

THE ASCENT

A community approach to putting patients first



November 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: Matthew Dodson, Director, Archuleta County Department of Human Services

With 20 years of experience in human services, Dodson is a leader in efforts to provide financial services and protective/prevention services to assist individuals and families. Dodson was honored as the Colorado Human Services Director Association's first Director of the Year in 2017, and, under his direction, Archuleta County Department of Human Services received a Distinguished Performance Award from the State of Colorado. He is a member of the Colorado Human Services Directors Association, Best Practices Court Team, Axis Mental Health Board of Directors and Colorado's Human Trafficking Council. Dodson represents Southwest Colorado in numerous committees and work groups that influence policy development and reform. In 2017, he was accepted as an Aspen Institute Ascend Fellow. Dodson is a licensed clinical social worker and earned his master's degree in social work from New Mexico Highlands University-Farmington.

Ascent: How have things changed in the past five years in Archuleta County in the way families and children are served?

Dodson: In Archuleta County, we've implemented several major changes in the way we deliver services to children and families. Most important is our goal at ACDHS to always remember the importance of customer service, an integral part of our job, and the experience we deliver to those we serve.

We use a two-generational approach that considers the needs of both children and their caregivers. These programs are designed to assure that services support the whole family in reaching self-sufficiency, so that opportunity becomes a family tradition. It's a concerted effort from leadership to case managers—it's probably the most significant change we've made. When we're working to help someone become more employable, for example, it becomes a work ethic tradition for the entire family. [Read more.](#)

Ascent: How are you making connections for families between health and social services?

Dodson: The answer really goes back to that intentional use of a two-generational approach. Health and human services are intrinsically linked. We are very proud of the relationships we have across sectors, including those with our local health department, community mental health providers, business and non-profit community, school district and the citizens of Archuleta County. We're highly engaged in developing and maintaining these relationships, recognizing that each sector has a role to play in helping individuals succeed. [Read more.](#)

Ascent: What's next? What's your vision to further advance social health and well-being?

Dodson: Given the recent election and anticipated changes in the federal and state Human Services administration, it's paramount that we are mindful about the transition planning process and sharing our vision for making Archuleta and, in general, Colorado, the best place to raise a child. We need to

continue on the road to:

- Invest in prevention and early intervention child welfare strategies;
- Ensure at-risk and aging adults are healthy, safe and thriving in our communities through integrated, community-based services;
- Do our best to provide employment and economic opportunities for the entire family and break the cycle of crisis and poverty;
- Increase access to adequate child care and access to high-quality early childhood programs and services; and
- Develop deeper coordination with our public health partners to support activities for physical, emotional and behavioral health. The further we can get upstream with prevention, the less likely the person will cross over the threshold into crisis.

Social & Behavioral Health Integration

Loneliness, social isolation increase risk of dementia by 40 percent

The largest study yet of the link between feeling lonely and experiencing dementia found that social isolation is associated with a 40 percent greater risk of dementia. The study, sponsored by the National Institute on Aging and the Social Security Administration, administered questionnaires and cognitive tests to more than 12,000 participants, following up with them every two years for up to a decade. The effects of isolation were uniformly applicable across gender, race, ethnicity or education, as well as whether there is social contact with friends and families. ([United Press International: Journals of Gerontology](#))

History lesson confirms trauma affects health for generations

Descendants of Civil War veterans who spent time as prisoners of war experience shorter life spans than those descended from soldiers who were not captured and imprisoned, a new study finds. The genetic evidence of the effects of trauma on generations is even more astounding when comparing sons of Civil War POWs conceived *before* the war versus those born *after* the war; the older sons enjoyed a longer lifespan than their younger brothers. Daughters in the family lines, however, showed no such early mortality. The trend holds steady no matter how poor or prosperous the family was after the war, indicating it's a function of either genetics or epigenetics—affecting the Y chromosome in particular—that makes the difference. ([Los Angeles Times](#))

Rising housing costs play big role in financial instability

Housing costs are rising while wages remain close to stagnant, putting families who devote a large part of their income to housing at higher risk when other big bills come in. And that leads to greater financial instability, a new Urban Institute brief finds. Families who rent are more likely to experience a major expense than homeowners, although lower-income homeowners also reported that making ends meet is a struggle. ([Urban Institute](#))

Screenings for abuse and interpersonal violence fail to make an impact

Screenings for intimate partner violence, elder abuse and abuse of vulnerable adults are not a mature science, a new meta-analysis finds. The screenings themselves vary broadly in accuracy; screening tools for elder abuse and abuse of vulnerable adults fared the worst. Even when screenings uncover an abusive situation among pregnant or post-partum women, improvement in quality of life doesn't improve demonstrably over the next 3 to 18 months. ([JAMA Network](#))

Payment Reform

They're back: HHS reinstating mandatory bundled payments

Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar says bundled payments will shift from voluntary to mandatory demonstrations mode soon, reversing the course set by his predecessor, Tom Price, who cancelled or rolled back mandatory models a year ago. In remarks to the Patient-Centered Primary Care Collaborative, Azar says bundled payments are part of the value-based transformation his department envisions for the future of Medicare; look for mandatory bundled payments for cardiac episodes, radiation oncology and other areas. ([Becker's Hospital CFO Report: Azar's remarks](#))

More flexibility coming from CMS to pay for social health needs

In a separate address, Secretary Azar indicated programs to help Medicare and Medicaid recipients pay for stable housing and food access are in the works. In remarks Nov. 14, Azar said HHS, which spends more than \$1 trillion a year for health coverage for seniors and low-income people, could likely spend less by aligning traditional health and social health needs. While he did not offer details on what such a program would look like, he did urge people to "stay tuned to what CMMI is up to." ([Modern Healthcare](#))

Member Spotlight



Gloria Summers, Cortez, Colo.

For most of her 58 years, Gloria Summers lived with low hearing. "I've had a hearing loss my whole life," she says. "I did have a hearing aid back in the early 90s, but I lost it." All that changed last year. ([Spotlight](#))

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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