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## **Colorado's Mental Health System Honors Innovation, Commitment**

*Colorado's First Lady Applauds Local and Statewide Leaders*

DENVER—Colorado's community mental health system served a record 84,500 people across the state last year, while 15.1 percent of Colorado's residents reported receiving some form of mental health treatment from public and private providers last year.

Mental health leaders from across the state met this week to honor leaders and programs that have shown great innovation to address some of the industry's most pressing concerns. One of these innovative programs strives to keep people healthy, while the other award-winning program has helped one health system retain its employees, which is critical to the stability of the center and the communities it serves.

"All of Colorado's community mental health centers and clinics are award-winners in my eyes," said Colorado First Lady Jeannie Ritter, who delivered the keynote address. "I am inspired to hear the word 'recovery' everywhere I go. Thousands of people are recovering and leading better lives thanks to this innovative and effective system."

Jefferson Center for Mental Health earned the Golden Light Bulb Award from the Colorado Behavioral Healthcare Council (CBHC) – an award that recognizes excellence in clinical innovation. Jefferson Center's *wellness now! Program* was designed with consumer involvement to provide numerous wellness classes and services focusing on quality behavioral health education and prevention for total integrated health. It is helping serve more people with mental health needs, while enhancing the recovery of Jefferson Center consumers.

Southeast Mental Health Services earned the Golden Abacus Award, an award that recognizes impact and innovation in the non-clinical arena. To minimize the costs associated with employee turnover; this healthcare system developed an employee orientation process that has increased employee voluntary retention significantly. The orientation program strives to build trust within the organization, inspire pride in the work, and create enjoyment among co-workers.

In addition, Linda Gabel, Chairperson of the Board of Directors for the Larimer Center for Mental Health (LCMH), received the Outstanding Board Member Award. Gabel is the Director of Business Operations for Colorado State University's Residential Services. The devastating mental illness that went undiagnosed and then misdiagnosed in her adult son ended in tragedy when he took his own life in 2005. Turning this tragedy into opportunity, Gabel draws on her son's strength to advocate for accessible mental healthcare today.

"We all have a stake in serving unmet mental health needs in Colorado," said George DelGrosso, Executive Director of CBHC. "People with untreated mental illness consume much more medical care than the average individual, which drives up the cost of healthcare for everyone. This unmet need also is driving up costs within the criminal justice system, and lowering productivity in the workplace."

CBHC is a nonprofit membership organization that represents Colorado's statewide network of community behavioral healthcare providers (including 17 community mental health centers, two specialty clinics, and five behavioral health organizations). Members contract with the State of Colorado and others to provide comprehensive, community-based behavioral and psychiatric services to more than 84,500 people across the state. CBHC members provide a network of skilled therapeutic and community resources to meet the mental health need of individuals and families. Thousands of people, once isolated and disabled by mental illness, are now leading productive and satisfying lives thanks to Colorado's award-winning community mental health system. For more information, visit [www.cbhc.org](http://www.cbhc.org).

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## Background

Serious mental health disorders affect more than 60 million Americans, including one out of every four families in Colorado. It will impact about half of us during our lifetimes. In addition:

- In Colorado, 15.1% of the population reported receiving mental health treatment in a 2007 report “Ranking America’s Mental Health.” About 12% of the population reported not seeking health care because of cost.
- One out of five people in Colorado needs mental health treatment each year, but less than one-third of those people who need services receive care. That lack of care resulted in suicide, lost productivity, and homelessness for many of the 600,000 individuals who went untreated in 2000. These numbers continue to rise.
- Colorado has the seventh-highest suicide rate in the nation. About 90% of those who attempt suicide are struggling with depression or another mental health disorder, many of which are undiagnosed and/or untreated.
- Colorado industry loses \$886 million a year in productivity due to untreated depression.
- In 2001, Colorado ranked 31<sup>st</sup> nationally for publicly funded mental health care, spending just over \$64 per capita. That was 21% below the national average of \$81 per capita that year. That funding was cut by another 25% over the next two years. It’s estimated that the state’s budget cuts in 2002-2004 may have eliminated/reduced mental health services to more than 30,000 people.
- Significant disparities exist in access to mental health care for racial, ethnic, and sexual minority groups, for people with disabilities, and for people living in rural areas of the state.
- According to the 2007 Census by the U.S. Census Bureau, there are 813,00 people living in Colorado who do not have health insurance (16.7%). About two-thirds of the uninsured are owners of small businesses or their employees. The percentage of people covered by government programs such as Medicare and Medicaid is rising, while the percentage of those with employment-based coverage continues to decline.
- Emergency room visits in Colorado for people with a mental health or substance abuse problem, and who had no private insurance, grew by 83% between 2001 and 2004. The trend continues to rise.
- *Mental illness is more common than cancer and diabetes.*
- *Mental illness costs the U.S. economy more than \$80 billion annually.*
- *People with serious mental illness lose 25 years of life expectancy and the loss is due primarily to cardio vascular disease.*
- *About 25% of all hospital admissions involve a mental-health or substance- abuse issue.*
- *About 90% of those treated with a combination of medication and therapy experience a partial to full recovery.*