

THE ASCENT

A community approach to putting patients first



December 2018

Western Colorado Leadership Group

Welcome to The Ascent, an e-resource from the Western Colorado Leadership Group that brings you timely, targeted news each month--news about population health, payment reform and the people working to pursue better care, lower costs and a healthier community.

Leadership



Leadership: Chris Lindley, MPH, MBA, Director, Eagle County Public Health and Environment

Chris Lindley has led Eagle County Public Health and Environment since May 2017. Previously, he served in several roles with the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, but his career path also includes military service as an Army environmental science officer and as founder of two health and fitness brands in Colorado. He earned a master's degree in public health from Emory University and a master's degree in business administration from Washington University.

Ascent: Access to mental health services is an issue affecting many in the region. What is Eagle County Public Health's approach to meet this need?

Lindley: We want to see same-day behavioral health services, seven days a week for anyone in need in Eagle County.

We are collaborating with many groups. One recent success is the arrival of the Hope Center to the Eagle River Valley. The Hope Center is a non-profit organization that provides free service to anyone in crisis, regardless of economic status. Any time there is a call involving a potential mental health patient, a licensed crisis clinician co-responds with law enforcement and/or paramedics to stabilize the patient in their home and connect them to the most appropriate care in the days and weeks following the call for help. The volume of calls they are getting really highlights the challenge; there is a lot of need for help and there is not a lot of access to services. Eagle County as a government entity, as well as all local law enforcement and county paramedics, are contributing to funding this organization. In addition, Rob Katz, CEO of Vail Resorts, and his wife Elana Amsterdam recently committed to contributing financial support to this model. [Read more.](#)

Ascent: From your point of view, what role does engaging community leadership play in the success of the RAE?

Lindley: It's absolutely essential. The RAE will not be supported or effective if it's not working with the key leaders in the community. Our heads of law enforcement, pre-hospital care, school superintendents, mental health providers and health care executives meet monthly to hash out what's working, what's not, and how we are collectively going to make the needed improvements. The challenges we face in mental health are collective problems, and we are committed to working collaboratively to address these problems as a community. We have hard, frank conversations about where the gaps are in the system, and who can be doing things better. This is the type of group the RAE must engage with and listen to and we are asking RMHP for commitment in sitting down at the table with us to develop solutions for how we can improve mental health care in our region. [Read more.](#)

Ascent: Can you share some of the population health priorities you have for the Vail-Eagle/I-70 corridor communities?

Lindley: We have many priorities, but to name a few: We want to build a crisis stabilization unit and social detox joint facility in the Eagle River Valley; we are working to increase the number of school-based mental health counselors from six to 17; and we want to ensure long-term funding for the Hope Center.

We hope the crisis stabilization unit will be co-located with a social detox center and respite care unit. We want to share resources and personnel to create a one-stop shop for people in need of behavioral health support. One of the challenges we face is the need for state licensing agencies to become flexible with state waivers, so we can best capitalize on space and staffing. [Read more.](#)

Social & Behavioral Health Integration

Research explores social determinants of health for young adults

Adolescents and young adults experiencing health disparities have much to gain when providers account for social determinants of health. In new research, innovative strategies in seven states, including Colorado were examined to identify success factors and synergies. Across all programs, forming community partnerships across multiple sectors that address social determinants was a crucial factor to enhance access and inform collaboration efforts. ([UCSF research](#))

Community health workers bring insider view to care team

Community health workers bring a deep understanding of local issues and resources to the care team. They often speak the patient's language (figuratively and, often, literally) and help patients navigate care and treatment plans. Now, academic medical programs are introducing doctors in residency programs to the ways community health workers can help them identify the hidden factors that influence patient health. Community health workers act as preceptors for residents at the Perelman School of Medicine's program, so they can more effectively leverage them as part of the multidisciplinary team. ([AAMC News](#))

Homeless camp sparks supportive housing initiative

Supportive housing is in the works in Minneapolis, spurred by the presence of about 120 homeless living in a camp just outside the city. A coalition of 90 faith-based organizations, Beacon Interfaith Housing Collaborative, has launched a campaign to raise \$1.5 million in private funds to build 70 new apartment units with on-site case managers to connect residents with employment assistance, drug treatment, health care and other services. Aligned with the Housing First approach, the project will be geared to those who may have criminal histories, substance abuse problems or other issues that make it hard to find permanent housing. Although Beacon has a history of developing affordable housing, it's starting this project from scratch and doesn't expect to have the new units ready for several years. ([Minneapolis Star Tribune](#))

Childhood trauma may disrupt how pain is processed

Chronic pain is quite real for the sufferers, but providers may be puzzled when there's not a clear cause for ongoing pain. Research demonstrates that trauma—especially childhood trauma—may be a factor in how people process and manage pain. Excessive stress can produce stress hormones that disrupt brain development in childhood and increase sensitivity to pain later in life. Fortunately, therapy to reduce stress can help; the American Academy of Pain Medicine advocates for wider use of psychology in pain management. ([KCUR](#))

Payment Reform

Integrated behavioral health finds success in Iowa, Tennessee

Multi-disciplinary teams that integrate behavioral health specialists and care management are making the mind-body connection work for Iowa and Tennessee Medicaid patients. The pilot resulted in better patient care and savings (by reducing hospital stays and readmissions, specialist appointments and ER visits), so health plan CareMore is scaling the model. ([Harvard Business Review](#); [Forbes](#))

IT interoperability critical for value-based payment reform

The health care industry is lagging in IT interoperability, one of the key elements needed to transform health care into a system that pays for value, according to HHS Deputy Secretary Eric D. Hargan. The government is looking to the private sector to accelerate innovation and interoperability; it's also looking at regulatory reform to identify rules on the books that may impede progress toward value-

based models. Roundtables with industry leaders have examined HIPAA and anti-kickback laws with an eye towards changes to make innovation and transparency the rule rather than the exception. ([RevCycleIntelligence](#))

Care Coordinator Spotlight



Paige Loura, San Juan Basin Public Health

Paige Loura returned to her native Seattle after college in Boulder, but what she learned here about how people and the systems in which they live are intertwined—and how those systems can affect individual and public health—brought her back to Colorado. ([Spotlight](#))

Practice Transformation

The Primary Care [Transformation Resources Catalog](#), sponsored by the Colorado Health Extension System, features dozens of opportunities to enhance practice efficiency and effectiveness. It will help you assess where you are and where you want to go—and it will allow you to match resources with needs.

For more information, contact
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About the Community

Western Colorado is creating an accountable community that uses health IT in a meaningful way, adopts value-based payment models, coordinates care and empowers patients to take charge of their health. We aspire to ensure the following:

- High-quality health care is affordable and accessible to all.
- Those who purchase health care are assured that care is effective, safe and appropriate.
- Patient care is a team effort, with roles that are well-defined, connected and collaborative.
- Patients have access to the support and information they need to take charge of their health and make their own decisions.
- Payment reform will foster reimbursement models that support accountability for population health and resource use.
- Information technology supports population health, helping providers predict outcomes, prioritize interventions and prevent disease.
- Health data is a community resource used in a secure way to support coordinated care at the population, practice and personal levels.
- Investments in information technology and health system transformation will improve quality of life and economic well-being across the state.
- Health is a community resource that requires leadership, stewardship, individual responsibility, community support and ongoing maintenance.

About RMHP

Founded in Grand Junction, Colo. in 1974, as a locally-owned organization, Rocky Mountain Health Plans provides access to affordable, quality health care enabling its more than 229,000 members across the Western Slope to live longer, healthier lives.



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