via the Pheedloop virtual event platform and covered a diverse array of behavioral health topics. The virtual platform also included session Q&A, networking tools, and an exhibit hall for participants to connect with one another throughout the Summit. More information about the Summit can be found at:
www.cbhws.org.

Continued on next page



Colorado Behavioral Health & Wellness Summit Continued

A Summit Snapshot:

- The event was open to the public at no cost.
- 521 people registered to participate in the Summit.
- There were a total of 60 speakers across 30 sessions in addition to the opening night event.
- The Summit was supported by 19 sponsors who each had a virtual booth in the exhibit hall and the opportunity to broadcast television quality advertisements throughout the conference.
- More than 100 individuals attended the Opening Night livestream on Monday night, and a total of 341 people accessed the Opening Night Session at some point during the conference.
- There were, on average, 20 live attendees and 20 session chat messages exchanged for each of the Summit's 30 sessions (600 total live viewings, and 602 total chat messages exchanged).
- Summit sessions were accessed a total of 1947 times throughout the entirety of the conference, indicating that many attendees accessed presentations on-demand after the live session time.
- All of the sessions will continue to remain accessible on the virtual event site until September 2021. Since the conference ended, sessions have been accessed an additional 117 times as of the 5th of January 2021.
- The 2021 Summit is scheduled for October 25-28 and will be delivered in a hybrid mode - in person and online.



INITIATIVE **Public Affairs**

In 2020, Envision:You sought to elevate the organization's profile with members of the Colorado General Assembly, the Governor's office, and key members of the Polis administration by engaging Brandeberry McKenna Public Affairs (BBMK). BBMK looked for opportunities to partner with the administration and work together to elevate issues of importance to both organizations. Key examples of these strategic projects included the recording of a PSA by



Governor Polis to encourage members of the public how to talk about mental health (e.g, How to Have the Talk), and a Podcast with Attorney General Phil Weiser to discuss raising awareness about the rise in substance abuse during the pandemic. These important projects not only provided an opportunity to advance our goals, but also positioned us as a partner with the Polis Administration as it advances significant changes in the delivery of behavioral health services in Colorado.

Additionally, Envision:You met with legislators, cabinet officials, and partner organizations to consider opportunities to advance mental health equity and improve outcomes for members of Colorado's LGBTQ+ community. This work included testifying for and against several pieces of legislation which affect LGBTQ+ community and mental health services more broadly (HB20-1086 "Insurance Coverage Mental Health Wellness Exam," HB20-1312 "Behavioral Health Training Requirements Educator License," HB20-1307 "Gay Panic or Transgender Panic Defense," HB20-1114 "Protect Minors from Mutilation and Sterilization"). We specifically testified in support of HB20-1086 at the request of State Representative Dafna Michaelson-Jenet, who continues to include Envision:You in her push for mental health services and support.



LOOKING AHEAD To 2021

Technology & Innovation Initiative

In 2021, Envision: You will implement strategic steps to develop a culture of innovation across our entire organization. By embracing values of technology, creativity, and self-reflection in the pursuit of our mission, we will increase the reach and efficiency of our programming, fundraising, and advocacy efforts. Beginning in February 2021, monthly programming and development innovation sessions will set aside time for our team to critically analyze our operations, identify shortcomings, and brainstorm unique solutions. Quarterly Innovation Labs will also provide a space for our team to conceptualize new ideas and explore possibilities for improvement. Frequent inspiration bulletins, lunch and learns, and resource sharing will further solidify our commitment to innovation in our day-to-day work. Through this initiative, we hope to better utilize our team's diverse skill sets and life experiences to enhance the ways in which we support, educate, and empower LGBTQ+ folks living with a mental health or substance use disorder.

Equity & Inclusion Initiative

Envision:You is committed to prioritizing and understanding the lived experiences of queer, Black, Indigenous, people of color (QBIPOC), as well as those with multiple intersecting identities. In order to best carry out our mission, Envision:You is dedicated to incorporating an intersectional lens to its current and future programs, as well as to its organizational standards. Through the implementation and continued re-evaluation of our Equity and Inclusion initiative, we will demonstrate our commitment to honoring the diversity within the LGBTQ+ community.

Queering Mental Health

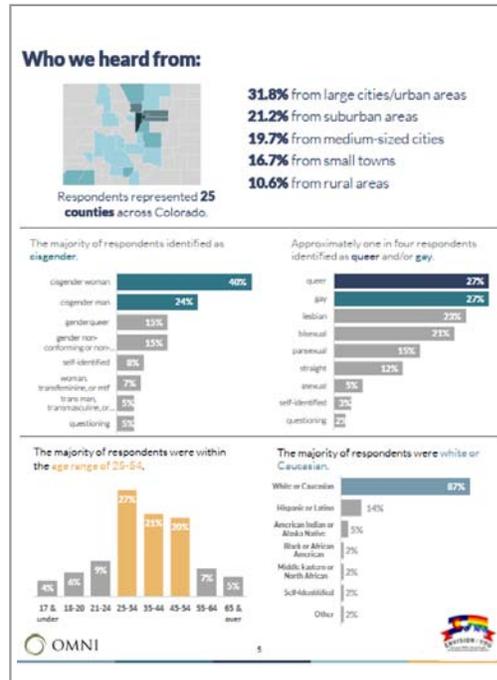
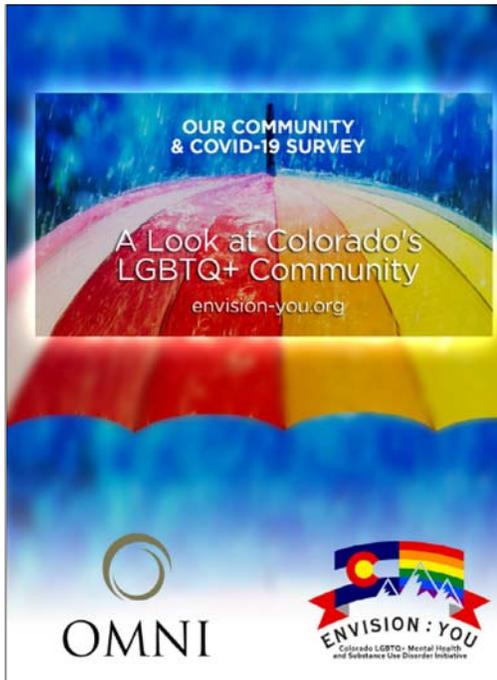
To coincide with Mental Health Awareness Month, Envision:You—in partnership with *Out Front*, Colorado's leading LGBTQ+ news and lifestyle magazine—produced a printed publication that highlighted the mental health concerns of queer people. Persons with lived experience shared their perspective, state leaders talked about their commitment to addressing desperate outcomes, equity, and access, in addition to highlighting various affirming resources and services available to individuals across Colorado. The 2021 edition will be on newsstands on May 7th. View the 2020 edition [here](#).



IN THE NEWS Survey Results

Our Community & Covid-19 Survey

In response to the coronavirus pandemic emergency, Envision:You partnered with OMNI Institute to assess how the LGBTQ+ community in Colorado was responding to the unprecedented circumstances. Nearly 300 individuals across the state completed a brief online survey, and representatives from several LGBTQ+ serving organizations shared their insights. Results from the survey indicated significant impacts to social supports, employment and housing among other concerns. **Click here** to learn more.





IN THE NEWS Monthly Newsletter

Empowered

In November of 2020 Envision:You launched a newsletter called Empowered. It is our intention to share important perspectives about issues of concern to members of the LGBTQ+ community, opportunities to engage in activities to promote wellness and well-being, and find affirming resources to enhance a person's mental health. Look for Empowered every month!

Click here to learn more.



Dry January for a Healthier New Year

Dry January is a public health campaign that was started in 2012 by the U.K. based charity Alcohol Change U.K. Now a New Year's challenge that millions take part in around the globe, it's meant to give those who participate a chance to reset their relationship with alcohol. There are many different reasons people choose to be sober for 31 days. For some, Dry January is a way to cut back on their drinking after the holidays. Others do it just to see if they can. The challenge is also used by those who suspect they might have a problem with alcohol.

Regardless of the reason people participate, many who do have reported many benefits to giving up drinking alcohol. According to the Alcohol Change U.K. website, 86% of participants saved money, 70% had better sleep, 66% had more energy, and 65% reported generally improved health. In a survey of 800 people who participated in Dry January completed in 2018, the average number of drinks consumed per

day had decreased and stayed down seven months after the challenge. One of the less tangible but no less important benefits of Dry January is the opportunity to assess your relationship with alcohol.

According to Steven Haden, CEO of Envision:You and licensed psychiatric rehabilitation counselor with the Mental Health Center of Denver, "Generally, for the average person, admitting you have a problem is very difficult. Even though I think we have made significant strides in how the general population views substance use disorders, we still have a long way to go."

This is particularly true for those who are a part of the LGBTQ+ community, where alcohol has often become a normalized way to socialize. In a survey of LGBTQ+ Coloradans conducted by CMH in partnership with Envision:You, 25% of lesbian, bisexual, and gay respondents reported binge drinking compared to 16% of heterosexual respondents. This is a trend that is unfortunately observed across the board when

5 HEALTHY TIPS
... for setting goals as we approach the new year

1. Reflect on your short-term and long-term priorities.
2. Establish SMART goals – Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound.
3. Break down goals into smaller, actionable tasks.
4. Accessibility is key, try verbalizing your goals to another person and writing them down.
5. One day at a time. Setting goals during a global pandemic can feel pointless. Forgive yourself if circumstances outside of your control derail your goals. Always prioritize your health over your productivity.

LEARN MORE

FRESH PRESS

In *The Importance, Benefits, and Value of Goal Setting*, Leslie Ringold, a professor of Psychology at Northwood University, breaks down past and present research on goal setting and the impact it can have on everything from professional success to mental health. Even the existence of a goal can increase the amount of mental energy and time we spend on that area of our life—goals help motivate action and build resiliency in the face of potential barriers. Setting goals has been shown to help improve the success of treatment for mental health, and is used in several current types of psychotherapy as a major tool. It's important to set realistic goals and continue to evaluate their effectiveness as time goes on. Research supports that potentially an even better predictor of whether a goal will be accomplished is if it is written down and communicated to someone else.

LEARN MORE

01.2021 | EMPOWERED

DRY JANUARY continued

It comes to substance use and the queer community. They often self-medicate to deal with discrimination based on sexual or gender orientation, rejection from friends and family who don't accept their identity, and other minority stresses.

This year with the COVID-19 pandemic the drinking landscape looks a little different. Retail alcohol sales have trended upward since March as many people have turned to alcohol to cope with stress. It is important to note that, according to the director of the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, alcohol misuse can lead to impaired immune system function as well as increased susceptibility to respiratory illness.

With this in mind, it might be a good time to evaluate your drinking habits. If you decide to participate in Dry January, identify healthier coping mechanisms beforehand that you can use as an alternative to drinking. You can also use the official app from Alcohol Change U.K. Try Dry, a great tool all year for those who are considering sobriety. Even if you aren't participating, make sure to support those around you who do!



71% of LGBTQ+ Coloradans say that most people in their state are not able to get substance abuse services and it's a problem.

ADVOCATE DARCEY CUNNINGHAM

Darcey Cunningham (she/her) is a Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC) and a certified eye movement desensitization and reprocessing therapist at the Mental Health Center of Denver. Darcey is passionate about providing trauma-informed, and affirming care for the LGBTQ+ population. In her role as the clinical program manager at Envision:You, she helps develop and deliver training for other behavioral health care providers to create culturally affirming practices.



PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT: HOW TO HAVE THE TALK

We know that substance use and mental health issues do not get better when they are ignored—in fact, they are likely to get much worse. Stigma surrounding the receipt of mental health services is among the many barriers that discourage people from seeking help, especially among members of the LGBTQ+ community. The How to Have the Talk program is a public awareness and social media campaign that aims to foster healthy conversations about behavioral health in the LGBTQ+ community. The campaign provides education and resources to help individuals feel more comfortable giving support and reaching out.



LEARN MORE

COMMUNITY PARTNER

The Mental Health Center of Denver has been an invaluable partner to Envision:You from its inception. The organization is a primary partner in the Colorado Behavioral Health & Wellness Summit, and also received Envision:You's corporate

Lean on Me award this year. Most importantly, the Mental Health Center of Denver demonstrates a devotion to increasing access to culturally relevant and identity affirming mental health services and programs, including those available to the LGBTQ+ community.



LEARN MORE

Envision:You For more information on Envision:You visit our website, envision-you.org or contact us at info@envision-you.org

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IN THE NEWS Highlights

Virtual Roundtable: How we can help in times of crisis

MAY 11, 2020

Click here to learn more.

LGBTQ+ Mental health needs: Envisioning a better Colorado

MAY 11, 2020

Click here to learn more.

Queering Mental Health: An introduction

MAY 11, 2020

Click here to learn more.

Envision:You & Caring for Denver Foundation announce telehealth program for LGBT community

MAY 26, 2020

Click here to learn more.

Envision:You presents 2020 "Lean on me" awards

JULY 31, 2020

Click here to learn more.

Envision:You launches the "How to have the talk" campaign

NOVEMBER 13, 2020

Click here to learn more.

Envision:You announces inaugural board of directors

DECEMBER 9, 2020

Click here to learn more.

Envision:You launches "Empowered" newsletter

DECEMBER 31, 2020

Click here to learn more.

