

# A Colorado Call to Action for Boys' and Men's Mental Health

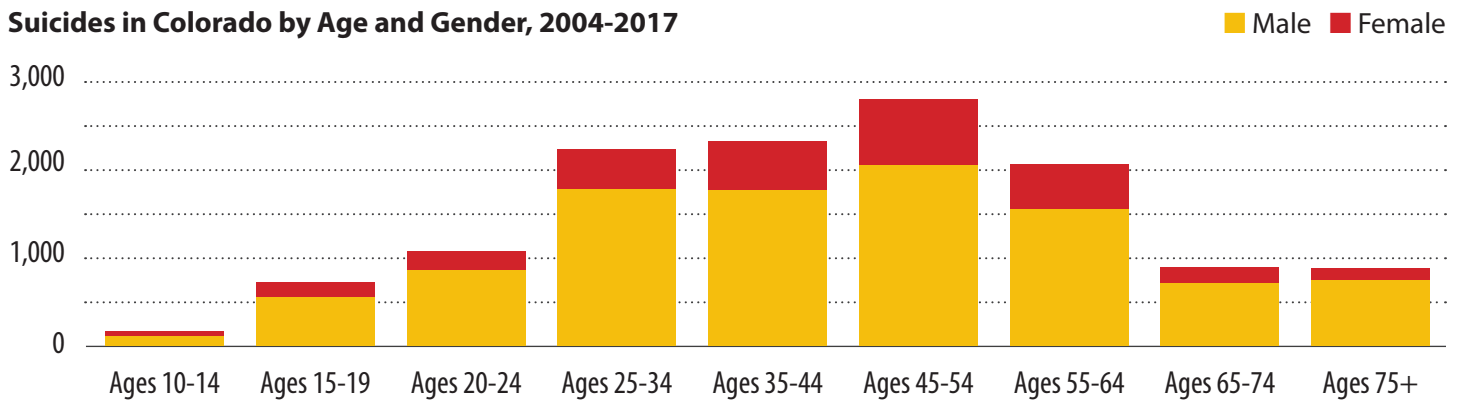
SCHOOL EDITION



## BACKGROUND

Colorado is making meaningful investments in improving both physical and behavioral health. While the state has a reputation as a lean, physically active state, Colorado's substance use and suicide rates are among the highest in the nation. Like every other aspect of whole-person health, promoting mental wellness begins with children and youth. The State Innovation Model released a call-to-action report with a 10-year roadmap to improve the behavioral health of boys and men.

Suicides in Colorado by Age and Gender, 2004-2017

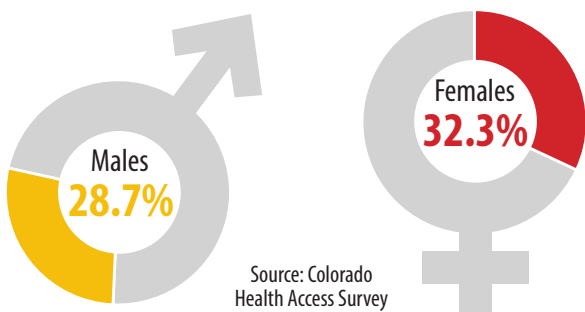


Source: Colorado Violent Death Reporting System

While behavioral health is an integral part of everyone's lives, we know that boys and men are less likely to seek social supports and professional help when they need it, leading to delays in diagnosis and treatment that can have serious consequences.

**Males in Colorado are about 3X as likely as females to die by suicide.**

Percentage of Coloradans who talked to a professional about their mental health, 2017



Source: Colorado Health Access Survey

## Half of mental health conditions develop by the time someone reaches adolescence.

Three-fourths occur by age 24. While rates of depression, anxiety, and other conditions are roughly the same among females and males, boys and men are less likely than girls and women to engage in help-seeking behaviors. Youth who are LGBTQ+, belong to racial and ethnic minorities, and who have a history of trauma are put at higher risk by health inequities, racism, discrimination, and lack of access to critical resources.

## WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

Colorado youth spend more than half their lives in educational settings. Research shows that they are more likely to seek out support when it is talked about and offered in a school environment, and that youth benefit from discussing behavioral health with trusted adults. Good behavioral health also matters to educational achievement. Students who access behavioral health services are more than twice as likely to stay in school as their peers who do not.



# How can you help?

Teachers, coaches, school administrators, and other trusted adults can all make a difference in the lives of young people. While Colorado as a whole needs to focus on building better systems of care and increasing access to treatment and other resources, each of us can play our part every day in creating a culture of health.



## Start the conversation

- Talk about social and emotional well-being and behavioral health in school settings
- Leverage school counselors, school resource officers, health care providers, and nonprofits to help offer support and facilitate conversations



## Create a culture of mental health

- Make behavioral health part of your school's overall strategic plan
- Incorporate social and emotional learning into your day-to-day curriculum
- Make sure to take care of your own behavioral health



## Build positive environments

- Locate behavioral health resources in the school to help normalize the subject
- Create safe, wellness-oriented spaces where students can practice mindfulness and de-stress



## Reduce stigma

- Use person-first language (e.g. "people with addiction" instead of "addicts")
- Incorporate behavioral health education



## Get trained

- Train teachers and staff in Youth Mental Health First Aid
- Seek out suicide prevention trainings offered by local or regional public health and health care agencies



## Screen for risks

- Use evidence-based screening tools to identify students at risk
- Establish relationships with local health care providers who can screen students



## Connect to care

- Integrate behavioral health into school-based health care services
- Establish relationships with local health care and crisis service providers

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

- Colorado Crisis Services: 844-493-8255. Text "TALK" to 38255. <https://coloradocrisiservices.org/>
- Mental Health Colorado: Mental Health Toolkit for Schools [https://www.mentalhealthcolorado.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/School\\_Mental\\_Health\\_Toolkit\\_Interactive\\_Final.pdf](https://www.mentalhealthcolorado.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/School_Mental_Health_Toolkit_Interactive_Final.pdf)
- Colorado Office of Suicide Prevention <https://www.colorado.gov/cdphe/categories/services-and-information/health/prevention-and-wellness/suicide-prevention>
- Sources of Strength <https://sourcesofstrength.org/>
- Let's Talk Colorado <https://letstalkco.org/>
- Colorado State Innovation Model: <https://www.colorado.gov/healthinnovation>
- Colorado SIM Call-to-Action Report: <http://bit.ly/mental-health-call-to-action>
- Mental Health First Aid Colorado: <http://www.mhfacolorado.org/>



**SIM**  
State Innovation Model

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