After a spring spent in home confinement, many Coloradans are breathing a sigh of relief as they emerge from the strict stay-at-home orders and feel the sunshine of summer on masked faces. And yet, many others are left wondering why that anxious feeling in the pit of their stomach just won’t go away.

Those of us with similar feelings are not alone. A poll by the Kaiser Family Foundation found 45 percent of Americans say stress from the global pandemic has harmed their mental health, and calls and texts to national support lines have jumped significantly since this time last year. Coloradans are concerned about financial insecurity, anxiety over illness and death, and an uncertain future, according to a Colorado Health Foundation survey.

Just as scientists describe a potential series of “peaks” of COVID-19 cases, experts across the country anticipate a steady increase in behavioral health needs in the next weeks and months, says Kristen Cochran-Ward, director of Connections mental health program for the Health District of Northern Larimer County.

“We’ve never dealt with anything like this before in our lifetime, all of these stressors and disappointments coming at us at once,” Cochran-Ward says. “Feeling occasionally anxious or having a heightened sense of awareness is a normal response to an abnormal situation. But if it’s causing regular anxiety or fear, a sense of feeling overwhelmed, intense sadness, a sense of loss or isolation, more anger than you normally have, or disrupting your sleep or concentration—or if you just feel worse emotionally than usual, it’s important to know that help is available. Making that call may help you on your way to feeling better.”

In Larimer County, a 24/7 COVID-19 emotional support line was established in response to the pandemic. From 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. it is staffed by specialists from the Health District’s Connections program, and SummitStone Health Partners’ staff cover it overnight. Trained staff listen to concerns, answer questions, and offer emotional support and resources.

**Emotional fallout**

Now that we have more freedom to move around in our communities again and aren’t stuck looking at the same walls, shouldn’t our mental health improve? Well, our brains are a little more complex than that.

continued on page 6
A healthy diet is something most of us can control during the time of medical fears and anxiety over the novel coronavirus. Summertime is often when fresh spinach leaves make a regular appearance on our meal plates, adding a satisfying crunch to sandwiches and salads.

Spinach is an excellent source of vitamins and minerals including vitamin A, vitamin C, and vitamin K1, folic acid, iron, and calcium, as well as potassium and magnesium. But did you know that cooking the dark, leafy greens helps our bodies absorb some of its key nutrients?

The reason is that spinach is loaded with oxalic acid, which blocks the absorption of iron and calcium, but the acid breaks down under high temperatures. Cooking spinach briefly on high heat can unleash the vegetable’s full potential for nutrition and taste.

Sautéing, or quickly heating it in a small amount of oil or fat with a bit of seasoning, is a nice option for serving cooked spinach as a healthy side dish or topped with a grilled protein of your choice as a summer entée.

Editor’s note: Despite its health benefits, consuming spinach may cause adverse effects in some individuals, so always check with your primary care provider before adding any new foods to your diet.

Green up your plate with COOKED SPINACH

by julie estlick

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Quick Sautéed Spinach

Ingredients:
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 shallots, minced
- 10 ounces baby spinach
- Kosher salt
- Freshly ground black pepper

Directions:
Heat the olive oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add the garlic and shallots and sauté until fragrant, 1 minute. Add the spinach by the handful and toss with tongs until it wilts, 3 to 5 minutes. Season the spinach with salt and pepper. Serve immediately. Yields 4 servings.

~ Recipe from The Food Network Kitchen, courtesy of The Neelys. foodnetwork.com/recipes/patrick-and-gina-neely/quick-sauteed-spinach-recipe-2107210

Correction: The family members for Health District Board of Directors candidate Johanna Ulloa Girón were listed incorrectly in the spring issue of Compass. Johanna is married to Carlos Girón and their children are Esteban and Sofía. We very much regret the error.
One in 10 children will be sexually abused before they turn 18, according to Darkness to Light, the leading child sexual abuse prevention organization in the United States. Left untreated, child sexual abuse can lead to short- and long-term physical and emotional health consequences such as depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), risky sexual behaviors, substance use disorder, and increased risk for suicide.

These are sobering realities, but there is a safe place for help. ChildSafe in Fort Collins is a comprehensive outpatient treatment program that helps victims of childhood abuse, particularly child sexual abuse, and their family members to heal. “The work we do addresses the trauma experienced in childhood to help our clients find their path in life and, with support, thrive,” says ChildSafe Executive Director Carol Bennis.

The demand for ChildSafe’s services has more than doubled in the last 10 years. “In 2019, we treated 839 clients and their families—more clients in one year than we have had in the organization’s 34-year history,” says Bennis.

Trained therapists use a combination of individual, group, and family therapy when working with children and adult survivors of childhood abuse. ChildSafe’s comfortable environment allows clients to feel safe enough to process the trauma they have experienced.

“Healing starts to occur the minute a child, their parents, or an adult survivor walk in the door and know they don’t have to keep that secret anymore,” says ChildSafe Clinical Director Val Macri-Lind.

After closing the office due to COVID-19, the clinic slowly began taking steps in late May to reopen and plans to continue with remote telehealth appointments and group therapy sessions. In-person appointments are scheduled on a case-by-case basis.

During the first appointment, Macri-Lind meets with parents, or an adult, to learn what happened, if there have there been other traumas in the person’s life, and if the case is in the criminal justice system. They develop a preliminary treatment plan and determine which therapist would be a good fit for the family.

“Parents are also traumatized and often don’t know how to talk to their child about what happened,” says Macri-Lind. “Therapy includes helping and supporting caregivers, which is healing for the child and helps create an environment at home where they’re supported.”

Experiential therapies such as sand tray, play, art, music, and journaling are especially effective with children and teens, she notes. “We have sand, art supplies, costumes, and toys to engage kids in ways that allow them to express [themselves] and process through their experiences.” (Supplies may be sent to the client’s home for use as needed.)

Children have loved interacting with Chester the therapy dog, and Chester loved being with them, too. When one little girl asked to dress up as a fairy, she wanted to dress Chester as a fairy, too. He willingly obliged.

“Chester was born to do this work,” says Bennis. “His presence is very calming, and he’s very intuitive. He’ll sense when someone is upset and will go to that person to be close and available for petting. He helps kids and adults regulate their emotions when they’re upset.”

Helping clients develop coping and regulation skills is a big part of the work that ChildSafe therapists do. “We explain that even though bad things happen, you can still be OK working through your experience, as long as you’re keeping yourself grounded in the present while you work through it,” says Macri-Lind.

There are several options for help paying for care including the Victim Compensation Fund, grants, a sliding scale based on income, and a specialist to check into any private insurance coverage. ChildSafe also offers free group therapy and parenting classes for parents who are raising traumatized children. No referral is required, and anyone may attend. Check the website for up-to-date information on classes and therapy groups.

“Sexual abuse can be a very isolating experience,” says Macri-Lind. “Victims feel like they’re the only ones this happened to. Working through their trauma with others who have been through it too is something that individual therapy alone can’t do.”

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**Upcoming fundraising event**

**Be a Hero 5K Race and Fun Run**

*Sunday, Aug. 30*

Find the latest event information at [childsafecolorado.org/events](http://childsafecolorado.org/events) or call 970-472-4133.

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**ChildSafe Colorado**

2001 S. Shields, Building K, Fort Collins

970-472-4133 - Call for an appointment (telehealth is available)

[Childsafecolorado.org](http://childsafecolorado.org) – information on programs, free resources for parents, volunteer opportunities, and training events for health-care professionals, teachers, and counselors
Is coronavirus still in our community?

Absolutely. Although we have experienced some decline in the rate of spread and the number of cases locally, other states have recently seen sharp rises. It is very much still here, and its presence is expected to fluctuate widely over time.

If the number of infections is going down, do we still need to take precautions?

The important thing to remember is the reason the numbers have gone down is because of all the strict precautions we put in place and not because the virus decided it didn’t want to be around any longer. It’s because we were staying home, we were social distancing, we were wearing masks, and we were washing hands religiously. If we loosen up, we see the same thing we saw back in March, which is an increase in spread. The big risk is that we overthrow our hospital system so that it can no longer meet the needs of the community.

How long will we have to social distance?

Our best estimate is that 90-95 percent of us are still vulnerable to the disease. If we are exposed, we are at risk. Until there is a vaccine, social distancing is the only way we have—along with masks and respiratory hygiene measures (coughing or sneezing into a mask or tissue)—to keep the curve flat. So it’s very important for the foreseeable future.

If I don’t have any risk factors for COVID-19, do I need to practice any precautions?

We’ve learned that even young, healthy people can get very sick. We’ve seen young adults die from this. Even in children, we’re learning that there can be severe vascular consequences from COVID-19. Although kids and young adults are generally safer than older people, this is not a risk that anyone should take.

We’re all in this together. If we want our neighbors to help protect us and the people we care about, then we have to do our part to protect our neighbors and the people in the community who are more vulnerable.

Is it safe to socialize with others?

For the most part, I think it’s relatively safe to see people in small groups if you’re outside, you wear a mask, and you keep your distance. It’s not without risk, but the vast majority of cases are spread through indoor exposures. Obviously make sure that if you have any symptoms consistent with COVID-19 that you don’t socialize or go out in public. People who are at highest risk for complications from COVID-19 (65 and over, and certain underlying health conditions) are encouraged to stay home. If they socialize, they should take extreme precautions.

Does wearing a mask really protect me or others from coronavirus?

There has been a lot of recent research that masks are effective, and that even cloth masks are effective. If a large proportion of society is doing a good job of wearing masks, it’s thought that this measure alone could keep the curve flat for a long period of time.

Isn’t this just like the flu?

We know that COVID-19 is 5-10 times more deadly than the flu, maybe more. In less than four months, we’ve seen it spread and kill more than 130,000 people in the United States. If this were to run its course without a vaccine, you’re looking at maybe anywhere from 800,000 to a couple of million people dying over 18 months. Those numbers are startling. And COVID-19 patients with an underlying condition are 6 times as likely to be hospitalized and 12 times as likely to die, compared with those who have no such condition, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Another difference is that, unlike COVID-19, we have a vaccine for the flu and many people have immunity to different strains of flu.

Also important is how this virus has disproportionately affected marginalized communities. A lot of the outbreaks have been in prisons and in low-income jobs, meat-packing plants especially. And in communities of black and brown people, people have been dying in disproportionate numbers.

Will we have another wave of cases?

It’s difficult to predict, but a number of infectious disease experts and epidemiologists who have been looking at this closely say cases are likely to go up and down, depending on how we all act, and that it is very likely that we will have another surge of cases that will coincide with cold and flu season.
Warm greetings to the residents of northern Larimer County in these challenging times. As we experience 2020—a year unlike any other—each of us has had to adjust our lives. Likewise, though this Annual Report usually focuses on the year behind us, this year it’s different. We are incorporating some key accomplishments of the past, while also addressing the present.

Maintaining one’s health, it turns out, is not an easy thing to do alone. Though we often move through life not consciously realizing it, our health very often relies on other people. It is in partnership with others that we have the best chance of achieving our greatest health.

In 2019, Health District programs partnered directly with thousands of people. We worked with some to help uncover more affordable ways to secure both prescriptions and health insurance. We partnered with others to help them achieve customized dental care plans and advance care directives.

Partnering with other organizations expands impact. We place mental health and substance use professionals directly into our two local primary care safety net clinics, Salud Family Health Centers and UCHealth’s Family Medicine Center. And our Community Impact Team works with multiple organizations and consumers to build community knowledge of recent information to significantly reduce addiction in our community.

This year, as 2020 revealed the COVID-19 pandemic, working in partnership took on an even greater importance. Seeking to help fill the most critical gaps in health interventions as COVID took hold, the Health District was humbled to enter into a rapid, exhausting, effective partnership with providers of services to those experiencing homelessness.

Since it is impossible to ‘stay at home’ when you don’t have a home, our partnership helps prevent the spread of the disease by facilitating health screenings, hand washing, social distancing, and a place for isolation and recovery for those who become ill or need to quarantine.

At the same time, the emotional strains of life disruption, economic trials, and uncertainty grew. Our Connections mental health and substance use program became the COVID-19 emotional warm line, giving hope and help to anyone who is feeling overwhelmed and in need of emotional support or connection to resources.

In an era where we are living with an ever-present virus that is more contagious and deadly than most, the lives of each one of us depends largely on what others do. In the absence of a vaccine or cure, masks and social distancing (at least 6 feet!) are critically important ways we can partner to protect each other.

As of this writing, the families of 130,000 Americans and over 1,550 Coloradans have lost loved ones to COVID-19—a toll that will have grown by the time you are reading this. Hundreds of thousands more have experienced serious health challenges.

So many people are stepping up to help one another with their health, in so many ways. COVID-19 is real, it is still with us, and it remains an extreme risk to everyone’s health. Please—partner with us in preventing its spread!

Our services by the numbers

9,932
Patient visits to our Family Dental Clinic
(3,458 patients served)

1,517
People who received blood pressure checks

1,136
People who received cholesterol tests

882
Quit Tobacco counseling sessions held (for 206 clients)

19,210
Client contacts for mental health or substance use help provided by Connections, CAYAC, and our Integrated Primary Care/Mental Health Program

2,215
Households that received help finding new, reduced-cost health insurance options from Larimer Health Connect

1,187
People who received assistance from the Health District and its partners in completing their advance care planning documents

$1,187,618
Value of grants received for dental and mental health services, health insurance enrollment support, community assessment, and health equity training

13,338
Total number of individuals who received dental or health care, or connections to care from Health District staff

The Health District is governed by a publicly elected board of directors.

Michael D. Liggett
President

Molly Gutilla
Vice President

Faraz Naqvi, M.D.
Liaison to PVH Board

Celeste Kling
Secretary

Joseph W. Prows, M.D.
Treasurer

2019 Annual Report

Health is hard to accomplish Solo

“We cannot live only for ourselves. A thousand fibers connect us with our fellow humanity.”

~ Henry Melvill (edited)
Dental Clinic renews focus on preventive care

Dana Turner has three words for patients who haven’t been back to the Family Dental Clinic in a while: “We miss you.”

That was true in 2019, and it’s especially true in 2020.

Turner is director of the Health District’s dental services, which are anchored by the 12-chair Family Dental Clinic in north Fort Collins.

The Family Dental Clinic provides free and low-cost dental care to residents of northern Larimer County who meet income guidelines and do not have commercial dental insurance. It offers low sliding fees to those who qualify and also accepts coverage by Health First Colorado (Medicaid) and Child Health Plan Plus (CHP+).

In 2019, the clinic saw 3,458 patients. It also made a special effort to reach out to patients who had not come in recently for routine preventive care or to complete needed treatment. And there was a renewed focus on dental hygiene, increasing staffing to allow for more and more flexible appointments.

“Dental hygiene is the foundation of the Family Dental Clinic,” says Turner. “Effective care for the patient begins there.”

One person who didn’t need to be reminded of the importance of routine preventive care is Ann Leffler.

“I have all of my teeth, and I’m trying to keep them. The Family Dental Clinic is helping me do it,” the 80-year-old Fort Collins resident says. She comes in for regular cleanings to maintain her oral health and address problems early, paying on the clinic’s sliding-fee scale, as well as receiving assistance from state senior dental grant funds, which the Family Dental Clinic had greater access to in 2019.

“They make sure I’m comfortable with my payments and comfortable in the dental chair,” Leffler says.

Furthing its outreach to new patients in 2019, the dental clinic also received grant funding from Delta Dental of Colorado Foundation to help those who cannot afford necessary specialty care.

But outreach to new and existing patients had to pause briefly in 2020 when COVID-19 hit northern Colorado. The dental clinic was forced to limit service to emergency cases, deferring patients who had routine needs.

Now the Family Dental Clinic has slowly reopened along with the rest of the community, and Turner and the dental clinic staff are once again eager to see familiar faces in their dental chairs. “Come on back; we’ve missed you!”

Integrated Care Team focuses on ‘whole person’ medicine

“Integrated behavioral and physical health care is essential to treating the whole person,” says Zori Rodriguez, behavioral health bilingual provider for the Health District’s Integrated Primary Care and Mental Health Team.

Rodriguez left a management position four years ago to join the Integrated Care Team serving at UCHealth’s Family Medicine Center and the Salud Family Health Centers clinic on Blue Spruce. The Health District adds an onsite psychiatrist and licensed mental health and substance use therapists to the clinics’ physician and behavioral health teams to offer assessments, answer questions, or set up appointments on the spot for patients.

“I find integrated care to be incredibly meaningful work,” Rodriguez says.

“For example, if a person comes to their doctor complaining of stomach aches, they will often have anxiety or other mental health issues that also need to be treated. We can help them with tools to address that.”

The partnership provides a level of trust for patients who already have a relationship with their primary care doctor. The physician introduces a mental health specialist to the patient to answer questions or help with addressing behavioral health concerns. This immediate connection removes the weeks-long wait time to get an appointment and patients get care in a place where they already feel comfortable.

In 2019, the Integrated Care Team served 1,513 clients, provided 422 psychiatric assessments, and made 3,880 behavioral health contacts with patients across the two clinics.

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit earlier this year and facilities were closed, team members switched to telehealth.

“It was an adjustment as a provider to do a behavioral health assessment without seeing the person’s face, not to mention developing trust over the phone, but my patients tell me they value it,” Rodriguez says.

Doctors are referring a steady stream of patients struggling with mental health issues during the ongoing crisis, says Lisa Bolander, a team behavioral health provider at Salud. “Depression and anxiety are running high right now, and many people who were already dealing with anxiety are now isolated from their support network. We’re here to help.”

The current plan at both locations is to mainly continue with remote behavioral health appointments while slowly—and safely—bringing back more providers to help patients requiring in-person care, subject to any changes in public health orders.
Help with prescription costs is a call away

How will I ever afford my medicine? That’s what many people think when faced with overwhelming prescription drug costs.

But hold on, says Ann Martin of the Health District’s Prescription Assistance service—you might have some options.

“There are lot of tools in our toolbox, and that toolbox keeps growing,” says Martin, a Health Coverage Specialist at the Health District who has been helping local residents obtain their medications for 21 years. Martin now enlists a variety of strategies—from drug discount cards, to pharmaceutical company assistance programs—to lower people’s prescription costs.

Prescription Assistance is a service of the Health District that helps people find medications at lower or even no cost. It is part of the Larimer Health Connect program, which helps individuals and families find health coverage that meets their budget and needs. Last year, Prescription Assistance helped 156 people.

Although new health coverage options have given many Coloradans better access to prescriptions drugs, high costs can remain a stubborn stumbling block for some. In the most recent Community Health Survey, nearly one in 10 residents still reported difficulty affording their prescriptions.

One of those people was Teresa Hagemeier, a Fort Collins resident who lacked health insurance and struggled to afford several expensive medications vital for her health.

“I was raised to work hard and to take care of your bills,” says Hagemeier. “But I realized this was not something I could manage. There was no shame in accepting help.”

As is the case with many of her clients, Martin found a short-term solution for Hagemeier—vouchers to cover the costly drugs—while she worked on a long-term plan. Eventually Martin’s colleagues helped Hagemeier enroll in Health First Colorado (Medicaid), which now covers all of her prescriptions.

“I felt very grateful that the program was there when I needed it,” Hagemeier says.

Although Martin delights in meeting personally with clients, COVID-19 means a temporary switch to telephone calls and the U.S. mail. Regardless, Martin still is able to do what she does best—give hope to those who had practically given up.

“Whether you are insured or uninsured, there could be options out there that save you money,” says Martin. “Do yourself a favor and find out what your options are.”

Call 970-416-6519 for more information.

Larimer Health Connect helps make sense of health insurance

Working with community partners to expand services, the Larimer Health Connect (LHC) program is providing new ways to help people find the right health insurance coverage that fits their budget.

The LHC team’s Certified Health Coverage Guides answer questions, explain financial assistance, and help residents enroll in insurance plans available through the Connect for Health Colorado Marketplace. They also assist clients in determining if they qualify for Health First Colorado (Colorado’s Medicaid Program) or Child Health Plan Plus (CHP+), the state’s public health insurance programs. Larimer Health Connect is a free service for all Larimer County residents and open-year round.

Open enrollment for the Marketplace begins in November and continues through mid-January. Outside of open enrollment, people in health insurance coverage. A new public service was added last year to provide health insurance education at area libraries. “We partnered with library staff to have a Health Coverage Guide on site to explain insurance terms and answer questions from the public at several walk-up events,” says Rosie Duran, Larimer Health Connect team supervisor.

This year help looks a little different due to COVID-19 concerns. Guides are currently holding virtual appointments by phone or Zoom video. Some in-person slots are available for those without computer or internet access.

Remote appointments will continue to be offered indefinitely for those who prefer to stay home or have transportation issues.

Living in the midst of a global pandemic makes insurance coverage more important than ever, Duran says. “One trip to the emergency room can cost thousands of dollars. You just never know, and it’s better to be prepared and have that peace of mind during a stressful time.”

See page 8 for more information on current services. To schedule an appointment, call 970-472-0444 or visit larimerhealthconnect.org.
Improving the health of our community requires steadfast partnerships centered on a commitment to helping others. It’s with gratitude that we recognize the individuals, businesses, foundations, and organizations that support our mission. Together, we have touched the lives of over 13,300 individuals as we:

- Enrolled more families and children in health insurance programs
- Ensured critical access to dental services for individuals with low incomes or disabilities
- Helped children, adolescents, families, and adults to find answers, options, and support for mental health and substance use issues
- Helped to transform beliefs and culture around substance use issues in our community to improve treatment practices and outcomes

**Businesses & Foundations**

| Ault Rental | Farmers Bank |
| Colorado Dept. of Public Health and Environment | Fort Collins Lions Club Foundation |
| Colorado Health Foundation | Good Day Pharmacy |
| Colorado Health Institute | Home Instead Senior Care |
| Connect for Health Colorado | The Human Bean |
| Delta Dental of Colorado | NextFifty Initiative |
| Foundation | Robert Wood Johnson Foundation |
| Denver Foundation | Signarama |
| Woodward Charitable Trust |

**Individuals**

| Karl Amick, DDS | Debra Larsen |
| The Rev. Richard and Mary Cella | Mark Or. DDS, MD |
| Robert and Marie Chambers | Mary Milkingon |
| Randy and Jean Hediger | Mary Portillos |
| Connie Herman | Deanna Richardson |
| Katherine Jeffrey | Jenna Skoelmaker, DDS |
| Celeste King | Richard Welster |
| Linda and Ken Kovar | Margarita Weiss |
| Dorothy Kuntzler | Anonymous (8) |
| Kenneth Lampert |

**Ongoing Project Partners**

| Associates in Family Medicine | Fort Collins Police Services |
| Bertnhoud Life Center | Fort Collins Senior Center |
| Centers for Disease Control and Prevention | Front Range Clinic |
| Chilton Senior Center | Front Range Community College |
| City of Fort Collins | Homeward 2020 |
| City of Loveland | Housing Catalyst |
| Colorado Consortium for Prescription Drug Abuse Prevention | LaFamilia |
| Colorado Dept. of Health Care Policy and Financing | Larimer County Dept. of Health and Environment |
| Colorado Dept. of Public Health and Environment | Larimer County Dept. of Human Services |
| Colorado Health Medical Group | Larimer County District Attorney’s Office |
| Colorado Health Institute | Larimer County Department of Criminal Justice Services |
| Colorado Health Network | Larimer County Office on Aging |
| Colorado Opioid Synergy - Larimer & Weld | Larimer County Sheriff’s Office |
| Colorado School of Public Health | Leap Coalition |
| Colorado State University (CSU) | Loveland Life Center |
| CSU Franklin A. Graybill Statistics and Data Science Laboratory Services | Mental Health and Substance Use Alliance of Larimer County |
| CSU School of Health Services | Mosaic |
| CSU Kielland Reagan Nutrition Center | Mountain Crest Behavioral Health Center |
| CSU Health Network | NoCoCot |
| DentacQuest | North Range Behavioral Health |

**Community Impact Team**

Organizes community efforts to make long-term, systemic changes that will significantly improve the health of the community, with a focus on mental health

- Helps individuals understand health-care options to complete and share their advance care directives with medical providers and their loved ones
- Aids people in quitting tobacco use
- Provides cholesterol, blood pressure, and glucose screening and education
- Helps people with limited incomes to fill their prescriptions

**programs**

**Connections**

Answers, options, and support for adult mental health and substance use

- 425 W. Mulberry, #101 • 970-221-5551

**Child, Adolescent, and Young Adult Connections (CAYAC) Team**

A service of the Connections program that focuses on answers, options, and support for youth and families. Early identification of areas of concern, assessment, and guidance for counseling or other treatment of mental health and substance use for youth and families

- 425 W. Mulberry, #112 • 970-221-3308

**Heart Health Promotion**

Nurse screening and consultation for cholesterol, blood pressure, and glucose. The Improving Blood Pressure Program offers sessions with an RN to learn self-monitoring techniques and how to discuss results with a medical provider.

- 970-224-5209

**Integrated Primary Care/Mental Health Program**

Providing behavioral health care in safety net clinics

- 970-224-5209

**Larimer Advance Care Planning Team**

Free assistance and support to help people complete and share their advance care directives

- 120 Bristlecone • 970-482-1909

**Larimer Health Connect**

Helping people find the best options for health insurance to meet their family’s health needs and budget; prescription assistance

- 144 N. Mason, Unit 7 • 970-472-0444

**Quit Tobacco Program**

Support and resources to quit smoking, vaping, and/or chewing with the help of certified Tobacco Treatment Specialists

- 970-224-5209

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**2019 revenues, total**

$10,066,746

**2019 expenditures, total**

$10,960,931

**2019 expenditures, by program**

- Dental Services: 14.2%
- Integrated Mental Health, Substance Use, & Primary Care Services: 10.1%
- Heart Health Promotion & Quit Tobacco Program: 7.3%
- Other Revenue: 1.9%
- Programs/Services: 91.8%
- Connections/CAYAC: 14.2%
- Community Impact: 5.9%
- HealthInfoSource: 7.4%
- Integrated Genetic Medicine: 3.5%
- Integrated Primary Care/Mental Health Program: 31.6%
- Integrated Project Aims: 3.7%
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- Integrated Project Aims: 3.7%
- Integrated Project Aims: 3.7%
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Help Make History
The Fort Collins Museum of Discovery wants pandemic experiences—stories, interviews, videos, scrapbooks—from people of all ages to record what life is like for them during COVID-19. These will become part of the museum’s permanent archive.
fcmod.org/blog/category/archive-collections

Free Metropolitan Opera Global Summer Camp
July 13–August 7. Stream a Met opera performance a week, participate in artist chats and at-home projects. Broken into two groups – grades 3-6 and grades 7-12 – register at metopera.org/discover/education/global-summer-camp/home/

OtterCares Foundation Project Heart for Clubs
Teaches elementary-age kids about philanthropic giving and how to design their own projects to make an impact.
myprojectheart.org/clubs

Volunteering
Healthy young people can fill open slots left by older adults and those with underlying health conditions who regularly serve but are forced to quarantine.
ocovolunteers.org (United Way of Larimer County) or call 970-407-7000

It was opening night, and 16-year-old Eli Brandt was excited to play the character of the Pharaoh in a production of Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat. But instead, something more dramatic happened. The curtain never went up on the play, and much of the world retreated into COVID-19 lockdowns.

“I was really disappointed, and it was unsettling. The hardest part was not knowing what would come next,” says Brandt, a member of the theatrical Academy by DivaBe in Fort Collins.

The next day, Brandt began to hear a song in his head. Instead of concentrating on sheltering at home, he focused on bringing his “cheesy little song” to life. His aunt, the academy founder, recorded him and his siblings performing “The Quarantine Song.” Lincoln, 19, used a nine-pack package of toilet paper as his “drum,” while 13-year-old sister Amelia shook bottles of disinfectant and liquid soap like maracas.

The song attracted the attention of Broadway star Laura Benanti, whose social media campaign Sunshine Songs highlights the artistic gifts of kids whose performances were canceled due to the pandemic. Out of thousands of submissions, Benanti chose their song as one of the acts in her YouTube Sunshine Songs productions.

“That was really great! This song helped us deal with our feelings and express them in a funny way that a lot of people maybe can relate to,” Eli says.

From virtual museum camps, to mowing lawns for older neighbors, to learning how to cook, young people can find ways to positively channel their passions, skills, and energy now, according to Fort Collins psychotherapist Michael Gitter.

“It’s tough for kids, teens, and young adults to be more isolated from their peers. But how they respond to these times will impact the rest of their life,” says Gitter. “If they stay bored and frustrated, they will get nothing out of this moment. But if young people decide, ‘I can bring even more light to myself and others now,’ they will make the absolute best of this pandemic, and learn how to cope and thrive in uncertain times.”

Gitter says it’s been heartening to see teens, for instance, seize these challenging times for good. “One 17-year-old girl said she’d always wanted to learn sign language, so she did. Two sisters learned how to sew from their mother and made masks for others.”

Then there’s 13-year-old Hazel Reyes. “My softball season was canceled, we switched to online learning, and it was really hard wondering when I would see my friends again.”

But Hazel decided to “look for the good” and “spread positivity” to retirees, teachers, and her school principal. “I took some chalk and wrote sidewalk and driveway messages like, ‘If there was no change, there would be no butterflies,’ or ‘You are loved,’ and ‘Don’t worry be happy.’ Over three weeks, I chalked about 95 homes. It felt really good to bring some happiness to others.”

As Hazel shows, even during these unsettling times, how we choose to show up in the world is under our control, Gitter says. “If we use this experience to deepen our character, cultivate courage, creativity, and helpfulness, this time can be a gift.”

Make it a summer to remember
Help Make History
The Fort Collins Museum of Discovery wants pandemic experiences—stories, interviews, videos, scrapbooks—from people of all ages to record what life is like for them during COVID-19. These will become part of the museum’s permanent archive.
fcmod.org/blog/category/archive-collections

Free Metropolitan Opera Global Summer Camp
July 13–August 7. Stream a Met opera performance a week, participate in artist chats and at-home projects. Broken into two groups – grades 3-6 and grades 7-12 – register at metopera.org/discover/education/global-summer-camp/home/

OtterCares Foundation Project Heart for Clubs
Teaches elementary-age kids about philanthropic giving and how to design their own projects to make an impact.
myprojectheart.org/clubs

Volunteering
Healthy young people can fill open slots left by older adults and those with underlying health conditions who regularly serve but are forced to quarantine.
ocovolunteers.org (United Way of Larimer County) or call 970-407-7000
“Our first focus as humans is on survival,” Cochran-Ward explains. “Once stay-at-home orders are lifted and we begin to feel a bit more physically safe, our minds turn to the financial and emotional impacts of the shutdowns on our family and community—that’s when people start to realize that the emotions can be tough to handle alone.”

The emotional support line will continue throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, thanks in part to a Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) grant that covers the cost of three additional full-time positions to help with the expected increase in call volume on the support line.

“We all need to take care of our emotional wellbeing, so please don’t be afraid to call the support line and take advantage of these increased resources during these difficult times,” says Nick Christensen, a member of the Larimer County Behavioral Health Policy Council.

A new kind of grief

“One issue not getting enough attention is the grief most of us are experiencing over the loss of our normal way of life,” Cochran-Ward notes. All the missed graduations, family gatherings, baby showers, weddings, and cancelled vacations are important life events that we depend on to get us through the tough times.

These losses coupled with the fact that the virus has not left us—we are still asked to wear masks and stay 6 feet apart until there is a vaccine—can be frustrating and sad.

Callers to the support line struggle with this new, unexpected reality, but there are options for getting the appropriate help. In addition to just being able to call and talk to a supportive person, individuals who want to talk with other community members working through similar things may want to participate in pandemic-related support groups.

“Groups help connect people with a support network, decrease their isolation, and provide tools on how to handle the stress and anxiety that COVID-19 caused or increased,” explains Jenna Raymond, a Connections behavioral health specialist who helps facilitate the groups.

Virtual get-togethers

While we’re cut off from visiting many family and friends, virtual events where you chat or cook or make something at the same time have become a popular way to socialize and let off steam. If your get-togethers involve alcohol, remember to stick to moderate amounts (one drink per day for women, up to two drinks for men) and pay attention to your state of mind.

“If you’re using substances to deal with emotions it can lead to problems,” Cochran-Ward says. “Bottom line is don’t use substances to cope—check in with yourself and make sure it’s not becoming a problem. If it is, call us now.”

Also, people in recovery from drug and alcohol addiction and those with pre-existing mental health issues may be experiencing additional stress. Help is available, so if you’re struggling, don’t wait to see if you get better—reach out right away, she advises.

In addition to the support line and support groups, the Connections program and its Child, Adolescent, and Young Adult Connections (CAYAC) Team are also providing their regular services through mostly telehealth appointments, including assessments and connections to the mental health and substance use services most likely to meet individual’s and family’s needs, when needed.

Given the unprecedented time we’re living through and all the unknowns that lie ahead, how do we find mental balance and stay positive?

Focus on taking care of each other, Cochran-Ward suggests. Reach out to neighbors and friends and ask how they are doing. And don’t be afraid of the answer. “Remember that professional help is available to enhance coping skills or simply listen and offer support. No one needs to go through this alone.”

If you are experiencing ANY of the following:

- desire to improve emotional health
- feeling overwhelmed
- more worried or anxious than normal
- sleep issues
- agitation or anger
- difficulty concentrating or making decisions
- you need to talk to someone supportive

Call the Emotional Support Line at 970-221-5551. Someone is available to help 24/7.

If you are having a mental health crisis:

Call the SummitStone Health Partners Crisis Hotline at 970-494-4200, ext. 4, text TALK to 38255, or call 911.

Walk-in services are open at SummitStone Crisis Services at 1217 Riverside Ave. in Fort Collins. However, anyone who is experiencing symptoms of the coronavirus is encouraged to call the numbers above or text to receive crisis support.
Blood pressure program targets heart health during pandemic

Mounting scientific evidence shows that the novel coronavirus causes infection and inflammation in blood vessels. The high prevalence of blood clots, strokes, and heart attacks in COVID-19 patients may be linked to these factors, says Health District Clinical Nurse Manager Cheri Nichols.

“There are widespread, significant benefits to preventing or managing any condition that compromises the blood vessels, including high blood pressure, heart disease, and diabetes. It’s important now during the pandemic, and always,” Nichols says.

The Health District can help. The Improving Blood Pressure Program offers free individual sessions with a registered nurse. These sessions cover how high blood pressure can be improved with medications and healthy lifestyle, how to self-monitor your blood pressure (BP) at home, and how to have an effective discussion with your healthcare provider about concerns and treatment options.

High blood pressure is one of the easiest conditions to diagnose and treat effectively and is best accomplished through active patient involvement and partnership with a provider. Participants in the program may borrow an automatic BP cuff for several weeks free of charge, and get advice on how to shop for one. Consultations are done over the phone or by telehealth.

Nurses are available to answer questions and for program enrollment—call 970-224-5209.

Health District Statement on Racism

The Health District believes Black Lives Matter and is committed to listening, learning, and acting in ways that are anti-racist, to support and encourage change within and beyond our organization.

As a public entity, as an employer, as a health services provider, and as a member of the northern Colorado community, we pledge to take the following actionable steps to help dismantle systemic racism:

Read our full statement at: healthdistrict.org/health-district-statement-racism

Care in recovery

Health District staff continue working with community partners to help individuals experiencing homelessness during the COVID-19 outbreak. So far, eight guests have been isolated at our Myrtle Street recovery center for those with COVID or COVID-like symptoms. Pictured are Taylor Kelley, Homeward Alliance COVID-19 recovery site manager, and MJ Jorgensen of the Health District’s Community Impact Team at the check-in station for the Myrtle Street recovery center.

Staff members wrapped up work at the now-closed Northside Aztlan Community Center’s (NACC) temporary homeless shelter after performing 25,216 temperature checks and testing over 300 guests and staff for the coronavirus (just one positive result). A total of 24 guests with symptoms were served in the Health District’s isolation and recovery area at the NACC.

Kling, Naqvi re-elected to Health District board

In May, Celeste Holder Kling and H. Faraz Naqvi were both re-elected to three-year terms on the board of directors for the Health District of Northern Larimer County.

Eight candidates ran for two open seats on the Health District board. A total of 1,998 ballots were cast in the special district election.

Naqvi, 54, is a physician and businessperson. Kling, 62, is an attorney and mediator. Both are from Fort Collins.
Need someone to talk to?
We’re here to listen.
COVID-19 emotional support for Larimer County is available 24 hours, 7 days a week. No cost.
970-221-5551

The Family Dental Clinic is now taking appointments for your general dental care needs, including routine cleanings. Emergency appointments available daily.
MEDICAID • CHP+ • SLIDING FEE SCALE
970-416-5331
healthdistrict.org/dental
Patients must live in the Health District, have no private dental insurance, and meet income guidelines.

Can’t afford your prescriptions?
We may be able to help you get your medications for lower or no cost.
Options may be available for those with or without health insurance.
For more information, please call to set up an appointment—our services are free!
970-416-6519
healthdistrict.org/prescription-assistance

We’re back!
We’re still here to help you quit tobacco, with counseling by phone and free nicotine patches, gum, or lozenges by mail.
- Experienced tobacco treatment specialists
- Positive, supportive approach
- Sliding fees for those who qualify
- Covered benefit for Health First Colorado (Medicaid) enrollees

Thinking of QUITTING?
healthdistrict.org/quit-smoking

Get covered during COVID
No job? No health insurance?
Health First Colorado (Medicaid), Connect for Health Colorado, or Child Health Plan Plus (CHP+) may be a more affordable option for you.

For Medicaid:
- Stimulus money does not count toward your income.
- Income changes will not end your benefits (FOR A LIMITED TIME).
- Enroll at any time of the year. No deadlines!

For marketplace plans:
- If you’ve lost your health insurance, you have 60 days to enroll in a marketplace plan.

Free, local enrollment help.
Schedule your appointment!
970-472-0444
larimerhealthconnect.org

970-224-5209
healthdistrict.org/quit-smoking

970-472-0444
larimerhealthconnect.org

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