

# Experience & Access Trends in Colorado Youth Mental and Behavioral Health



The Colorado Health Access Survey (CHAS) is the state’s primary longitudinal dataset for evaluating health insurance coverage, care utilization barriers, and social factors. Understanding trends is essential to developing effective policy and practice solutions matched to youth needs.

## Key Takeaways

CHAS findings indicate that while Colorado youth experience elevated mental health needs relative to other states, service access has remained steady.

1. After some concerning trends, youth mental health is showing signs of improvement.
2. Colorado youth tend to have more mental health issues but better access to care compared with youth in other states.
3. Youth are more likely than adults to speak to a provider about mental health concerns.

## Evidence Insights

### Insight 1. Youth mental health is leveling off after a decade of worsening trends.

In 2025, 18.4% of Colorado's youth reported 8 or more days of poor mental health in a month, down from 21.9% in 2023 (Figure 1).

The youngest Coloradans (ages 5–11) are still showing concerning upward trends.

### Insight 2. Urban and rural communities have similar rates of poor mental health.

Poor mental health among youth does not vary by Behavioral Health Administrative Service Organization (BHASO) region (Figure 2).

However, in 2023, rates of suicide among youth ages 10 to 24 in rural parts of the state were 35% higher than the state average.

Figure 1. Colorado Youth (Ages 5–24) Experiencing 8 or More Days of Poor Mental Health a Month

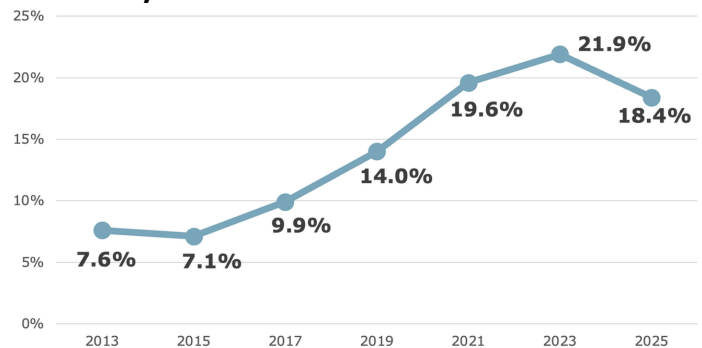
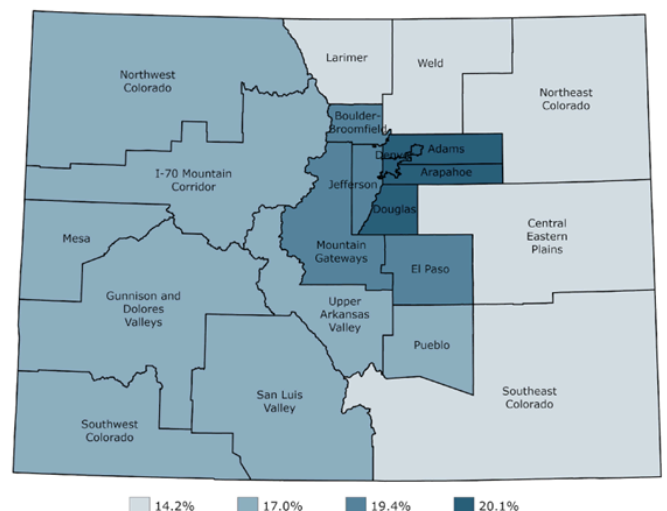


Figure 2. Colorado Youth (Ages 5–24) Experiencing 8 or More Days of Poor Mental Health a Month, by BHASO



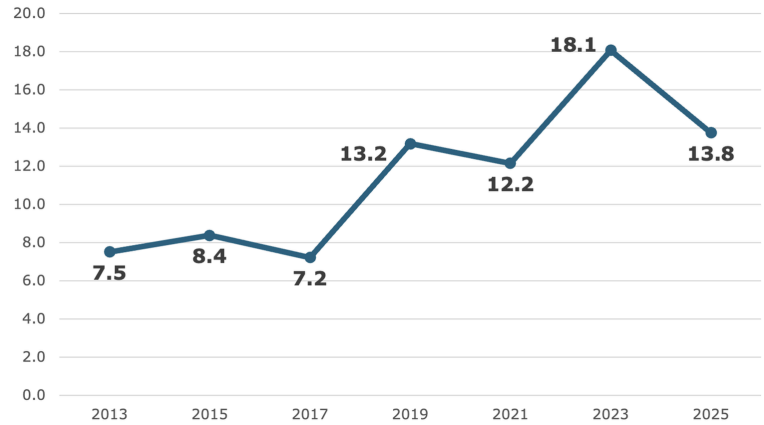
### Insight 3. Access to mental health care for Colorado's youth remains stable.

After a 2023 spike, issues with access to mental health care have returned to pre-pandemic levels (Figure 3). Mental health care access problems for youth ages 12 to 17 dropped by half in the past 2 years.

In 2025, youth with private and public insurance had similar access to needed mental health care. For all Coloradans (youth and adults), uninsured people are more likely to not get needed care compared to their insured counterparts.

It is now more common for Colorado youth to talk to medical professionals about mental health. In 2025, 23.2% of Colorado youth talked to a general doctor and 22.2% talked to a mental health provider. This compares to 14.4% and 17.6% in 2017, respectively.

Figure 3. Colorado Youth (Ages 5–24) Who Did Not Get Needed Mental Health Care Services in the Last Year

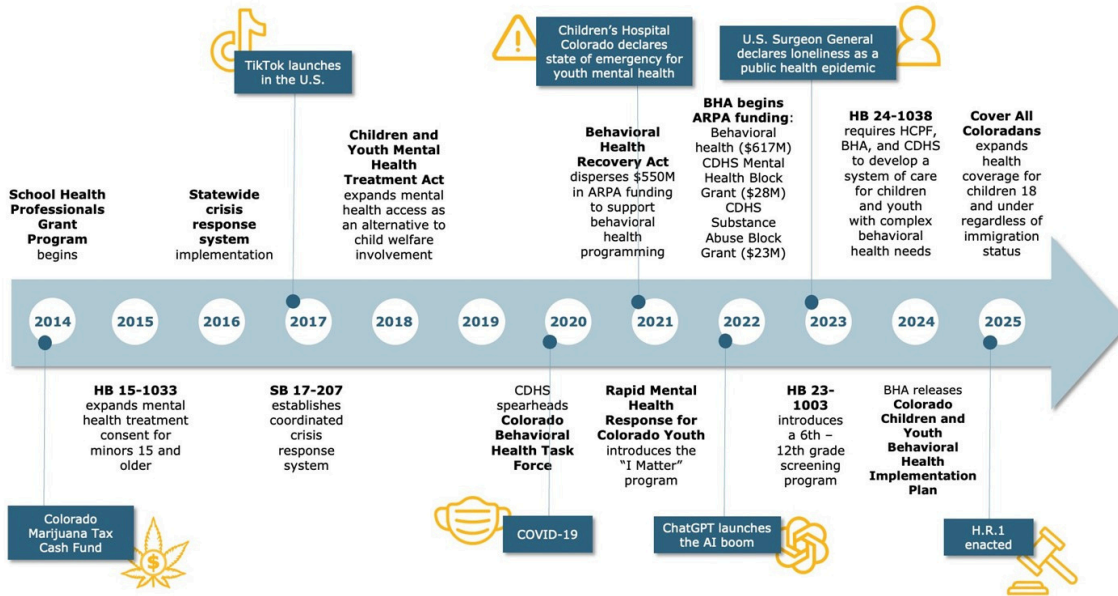


## Policy Implications and Actions

### Building on Colorado's Historic Investments in Youth Mental Health

CHAS data reflects that improving access to care is not an accident. This is the result of strategic, sustained investments in Colorado's behavioral health infrastructure across branches of government. These investments have helped to stabilize care delivery despite unprecedented demand (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Timeline of Colorado's Sustained Investments in Youth Mental Health



While youth mental health is stabilizing, most indicators are still worse than pre-pandemic. There is now an urgent opportunity to build on this foundation by looking beyond accessing care to deeply examine the quality of care—to ensure that every young Coloradan gets the right care at the right time.



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