



Mental health conditions affect millions of people nationwide. In Colorado, recent data show both signs of improvement and continued challenges in access, especially for young people and other communities facing barriers to care.

Mental Health in the United States

- **23.4% of U.S. adults - 61.5 million people - experienced mental illness in 2024.** That is more than 1 in 5 adults. ^[1]
- **5.6% of U.S. adults - 14.6 million people - experienced serious mental illness in 2024.** ^[1]
- More than **1 in 7 U.S. youth ages 6-17** experience a mental health disorder each year. ^[1]
- **50% of lifetime mental illness begins by age 14 and 75% by age 24.** ^[1]
- Only **52.1% of U.S. adults with mental illness received treatment in 2024**, underscoring persistent gaps between need and care. ^[1]

Mental Health in Colorado

- In 2021-2023, **26.8% of Colorado adults had any mental illness in the past year**, compared with 23.0% nationally. ^[2]
- During the same period, **6.9% of Colorado adults experienced serious mental illness**, compared with 5.8% nationally. ^[2]
- Among Colorado adolescents ages 12-17, **22.7% experienced a major depressive episode** in the past year. ^[2]
- In 2025, nearly **21% of Coloradans age 5 and older reported poor mental health**, down from 26.1% in 2023. The Colorado Health Institute notes that improvement was not evenly distributed across populations. ^[3]

Access to Care

- Colorado youth showed meaningful improvement in access: the share of middle- and high-school-age youth reporting difficulty getting needed mental health care fell from **21.0% in 2023 to 7.5% in 2025.** ^[3]
- Young adults ages 18-24 continued to experience high rates of poor mental health and barriers to care in 2025. ^[3]
- In 2025, **14.4% of women** in Colorado reported being unable to get needed mental health care, compared with **10.0% of men.** ^[3]

Demand for Behavioral Health Care in Colorado

- Behavioral health claims in Colorado **more than doubled from 2.9 million in 2019 to 6.3 million in 2025.** ^[4]
- The number of people represented in behavioral health claims grew from about **450,000 in 2019 to 720,000 in 2025.** ^[4]
- Behavioral health telehealth use has remained comparatively steady after the pandemic, demonstrating continued demand for remote behavioral health services. ^[4]
- Mental health remained the **top diagnosis category for telehealth services across demographic groups** in Colorado; generalized anxiety disorder was the leading mental health telehealth diagnosis in 2023. ^[4]
- In 2021, more than **25,000 Colorado emergency department visits** were related to mental health or potential self-harm. Among youth under 18, these visits increased 158% from 2016 to 2021. ^[4]

Who MDCC Served in 2025

830

CLIENTS SERVED

675 through outpatient services and 155 through community-based care. ^[5]

10,619

THERAPY SESSIONS

8,655 outpatient sessions and 1,964 sessions in community-based settings. ^[5]

56%

TRAUMA HISTORY

More than half of clients served had a reported history of trauma. ^[5]

49%+

RACIALLY / ETHNICALLY DIVERSE

18% Hispanic/Latino/a, about 12% Black/African American, and about 11% multiracial; race/ethnicity was unknown for about 6%. ^[5]

Additional Client Characteristics

- **11%** of clients identified as individuals with disabilities. ^[5]
- **10%** identified Spanish as their language. ^[5]
- **2%** reported no stable housing, and **2%** were veterans. ^[5]



MDCC's Impact in 2025

Children First: Bringing Care Into Schools

In 2025, MDCC's Children First Program expanded access to school-based mental health support across Denver Public Schools through the dedication of graduate interns, serving **155 unique children through 1,964 counseling sessions**.^[5]

By providing care in schools, Children First helps bring mental health support into settings where children already spend their day while giving therapists-in-training supervised experience serving young people and families.^[5]

Outpatient Counseling: Accessible Care Across the Lifespan

In 2025, MDCC's Outpatient Services provided accessible, high-quality therapy for children, adolescents, and adults across the lifespan. The program served **675 unique clients through 8,655 sessions**, delivering consistent, compassionate care tailored to each individual's goals, strengths, and lived experiences.^[5]

Individual therapy represented 88.87% of services provided, reflecting strong demand for personalized, one-on-one support.^[5]

Building the Behavioral Health Workforce

MDCC's model addresses both sides of the mental health access challenge: providing care today while preparing the behavioral health workforce needed for tomorrow. In 2025, therapists-in-training provided **4,308 hours of clinical service**, including 3,432.58 hours from unlicensed clinicians and 875.83 hours from interns.^[5]

Sources

[1] **National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)**. *Mental Health By the Numbers*. Reviewed and updated 2025.
<https://www.nami.org/mental-health-by-the-numbers/>

[2] **Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)**. *Behavioral Health Barometer: Colorado, Volume 8 - Indicators as Measured in the 2021-2023 National Surveys on Drug Use and Health*. SAMHSA Publication No. PEP25-07-009, 2025.

[3] **Colorado Health Institute**. *Mental Health in Colorado: Are Things Really Getting Better?* May 11, 2026; updated July 31, 2026.
<https://www.coloradohealthinstitute.org/research/mental-health-colorado-are-things-really-getting-better>

[4] **Center for Improving Value in Health Care (CIVHC)**. *Data Dive: Mental Health Care in Colorado*. May 28, 2026.
<https://civhc.org/2026/05/28/data-dive-mental-health-care-in-colorado/>

[5] **Maria Droste Counseling Center**. 2025 program, client demographic, service utilization, and clinical training data supplied by MDCC; includes Children First and Outpatient Services figures.

Notes: Data reflect the reporting period identified by each source and should not be interpreted as estimates from a single year. Measures such as "any mental illness" and "poor mental health" use different definitions and are not directly comparable. Percentages may not total 100% because of rounding and unknown/missing demographic data.

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