

COLORADO LGBTQ+ BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

STATE OF THE STATE SURVEY REPORT



BLACK
TRANS
POWER



The State of our State
Key Findings

2021



To review the final results of the entire research report, go to:
www.envision-you.org/state-of-the-state

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This report reflects a collaborative effort by the following organizations:



Key Findings

Love who
you are



OVERVIEW

LGBTQ+ community members face a variety of unique behavioral health risks and needs. Experiences of discrimination, violence, and challenges with family and social support of LGBTQ+ identities all increase the risk for poor behavioral health outcomes.³ Community members can also face a range of barriers to accessing quality treatment and supports— in addition to financial and logistical challenges, it can be very difficult to find a provider or support group that adequately addresses mental health needs in the context of LGBTQ+ identity. This section of the report provides an overview of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), mental health and substance use experiences and diagnoses, and impacts on day-to-day life for survey and interview participants.



Key Takeaways



Adverse childhood experiences are common

Over 45% of survey respondents reported living with someone with mental health issues and/or experiencing some degree of verbally abusive behavior by adults in their households. 85% respondents reported at least one adverse childhood experience.



Many folks have substance use or mental health concerns that are unrecognized or undiagnosed

Over a quarter of survey respondents were worried about undiagnosed or unrecognized mental health concerns and 7% were worried about substance use concerns. Approximately 1 in 4 reported that their primary providers had not asked about their mental health and 34% had not been asked about their substance use.



Finding treatment and support that meets folks' needs is difficult

It is important that providers are aware of and understand queer and trans identities, yet folks are often burdened with educating providers or finding themselves as the only person with particular identities in support or treatment settings.



Feeling safe is critical to recovery

One of the most important aspects of treatment and recovery is ensuring access to safe and stable places, from inpatient treatment settings, to social support and home environments. Interview participants emphasized that focusing on cultivating a sense of safety such as paying special attention to trans and queer specific needs (e.g., nongendered rooms) is sometimes more effective than focusing solely on behavioral health issues and behaviors.



OVERVIEW

In order to best understand the behavioral health needs and experiences of the LGBTQ+ community, it is critical to understand how individuals are positioned to access the care that they need. Access to insurance, type of insurance coverage, readiness and ability to ask for and seek care, and the accessibility of services are chief factors that impact individuals' ability to get help. LGBTQ+ folks may experience a multitude of barriers in accessing care – insurance coverage of behavioral health care and gender affirming care is still not universal; there is a lack of providers who practice LGBTQ+ affirming care; and stigma prevents many folks from seeking care, particularly mental health care. Navigating the vast landscape of services to identify safe and appropriate care options can require additional emotional and physical labor by those in need. This section of the report explores individuals' care seeking behaviors and barriers and facilitators to accessing care.

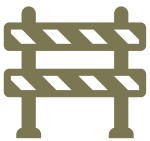


Key Takeaways



Many folks aren't receiving the help they need – even when they ask for it

There is a clear unmet need for folks getting help when they are not feeling well, either physically or mentally. Approximately 1 in 5 survey respondents did not receive help when they asked for it. An additional 1 in 5 did not ask for help even though they needed it.



Trans folks are experiencing significantly more challenges when accessing care

Across measures, trans respondents reported more challenges in accessing care. From navigating providers to accessing spaces and services, trans folks were more likely to report experiencing discriminating or non-affirming language, practices, or interactions.



There is a need and desire for improved resources that help individuals identify LGBTQ+ affirming providers

Nearly every single survey respondent said that they would use a resource of LGBTQ+ affirming health care providers if one were available and that currently available resources are hard to trust or out of date.



OVERVIEW

Beyond addressing systemic barriers to care access for LGBTQ+ Coloradans, it is vital that behavioral health, treatment, and recovery services are of high quality. Providers must recognize their responsibility to meet the nuanced needs of their clients, including respecting and being knowledgeable of their gender and other intersecting identities. This section of the report provides an overview of survey and interview participant experiences in treatment and recovery, including important aspects of diagnoses, types of treatment received, and how participants experienced aspects of providers that are important for receiving high-quality care.



Key Takeaways



Simple steps can be taken to improve LGBTQ+ experiences in care

Survey respondents engaged who engaged with behavioral health providers identified key steps providers can take to improve services, indicating providers' shortcomings in having LGBTQ+ inclusive signage and failing to ask for and use the name and pronoun identified by the client, rather than legal names.



Folks hold differing levels of trust with types of providers

Survey and interview participants most often reported receiving therapy and counseling as types of treatment for disorders. They were more likely to disagree with mental health and substance use diagnoses received from counselors and/or psychotherapists, than from medical doctors or psychiatrists or physician assistants.



Authenticity, acceptance, training, and affordability were all key areas in which providers could do better

The top qualities and interactions sought from providers included authentic attention in care; acceptance of LGBTQ+ patients and diverse relationships (e.g. poly, kink, and non-monogamous relationships); training for providers and staff; and affordability of services.

Individual and Community Strengths and Supports



OVERVIEW

Isolation is a key risk factor impacting behavioral health outcomes. Having a robust support system, knowing that there are people who care about you and whom you can rely on, and feeling like you have a community that you belong to can help promote positive health outcomes. By developing a better understanding what support systems are holding our community members up – or failing to do so – we can better identify gaps in community building and outreach efforts to make sure no one in our community feels alone.



Key Takeaways



Most folks felt supported by someone in their lives

Friends were considered to be an important source of support by the majority of survey respondents and were also considered to be the most supportive source in people's lives. When asked whether there are people in their life who care about them, nearly nine in ten respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they have someone in their life who cares about them.



There is a need for community building

Approximately a third of respondents did not feel that they have a community to which they belong. Having a sense of belonging is a strong safety net that can support positive health outcomes, particularly among those belonging to marginalized communities.



COVID-19 has had a significant impact on people's support systems

COVID-related restrictions have had a major impact on individuals' abilities to connect with one another, further isolating those who were already alone and breaking down systems of support. Over a third of respondents indicated having experienced a loss of their support system(s) as a result of COVID-19.