

COLORADO LGBTQ+ BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

STATE OF THE STATE SURVEY REPORT



BLACK
TRANS
POWER



The State of our State
Executive Summary

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:



A woman with blonde hair and colorful eye makeup (pink, blue, and white) is looking upwards. She is wearing a grey t-shirt with the text "Love who you are" written in a cursive font. The background is a blurred green, suggesting an outdoor setting. The entire image has a semi-transparent green overlay.

Executive Summary

Love
who
you
are



OVERVIEW

State-level efforts to understand and address LGBTQ health and behavioral health inequities in Colorado have largely focused on overall health outcomes, providing only high-level insights into the behavioral health needs and outcomes in the community and unable to dive into the depths and nuances therein. To begin addressing these gaps, Envision:You, in partnership with the OMNI Institute and an expert advisory group, sought to conduct a statewide assessment to document and understand Colorado LGBTQ+ individuals' behavioral health needs and experiences, with particular attention paid to intersectionality of sexual orientation, gender identity, race/ethnicity, and geography. 588 community members from across Colorado responded to an online survey, findings which were further contextualized through 17 community member interviews.



Mental Health & Substance Use Experiences

LGBTQ+ community members face a variety of unique behavioral health risks and needs. Early and compound trauma, including stigma and internalized stigma, can impact behavioral health outcomes later in life. These can be further compounded when individuals lack important protective factors such as lack of social supports.

Time affected by mental health during the past 30 days



Over a quarter of survey respondents experienced service challenges such as unrecognized or diagnosed mental health concerns, and/or primary providers not asking about mental health at all.



28% of respondents are worried about their mental health and that their concern has not been diagnosed or recognized



26% of respondents did not have their primary provider ask them about their mental health



34% of respondents did not have their primary provider ask them about their substance use



Impacts on Well-Being

I deal effectively with daily problems



I am able to cope with crisis



I am able to handle my emotions



I do well in social situations



I do well in school and/or work?



Prefer not to answer
 Strongly Disagree
 Disagree
 Agree
 Strongly Agree

Self-Harm

Serious Thoughts of Self-Harm

- **Over two-thirds of respondents** indicated that they had seriously considered harming themselves on purpose at some point in their life (65%)

Self-Harm Behaviors

- Among those who had seriously considered harming themselves on purpose at some point in their life, **three in four respondents** had engaged in self-harming behavior(s) at some point in their life (75%)

Suicide

- 1 in 2** respondents had seriously considered suicide in the at some point in their life
- 1 in 10** trans and non-binary respondents had seriously considered suicide in the past 30 days
- 1 in 15** respondents who are not trans and non-binary had seriously considered suicide in the past 30 days
- 1 in 2** respondents had attempted suicide at some point in their life



I think it is hard as a queer person to feel safe in general. And when it comes to mental health, it's basically essential to feel safe in a space before you can start healing and working on recovery or progress.

- Interview Participant





Access to Care

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 still prevents folks from seeking care, particular mental health services. Navigating the vast landscape of services to identify those that are affirming, let alone a provider that also meets additional needs such as taking insurance, being conveniently located, practicing trauma-informed care, or having expertise in substance use treatment, often requires additional emotional and physical labor by those in need.

43%

Of respondents either asked for help and did not receive it or did not ask for help when they needed it



The top barriers to asking for or being able to receive services were:

Readiness to seek care



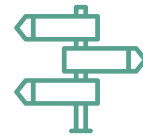
Accessibility of services



Lack of LGBTQ+ friendly services/providers



Navigation of the provider landscape



Top 5 Spaces Respondents Had Difficulties Accessing



SUPPORT GROUPS OR RESOURCES



PUBLIC BATHROOMS



MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES



SEXUAL OR REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH SERVICES



MEDICAL OR PRIMARY HEALTH CARE



What do survey respondents want most from their health care provider?

- Having LGBTQ+ inclusive forms
- Accepting insurance
- Specialization in LGBTQ+ health topics
- Use of gender neutral language when discussing health topics



Experiences in Treatment & Recovery Services

In order to access services alone can be a major challenge for LGBTQ+ -- yet how do those services even look once they are able to get there? Providers must recognize their responsibility to meet the nuanced needs of their clients and practice LGBTQ+ affirming care. Failure to do so can lead to increased trauma and hesitancy to access care in the future. For those experiencing mental health or substance use related concerns, access to services that are safe, affirming, and relevant is particularly crucial.



1 in 5 respondents indicated a behavioral health care provider had **invalidated** their identity(ies)



1 in 10 respondents indicated a behavioral health care provider had **tried to change** their identity(ies)

Where are outpatient providers falling short?

At least 1 in 5 participants indicated that the most recent behavioral health provider they saw...



...had signs, posters, and other visible signals that the office setting is LGBTQ+ friendly



...used or providing a program, module, or curriculum that was designed specifically for use with LGBTQ+ populations



...asked about sexual orientation, gender identity, and/or relationship status



...asked about and addressing them by their correct pronouns



...had gender neutral restrooms in the office and/or clinic setting



...used gender neutral language when talking about reproductive health, sexual health, or relationship status



In what areas do folks think behavioral health providers could improve?



Improve accessibility and convenience of services



Provide more resources



Use people's correct names and pronouns (and ask for them)



Practice trauma informed care



Care more about them and pay attention to what they're saying



Accept community members from all backgrounds (and be ready to provide culturally responsive services)



Increase affordability of services



Train up on what practicing LGBTQ+ affirming care (and be transparent when you lack that training)

Individual & Community Strengths and Supports

A sense of community and belonging – feeling like there are people in your life that you can count on and who support you – is a key protective factors promoting 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.

Reflecting on the last 30 days...



89%

of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they feel like people care about them



67%

of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they feel like they belong to a community



Where are people finding support?

At least 3 in 5 participants indicated that feel somewhat or very supported by...

Friends



Family



Therapists



Online Spaces



36%

of respondents experienced a loss of their support system(s) as a result of circumstances related to COVID-19 (n=531)

What helps folks feel seen?

Interview participants noted that using affirming language, feeling supported in their gender identities and sexual orientations, and having access to networks of social support make them feel seen. For trans and nonbinary participants, gender affirming activities such as wearing clothes that matches their gender identity and expression can be an important activity for self-care and self-respect. Having the space to engage in gender-affirming activities, especially for queer and trans youth, can help boost self-esteem and feelings of safety.