

# Senate Bill 23-174: Expanding Access to Behavioral Health Services for Colorado Kids

Sponsored by Sen. Kolker and Sen. Gardner and Rep. Lukens and Rep. Winter



Colorado's youth are in crisis. The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the decline in young people's mental health and well-being, and has further exposed the extent and severity of long-standing health concerns. Too many continue to face barriers accessing the services they need to lead happy, healthy lives as children and into adulthood.

*Colorado must invest in early, prevention-focused solutions to protect and ensure a strong start and healthy future for all Colorado children.*

## BY THE NUMBERS

Suicide is a leading cause of death among Colorado youth ages 10-24.

<https://pcmh.org/childrens-mental-health/>

Rural youth in Colorado are twice as likely to die by suicide.

<https://coruralhealth.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/2022-Snapshot-of-Rural-Health-February-final-release.pdf>

More than 1 in 5 school-aged children have experienced worsened mental or emotional health since the pandemic began.

<https://www.kff.org/statedata/mental-health-and-substance-use-state-fact-sheets/>

40% of middle and high school students experienced feelings of depression in 2021.

<https://cdphe.colorado.gov/healthy-kids-colorado-survey-dashboard>

Only 34.4% of youth with depression receive treatment.

<https://mhanational.org/issues/2023/mental-health-america-youth-data>

### **SB 174 would expand access to behavioral health services for kids and their families.**

Colorado youth under 21 must have a formal diagnosis to qualify for behavioral health services.

SB 174 removes this prerequisite and opens access to a wide array of services, such as psychotherapy and services related to case management, prevention, education, and outreach, without requiring a diagnosis. This policy applies to thousands of kids across the state covered by Medicaid and the School Health Services Program.

By eliminating the diagnosis requirement and covering a variety of behavioral health services, more Colorado kids and their families can equitably access affordable, early, prevention-focused services before a crisis occurs.



**For more information, contact Bridget Anshus:  
(414)-690-0770 / [banshus@mentalhealthcolorado.org](mailto:banshus@mentalhealthcolorado.org)**

# Senate Bill 174 is supported by the following organizations:



**Colorado Chapter**



American Academy of Pediatrics  
DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN®



**inseparable**



**Boulder County**

**Boulder County Public Health**

