

mhsu alliance  
of larimer county

# STRATEGIC PLAN

# 2024



**OCTOBER 10,  
2024**

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The Mental Health and Substance Use Alliance ("MHSU Alliance", or "the Alliance") is facilitated and supported by the Community Impact Team with the Health District of Northern Larimer County. To learn more, please visit [www.healthdistrict.org](http://www.healthdistrict.org).

The 2024 Strategic Plan report was prepared by Hannah Groves, Shelley Marie, Cassi Niedziela, Abby Worthen, Alyson Williams, and others at the Health District of Northern Larimer County who work with the Alliance. The contents of the Strategic Plan are the results of the time and effort of the MHSU Alliance Steering Committee from January – September 2024.



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# GLOSSARY OF TERMS

We like to be clear about what we mean when we use certain terms. Below is a list that provides definitions of terms used throughout the Strategic Plan. This list is not all-inclusive, so if there's confusion on something, reach out to Alliance Staff at [CIT@healthdistrict.org](mailto:CIT@healthdistrict.org).

**Behavioral Health:** An umbrella term for all “the emotions and behaviors that affect your overall well-being”, which can include mental health challenges, diagnoses, or other struggles including substance use/misuse/disorders. (Source: [Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services](#))

**Behavioral Health Administrative Service Organizations (BHASO):** Stated for 2025, BHASOs will “establish, administer, and maintain regional networks of behavioral health care providers that serve people across Colorado.” (Source: [Colorado Behavioral Health Administration, 2024](#))

**Care Coordination:** The organization of a patient’s care across multiple health care providers. Note this refers to services provided to an individual. (Source: [Centers for Medicare and Medicaid](#))

**Coordination of Care:** The organization of a patient's care across multiple healthcare providers to ensure that patient needs are met and high-quality care is delivered. This requires multiple service providers to work together and is conducted at a systems-level. This is often used interchangeably with “care coordination” but for the purposes of the Strategic Plan, we are defining them separately. (Source: [Agency for Healthcare Research & Quality](#))

**Crisis Continuum:** Also referred to as a “behavioral health crisis system”. Both terms refer to “an organized set of structures, processes and services that are in place to meet all the urgent and emergent behavioral health crisis needs of a defined population in a community, as soon as possible and for as long as necessary”. (Source: [Crisis Roadmap](#))

**Interoperable:** The ability of different information systems to work together and share information. (Source: [Colorado Health Institute & The Office of Health Information Exchange, 2021](#))

# GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**Lived & Living Experts:** Also called “people with lived & living experience”, these are individuals in the community who identify as having direct experience with mental health, substance use, or other behavioral health struggles and/or triumphs and are engaging with the Alliance outside of an organization. In other words, they are participating on their own time. These individuals have interacted with behavioral health systems, treatment, or resources as clients/patients seeking services.

**Peer/Peer Support/Peer Work:** A “peer” refers to someone who shares lived and/or living experience with another person and can guide or walk with them as they navigate their lives, including specific challenges with behavioral health. For more/different perspectives, please refer to some of our Members who provide peer services in Larimer County:

- [The Yarrow Collective](#)
- [North Colorado Health Alliance](#)

**Regional Accountability Entity (RAE):** Organizations that coordinate the health care of Health First Colorado (Colorado's Medicaid program) members. (Source: [Colorado Health Institute](#))

**Social-Emotional Screening:** Social-emotional screening is an applied method for detecting and monitoring signals that indicate whether a young child may be delayed in aspects of social-emotional development, such as communication, autonomy, affect, and interaction with people. (Source: [Ages and Stages](#))

**Recovery:** A process of change that helps people improve their health and/or well-being. (Source: [SAMHSA](#)) Every person in recovery has unique goals and sources of truth and healing. Please note that recovery may or may *not* include abstinence from substances or other behaviors. The path of recovery is up to the individual!

**Wraparound Support (or Services):** This term refers to a holistic, patient-centered approach to providing support to an individual with behavioral health challenges, ensuring support and continued care in and out of clinical spaces. Wraparound services can include case management, counseling, medical care and health services, family services, social work, housing assistance, and dietitian assistance. (Sources: [Rural Health Information Hub](#), [National Wraparound Initiative](#))

# ALLIANCE OVERVIEW

The Mental Health and Substance Use Alliance (“MHSU Alliance” or “the Alliance”) is an unincorporated nonprofit association comprised of individuals and organizations in Larimer County, Colorado who are dedicated to improving behavioral health care.

**25**  
**YEARS OF**  
**COLLABORATION**

The Alliance was founded in 1999, meaning we are celebrating 25 years of collaboration in 2024!

In 2024, MHSU Alliance Members worked together to update the collective vision and values for the group to better guide our future work and be reflective of the changing community landscape. Our vision and values are our north star and may continue to change as the Alliance evolves.

## MHSU Alliance Vision

Behavioral health is holistic, affirming, valued, and resourced as an essential aspect of whole-person health.

## MHSU Alliance Values

**Sustainable Change and Improvement:** We make a real difference through our work by finding and using strategies that bring lasting, positive change. We focus on accountability, affordability, and the involvement of lived/living expertise to ensure equity, sustainability, and effectiveness.

**Whole-Person Health:** Behavioral health is an integral and essential component of health. We support people in ways that respect and embrace their whole selves, including their culture and identities, so they can reach the level of health and wellbeing that they desire.

**Lived & Living Expertise:** We value the direct involvement and input of people with lived/living expertise in everything we do. We see all people as complete individuals. We're against thinking of "us vs. them" and are learning to address our own biases and discomfort with difficult subjects.

**Health Equity Within and Across Systems:** Health should not be compromised or disadvantaged because of an individual or population group's identity(ies) including but not limited to race, ethnicity, gender expression or identity, income, ability, sexual orientation, neighborhood, etc. We work together to reduce and eliminate inequities and differences in health outcomes. This means adapting systems so that providers in behavioral health take responsibility for addressing equity individually and collectively.

**Open-Mindedness & Respect:** We actively seek out diverse perspectives, ideas, and expertise. We strive to recognize and address our biases, promote inclusivity, and work to understand, respect, and accept differences. We lean into uncomfortable and/or difficult discussions and actively work to repair any harm.

# ALLIANCE OVERVIEW

The MHSU Alliance adopted structural changes to ensure effective use of Members' time and set the Alliance up for successful implementation of the 2024 Strategic Plan by building a strong and flexible infrastructure.

## MHSU Alliance Structure



In addition to the groups above, the **Alliance Staff** are also a key element to the Alliance's structure. Alliance Staff provide administrative and operational support for the MHSU Alliance. This includes helping the Alliance Members perform their duties, supporting progress on the Strategic Plan (including tracking, measuring, and communicating progress).

For questions on Alliance structure, or to join the Alliance please email [CIT@healthdistrict.org](mailto:CIT@healthdistrict.org).

# STRATEGIC PLAN OVERVIEW

The Mental Health and Substance Use Alliance collaboratively developed the 2024 Strategic Plan with the guidance and support from Alliance Staff and a paid consultant from January – September 2024.

The 2024 Strategic Plan aims to improve behavioral health care in Larimer County, Colorado in alignment with the Alliance’s vision and values, available national, state, and local data, and in accordance with the guidance of the MHSU Alliance Steering Committee.

The purpose of the 2024 Strategic Plan is to develop, track, and communicate specific, actionable, and locally-driven strategies and initiatives to improve behavioral health and to establish measurable goals and objectives for improvement.

The plan incorporates various factors influencing behavioral health, including an emphasis on opportunities to improve services and access for populations or groups in Fort Collins who have been excluded from and/or underserved by behavioral health systems.

Strategic Plans can look very different depending on the context. We have developed a guide below to help clarify what the MHSU Alliance Strategic Plan **is** and **is not**.

<b>The MHSU Alliance Strategic Plan IS...</b>	<b>The MHSU Alliance Strategic Plan IS NOT...</b>
<p>A living document; the Strategic Plan can and will change as our community continues to learn and grow together around behavioral health efforts. Processes for this are still being defined.</p> <p>A template for future work plans and progress on specific strategies and initiatives.</p> <p>A communication tool for updates to Alliance Members and the broader community.</p> <p>An invitation to any individual or organization/entity who wants to help improve behavioral health in Larimer County.</p> <p>Collaborative and consensus-based.</p>	<p>A static report that will sit on a shelf.</p> <p>The only effort to address or improve behavioral health, mental health, and/or substance use in the community. There are many wonderful groups and partners who are also working on this issue.</p> <p>Perfect, complete, or all encompassing of all the needs, gaps, and opportunities for behavioral health care in Larimer County and/or Colorado.</p>



# STRATEGIC PLANNING DEVELOPMENT

The MHSU Alliance started the strategic planning process in January 2024.

Over eight months, the Alliance achieved the following steps to co-create a Strategic Plan:

- ✓ Reconvened the MHSU Alliance after a hiatus and transitions due to the COVID-19 pandemic
- ✓ Set priorities based on local frameworks and recommendations
- ✓ Updated the Alliance’s collective vision and values
- ✓ Formed a Workgroup to propose recommendations for structural change
- ✓ Used data packets to dive into available evidence related to priorities

In August 2024, the Alliance met for a consensus-based process to select themes that will be further refined into locally-tailored strategies throughout the rest of 2024 and beginning of 2025.

The seven proposed themes were: Early Childhood Innovations; Coordination of Care; Data Infrastructure; Clinical Systems + Infrastructure; Promoting Behavioral Health through Nonclinical Methods; Behavioral Health Across the Criminal Justice Continuum; and Stigma Reduction.

The four themes adopted by consensus in August are:

- 1. Coordination of Care**
- 2. Promoting Behavioral Health through Nonclinical Methods**
- 3. Data Infrastructure**
- 4. Clinical Systems + Infrastructure**

The four selected themes are reflected in this Strategic Plan and will be the focus of the Alliance’s work through December 2025. More details on these themes are found on pages 12-15.

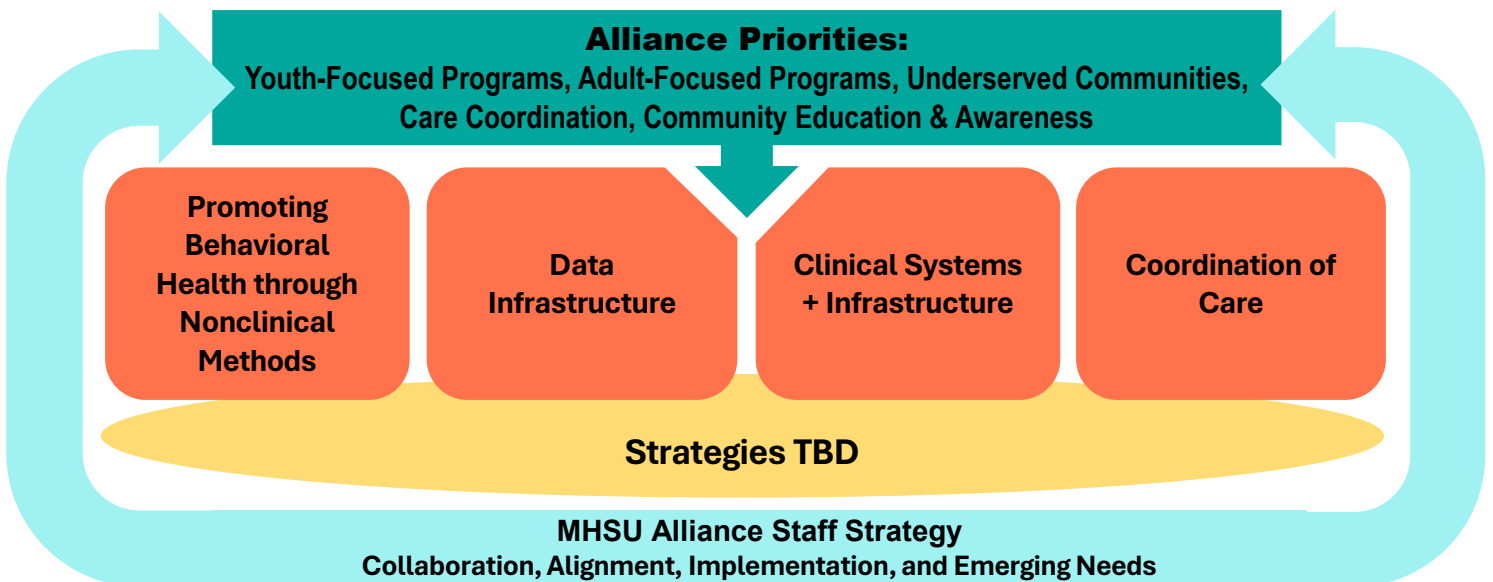
The themes adopted for the Strategic Plan meet the following criteria:

- 1** Positively impacts behavioral health for youth, adults, and/or underserved communities.
- 2** Aligns with the vision and values of the MHSU Alliance.
- 3** Addresses priority gaps identified in available data\*.
- 4** Promotes outcomes that are population- or community-based.
- 5** Impacts the conditions of systems change.
- 6** Is supported by moderate to significant evidence.

\*During the summer of 2024, MHSU Alliance Staff developed Youth- and Adult-Focused Data Packets, which summarize available national, state, and local data related to priorities identified by Alliance Members in April 2024. For more on these data packets, contact [CIT@healthdistrict.org](mailto:CIT@healthdistrict.org).

# 2024 STRATEGIC PLAN

<b>Vision</b>	Behavioral health is holistic, affirming, valued, and resourced as an essential aspect of whole-person health.
<b>Values</b> (Our Drivers)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sustainable Change and Improvement</li> <li>• Whole-Person Health</li> <li>• Lived &amp; Living Expertise</li> <li>• Health Equity Within and Across Systems</li> <li>• Open-Mindedness &amp; Respect</li> </ul>
<b>Overall Goal</b>	To be developed. Alliance Members will inform the Overall Goal as part of this year's work.
<b>Priorities</b> (Evidence-Informed Opportunities)	<p>Youth-Focused Programs; Adult-Focused Programs; Underserved Communities; Care Coordination; Community Education &amp; Awareness</p> <p><i>These priorities were selected by the Steering Committee from the Larimer County Behavioral Health Services' Community Master Plan 2.0 during the April 2024 Strategic Planning Retreat.</i></p>
<b>Themes</b> (Focused Areas to Address Priorities)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordination of Care</li> <li>• Data Infrastructure</li> <li>• Clinical Systems + Infrastructure</li> <li>• Promoting Behavioral Health through Nonclinical Methods</li> </ul>
<b>Strategies</b>	<p>To be developed. We need your help to figure out what specific, actionable, and locally-tailored strategies will work for our community.</p> <p><b>Join the Alliance to inform future strategies!</b></p>



# ALLIANCE STAFF STRATEGY

The role of the Alliance Staff is to provide administrative and operational support for the collaborative efforts needed to make progress on the Strategic Plan and Alliance functions and activities.

The Alliance Staff role includes convening and facilitating Steering Committee meetings, helping to organize and coordinate Workgroup efforts, and providing operational and administrative support, such as consistent and clear communication about Alliance activities.

The Alliance Staff Strategy includes the commitments outlined below:



# COORDINATION OF CARE

This theme focuses on system-level and collective effort towards continuity of care throughout the crisis continuum – from prevention to crisis care and everything in between. This is different than “care coordination”, which refers to services provided to an individual/family.

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## Why?

- ✓ Provides effective wrap-around support through a comprehensive and coordinated continuum of behavioral health services
- ✓ Preserves health and well-being while reducing engagement with avoidable acute/institutional care

## Potential Impacts

1. Both youth and adults
2. Can be tailored to meet specific demographic group needs
3. Looks holistically at the crisis continuum and opportunities for improvement
4. Reduces barriers to accessibility of care due to communication, coordination, and collaboration challenges

## Example Strategies

1

Community Adoption of a Centralized Referral Platform

2

Investment in Coordination of Crisis Response Systems

# PROMOTING BEHAVIORAL HEALTH THROUGH NONCLINICAL METHODS

Acknowledging cultural gaps in traditional clinical service models, this theme emphasizes and expands the ways we can improve and sustain behavioral health outside of a mental health professional's office and/or clinical spaces.

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## Why?

- ✓ Meets behavioral health needs of the community that cannot be solely addressed through clinical methods
- ✓ Utilizes community, arts, culture, and recreation to support mental health and overall wellbeing in a variety of ways

## Potential Impacts

1. Both youth and adults
2. Can be tailored to meet specific demographic group needs
3. Supports the ways in which people heal or seek healing outside of clinical spaces
4. Expands partnership opportunities for the Alliance

## Example Strategies

1

Public Art & Creative Placemaking

2

Peer Work & Spaces

3

Engagement Opportunities for People in Recovery & Recovery-Friendly Spaces

4

Access to Culturally Affirming & Nonclinical Healing Methods Within Health Systems

# DATA INFRASTRUCTURE

This theme aims to address community needs for improved and collaborative data collection methods and systems and data sharing within behavioral health care settings.

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## Why?

- ✓ Improves health equity and service delivery through robust, accurate, and responsive data collection and sharing systems
- ✓ Increases understanding of agencies' needs, access to resources, and outcomes

## Potential Impacts

1. Both youth and adults
2. Bridges connections between organizations and people who access behavioral health systems as clients or patients
3. Improves consistency of data and data systems to better reflect the community
4. Supports centralized, interoperable, and shareable data and data systems

## Example Strategies

1

Collect & Report Standard Behavioral Health Metrics Across Organizations

2

Community-Wide Framework for Documenting Successful Implementation Strategies & Modifications

3

Data Systems to Accurately Reflect the Community & Evaluate Outcomes

# CLINICAL SYSTEMS + INFRASTRUCTURE

This theme analyzes our community’s professional care systems and seeks to expand integration of behavioral health care in primary care and other clinical settings and systems. It also seeks to address and improve the ways in which systems in the community work together to provide care to community members.

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## Why?

- ✓ Strengthens and unifies behavioral health networks and systems to increase efficacy
- ✓ Promotes equitable services and improves access and outcomes

## Potential Impacts

1. Both youth and adults
2. Can be tailored to meet specific demographic group needs
3. Promotes hyper-local systems change
4. Improves integration and adoption of what works

## Example Strategies

- 1 Access to Social-Emotional Screening
- 2 Investigation of Alternative Payment Models to Sustain Needed Services
- 3 Integration of Behavioral & Physical Health Care Services
- 4 Engagement with New Regional Accountability Entity (RAE)/ Behavioral Health Administrative Service Organization (BHASO)

# WHAT'S NEXT: STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT & ALLIANCE RECRUITMENT

**The Strategic Plan is not complete yet! We need YOU for the next steps.**

During the winter of 2024 and spring of 2025, Alliance Staff will support the convening of Workgroups related to each of the four themes in the 2024 Strategic Plan. Each Workgroup will dive deeper into the themes and develop specific and actional strategies intended to drive progress and improvement in behavioral health care in the community. It will be important to investigate evidence-informed strategy options and determine which strategies will work for the communities in Larimer County.

Once strategies are determined, Workgroups will develop strategy-specific workplans to track and share progress. Workgroups will then begin implementing strategies. Attachment A is a sample Strategy Workplan Template.

Workplans will be updated every six months, and the 2024 Strategic Plan will turn into a communication tool to share progress, lessons learned, celebrations, and other updates with the full Alliance and the broader community.

Strategy development and implementation will take many hands, hearts, and minds. We welcome involvement from the entire community.

**To get involved, email [CIT@healthdistrict.org](mailto:CIT@healthdistrict.org).**





# ATTACHMENT A: STRATEGY WORK PLAN TEMPLATE

**THEME:**

Strategy:

Outcome Indicator(s):

- 
- 

Performance Indicator(s):

- 
- 

Current Workgroup Partners:

- 
- 

Key Action

Output

Resources Needed

Responsible  
Partner(s)

Timeline

YEAR 1

Target:

Completed:

Target:

Completed:

Target:

Completed:

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**STRATEGIC PLAN  
2024-2025**