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# Colorado Justice Report

NEWSLETTER OF THE COLORADO CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM COALITION

Winter 2013

1212 Mariposa St. #6, Denver, CO 80204  
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www.ccjrc.org info@ccjrc.org

Founded in 1999, CCJRC is a network of organizations, faith communities, and individuals working to reverse the trend of mass incarceration in Colorado

## Getting Healthcare - We all need it. Do you have it?



*Have you ever been sick or injured but didn't go to a doctor because you don't have the money or health insurance?*

*Have you ever gone to an emergency room for medical care because you don't have your own doctor?*

*Have you ever struggled with addiction or mental health issues but couldn't afford or find treatment?*

*Have you only been able to go into treatment after you've been arrested or couldn't continue in treatment after you finished your sentence?*

*Are you getting healthcare in prison for a chronic condition (like high blood pressure, diabetes, Hepatitis C, HIV) and are worried about getting healthcare after release?*

Tens of millions of people in the United States do not have insurance and struggle to get the healthcare they need, including mental health and substance abuse treatment. Limited access to treatment and the dominant approach of criminalization in the war on drugs have fueled unnecessary suffering, over-policing and mass incarceration, particularly for poor people and people of color.

CCJRC has long advocated for a complete redesign of drug policy grounded in a health-approach that prioritizes prevention, early intervention, harm reduction, and treatment on demand. For the first time, this dream has the potential of becoming closer to reality.

Although we understand and respect that there is a lot of controversy and unanswered questions about the federal Affordable Care Act (also known

as Obamacare), we believe that the potential benefit for people in the criminal justice system is enormous. Also, there is the real possibility that people won't end up in the criminal justice system at all if they can access substance abuse or mental health care through our health system as required by Obamacare.

To seize this opportunity for expanded access to treatment, CCJRC has launched an effort to ensure that people in the criminal justice system know about the NEW healthcare options. CCJRC has also joined forces with the Colorado Center on Law & Policy to coordinate a stakeholder group of community advocates, criminal justice agencies and healthcare and treatment providers to ensure people involved in the criminal justice system have equal access to care.

Starting *January 1, 2014*, most people involved in the criminal justice system will be eligible to receive healthcare and treatment either through Medicaid or an affordable insurance plan. (More details on these options below.)

There are still a lot of unanswered questions about how people in the criminal justice system are going to access health insurance through Medicaid or the private market, get the treatment they need, and coordinate with criminal justice agencies like pretrial services, probation and parole.

We aren't going to sugar-coat it. The changes under Obamacare are extensive and complicated. Utilizing Medicaid to pay for substance abuse and mental health treatment for people in the criminal justice system will require a level of coordination and collaboration between these three systems that has never existed before. But people are working it out day by day.

Hopefully, the following information will give you some direction as you think about your healthcare needs and how to be involved in making sure you (and your family) get enrolled in Medicaid or an affordable private insurance plan.

### What are my options for getting healthcare coverage?

Starting January 1, 2014, people will have expanded access to health insurance either through Medicaid or an affordable private health insurance plan. Medicaid is free health insurance and available to all people in Colorado who are U.S. citizens and earn less than 138% of the federal poverty level. People who do not qualify for Medicaid can buy an affordable health insurance plan with subsidies available through the federal government.

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**What is Medicaid?**

Medicaid is a government insurance program to pay for medical and health-related services for people with low income. Medicaid covers doctor visits, hospital services, substance abuse treatment, mental health treatment, family planning, prescriptions, and some transportation for medical care—everything that you would receive from a private insurance plan.

**Who is eligible for Medicaid?**

As of January 1, 2014, US citizens and legal permanent residents who earn less than 138% of the federal poverty level based on household size will be eligible for free health insurance through Medicaid. The following chart summarizes the income thresholds for Medicaid eligibility:

Household size	Maximum annual household income
1	\$15,282
2	\$20,628
3	\$25,975
4	\$31,322
5	\$36,668
6	\$42,015
7	\$47,361
8	\$52,708
Each Additional	Add \$5,347

**Q. How do I apply for Medicaid or private health insurance?**

If you are in prison, talk with your case manager. DOC has said that they plan to help everyone in prison start the Medicaid enrollment process prior to release. If you are already on parole, you can talk to your parole officer or your TASC case manager. They may or may not be able to give you much information or assistance but it's worth a try. All county Department of Human Services should be able to help you apply.

You can also go to the website [Coloradopeak.force.com](http://Coloradopeak.force.com) to apply on-line or call 1-800-221-3943. There is a single application process for Medicaid and affordable private insurance. The Regional Care Collaborative Organizations (RCCO) listed below can also help you. The Denver County Sheriff's Department is also launching an effort to help people leaving jail enroll in Medicaid as they are released. We have not yet heard whether other county jails will try to do the same.

**Q. What information do I need to start the enrollment process?**

You will need the following information for your application: Full names, dates of birth, and Social Security Numbers for everyone applying. If working, paycheck stubs and information about how much someone makes at their job, how often they are paid, and how many hours a week they work.

Information about any other income like child support, disability payments, etc. Information about your monthly bills (housing, electricity, gas, phone, water, trash, child-care, etc)

Healthcare continued

**Q. Are people currently involved in the criminal justice system eligible for Medicaid?**

Whether someone is or is not eligible for Medicaid will depend on the way s/he is involved in the criminal justice system. For example,

Status	Eligibility
Probation, Parole or Bond	You ARE eligible for Medicaid while on probation, parole or bond
Incarcerated – serving sentence in a prison or jail	You are NOT eligible for Medicaid if you are incarcerated. The only exception is if an “inmate” is hospitalized for more than 24 hours, then Medicaid can pay the hospital bill. You may be able to start the enrollment process prior to release—check with your case manager or re-entry program
Community Corrections - Residential Status (both diversion and transition clients)	You are NOT eligible for Medicaid. Federal rules consider people living in a halfway house to be “incarcerated” and not eligible for Medicaid. You may be able to start the enrollment process prior to release –check with your case manager or DOC liaison.
Community Corrections - Non-Residential Status and people in halfway house as condition of parole or condition of probation	Eligibility is unclear. It is unclear whether people who are on non-residential status in community corrections (both diversion and ISP-I transition clients) are ineligible. It is also unclear whether people living in the halfway house as a condition of probation or a condition of parole are considered ineligible under federal rules. CCJRC is working on getting clarification on the rules.

**Q. Once I have Medicaid, how do I find a doctor?**

There are groups called Regional Care Collaborative Organizations (RCCO) that are responsible for helping people with Medicaid insurance, find a doctor and coordinate care.

In Colorado, there are 7 RCCO regions:

**Region 1: Rocky Mountain Health Plans**, 970-254-5771 or 800-667-6434, [www.acc.rmhp.org/Home](http://www.acc.rmhp.org/Home) (Western slope and central mountain counties, including Larimer)

**Region 2: Colorado Access**, 303-368-0035 or toll free 1-855-267-2094, [www.coaccess-rcco.com](http://www.coaccess-rcco.com) (North East counties, including Weld)

**Region 3: Colorado Access**, 303-368-0035 or toll free 1-855-267-2094, [www.coaccess-rcco.com](http://www.coaccess-rcco.com) (Adams, Arapahoe, Douglas counties)

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**Region 4: Integrated Community Health Partners**, toll free 1-855-959-7340, [www.ichpcolorado.com](http://www.ichpcolorado.com)  
(south central and eastern counties, including Pueblo)

**Region 5: Colorado Access**, 303-368-0038 or toll free 1-855-384-7926, [www.coaccess-rcco.com](http://www.coaccess-rcco.com) (Denver)

**Region 6: Colorado Community Health Alliance**, 303-260-2888, <http://cchacares.com/en-us/home.aspx> (Jefferson, Clear Creek, Gilpin, Broomfield)

**Region 7: Community Care of Central Colorado**, 719-314-2560 or toll free 1-866-938-5091, [www.mycommunitycare.org](http://www.mycommunitycare.org)  
(El Paso, Elbert, Teller, Clear Creek)

**Q. Once I have Medicaid, how do I find a mental health or substance abuse treatment provider?**

There are groups called Behavioral Health Organizations (BHO) that are responsible for helping people with Medicaid get mental health and substance abuse treatment services. Each BHO has a network of substance abuse and mental health treatment providers and community mental health centers. All the treatment providers in the BHO network are required to accept Medicaid. In Colorado, there are 5 BHO regions.

**Access Behavioral Care** - 303-751-9030 or toll free 800-984-9133 [www.coaccess.com](http://www.coaccess.com) (Denver)

**Behavioral Healthcare, Inc.** 720-490-4400 or toll free 877-349-7379 [www.bhicares.org](http://www.bhicares.org) (Adams, Arapahoe, Douglas counties)

**Colorado Health Networks** - (800) 804-5008 toll free [www.coloradohealthpartnerships.com](http://www.coloradohealthpartnerships.com)  
(Alamosa, Archuleta, Baca, Bent, Chaffee, Conejos, Costilla, Crowley, Custer, Delta, Dolores, Eagle, El Paso, Fremont, Garfield, Grand, Gunnison, Hinsdale, Huerfano, Jackson, Kiowa, Lake, La Plata, Las Animas, Mesa, Mineral, Moffat, Montezuma, Montrose, Ouray, Otero, Park, Pitkin, Prowers, Pueblo, Rio Blanco, Rio Grande, Routt, Saguache, San Juan, San Miguel, Summit, Teller)

**Foothills Behavioral Health Partners** - 303-432-5950 or toll free 866-245-1959 [www.fbhpartners.com](http://www.fbhpartners.com) (Boulder, Broomfield, Clear Creek, Gilpin, Jefferson)

**Northeast Behavioral Health Partnership** - 970-347-2366 or toll free 888-296-5827 [www.nbhpartnership.com](http://www.nbhpartnership.com) (Cheyenne, Elbert, Kit Carson, Larimer, Lincoln, Logan, Morgan, Phillips, Sedgwick, Washington, Weld, Yuma)

For people on criminal justice supervision (parole and probation), this may be where you notice the biggest change if Medicaid is used to pay for substance abuse and/or mental health treatment. As we understand it right now, people under criminal justice supervision will first go to a mental health clinic or licensed clinician for an assessment.

If the person is diagnosed as being in need of substance abuse or mental health treatment, then Medicaid can be used to cover the costs of treatment so long as these services are "medically necessary." The treatment provider will most likely be required to communicate with the probation or parole officer about attendance and progress in treatment. If you are under supervision, you will need to work closely with your parole (or probation) officer.

## Because you matter...that's why...

I was recently diagnosed with skin cancer on my face. Not shocking since I had spent most of my childhood playing outside and I grew up during a time when it was more likely that we would drench our skins in cooking oil and broil ourselves in the sun then it was to put sunscreen on and wear hats. The reality for many of us, I think, is that most of us grew up with that feeling of invincibility and that we could experiment with our bodies without consequence. Long-term side effects weren't an issue when we were looking for short term pleasures.

Drugs, alcohol, bad food, cigarettes and risky behavior in general marked adolescence and early adulthood for most of the people I grew up with. The last thing we thought about was health insurance or consistent medical care. We went to the emergency room if something catastrophic happened. We didn't know or care about preventative care because it was an expense that didn't fit in our budgets or we didn't have jobs that offered health insurance. For some, those lifestyle choices began causing health problems. For some it created problems with the criminal justice system and for some it was both.

When I was arrested for drug possession, I needed to go to treatment or else I was going to prison. I also needed mental health treatment and although I didn't know it at the time, I also needed medical care. I was a single parent with two kids and a couple of part-time jobs. Drug treatment was expensive and there weren't any other options available to me so I ended up in prison for six years. When I arrived I also tested positive for Hepatitis C which was just quietly growing and slowly destroying my liver but since I wasn't critically ill the Department of Corrections would not offer treatment.

When I was finally released, I struggled just like most people on parole. Although I had a full-time job, it didn't pay enough for me to get insurance and the company that I worked for didn't offer it. So even though I was sick there was nothing I could do about it and my family needed me to be healthy.

In 2006 I started a new job that offered health insurance and went to the doctor immediately. I was diagnosed with depression and Hep C, the biopsy showed that I had reached stage 1 cirrhosis and they started treatment within a few weeks after the diagnosis. Within six months I was completely cleared of the virus and seven years later I am still virus free. When I was finally given the opportunity to take care of myself I jumped at the chance because the truth of the matter is, we never know what is going to happen, and I realized how much my physical and mental health really matters.

The new options now with healthcare reform can make a big difference in your life, if you take advantage of it. Now, you have the opportunity to take control of your health, not only for yourself, but for your family as well. Being able to get the care you need for your health needs can be a huge part of your success not just on parole but in moving forward in your life.

Last week I finished with the chemo on my face. We caught it early and my doctor said the treatment went well. There is a certain feeling of wholeness that goes along with having your own doctor, that you have someone on your side who knows who you are and the issues that you have and wants to help you be in the best health possible. The relief is more visible than the cancer was and I am grateful everyday for the opportunity to take care of myself and I hope that you will be too. Please be proactive about this. You matter – take care of yourself.