

Colorado Network *of* Health Alliances

A project of the



Colorado Coalition for the
Medically Underserved

PROGRESS & POSSIBILITIES

THE FIRST YEAR OF THE COLORADO NETWORK OF HEALTH ALLIANCES

JANUARY 2014

Northwest Colorado Community Health Partnership

Grand County Rural Health Network

Boulder County Health Improvement Collaborative

West Mountain Regional Health Coalition

Be Healthy Denver

Summit Health Care Collaborative

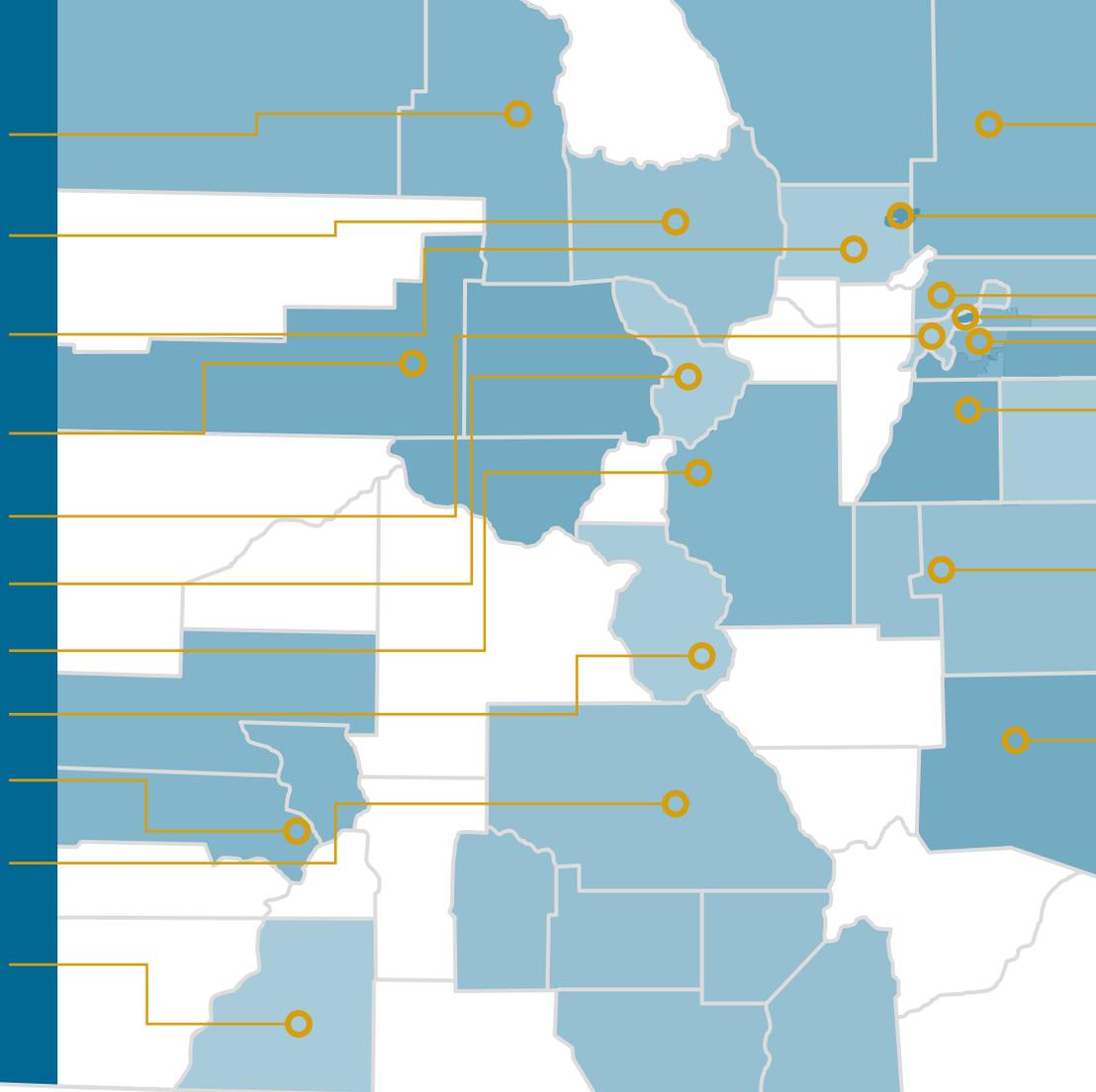
Rocky Mountain Rural Health

Chaffee County Health Coalition

Tri-County Health Network

San Luis Valley Public Health Partnership

La Plata County Citizens Health Advisory Council



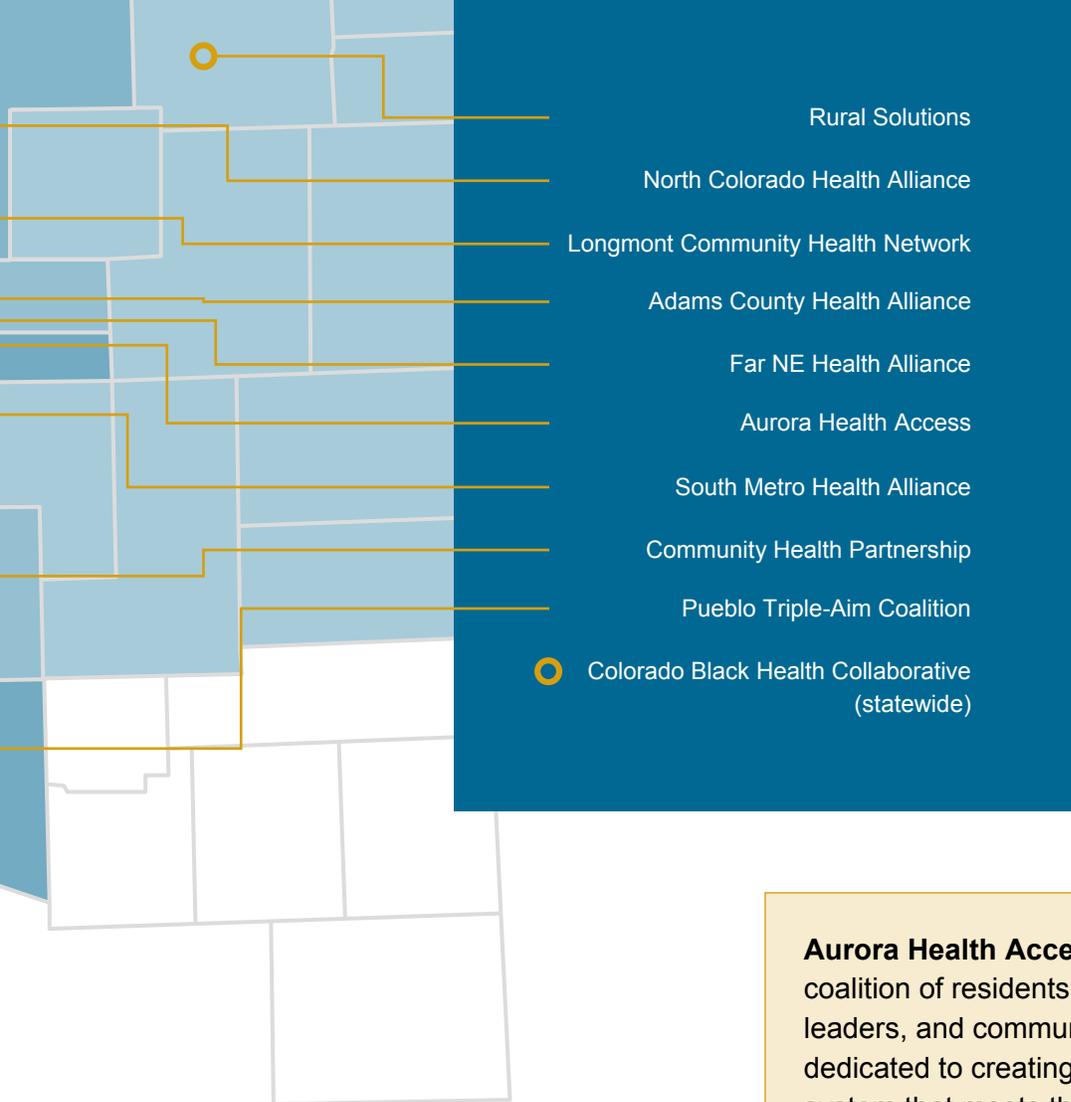
NETWORK OVERVIEW

Promising local reforms and collaborative approaches to health care systems change can be found throughout our great state. In many Colorado communities, established alliances of health care leaders, community agencies, and engaged residents are taking the lead in innovation and implementation.

Since mid-2012, the Colorado Coalition for the Medically Underserved (CCMU) has brought these diverse health alliances together to form the Colorado Network of Health Alliances. In 2013, the Network grew to 21 active health alliance members representing over half of the counties in Colorado and over 300 agencies around the state.

The Network fosters strategic shared learning, networking, and collaboration between communities that are working to improve population health and increase access to health care services. As the lead facilitator, CCMU aims to increase both the local capacity and efficiency of member alliances, as well as their visibility across Colorado, to help create a statewide narrative of health change.

As local and national health reforms usher in regional and statewide changes to health systems and the delivery of health care services, communities across Colorado are responding in tune. The Colorado Network of Health Alliances is rapidly becoming an exceptional opportunity to facilitate local and collective responses to these changes in Colorado.



Complex societal problems, such as inequitable access to health care, demand a different approach to developing and implementing solutions. Cross-sectoral and collaborative leadership strategies, often articulated as “collective impact,” are increasingly recognized as necessary if we are to address our thorniest problems.

Over the past year, alliance members have worked tirelessly to develop local strategies for implementation of key health reforms and local solutions to address our state’s health care challenges. One such alliance, Aurora Health Access, provides a glimpse into the power of collaborative leadership strategies to address local health care problems.

Aurora Health Access (AHA) is a coalition of residents, health care leaders, and community agencies dedicated to creating a health care system that meets the needs of all Aurorans. It launched in 2009, with a particular focus on improving access to care and care coordination. The group prioritized identifying high-utilizers of the health care system and potentially developing an intervention to bring the highest cost patients into primary care settings. After building relationships and trust between safety net, hospital, and community leadership, they were able to secure data demonstrating emergency department utilization trends. The clear need for action galvanized a community effort led by AHA leaders to apply for federal funding to design and implement a case management and care coordination program targeting high-utilizers. *Bridges to Care* was fully-funded and has demonstrated cost savings and care improvements since early 2013.

The true impact of collaboratives is difficult to measure and track, but AHA's experience is instructive—it shows an innovative health care system intervention born from a collaborative approach to change.

The Network brings members together in a number of ways to increase the effectiveness of individual alliances. In 2013, Network events provided education on organizational issues, such as coalition-building and financial sustainability, as well as health care hot topics, like care transitions and integrated care. Recently, the Network committed to developing and implementing statewide strategies for change. This collective action provides an unprecedented opportunity for community-led, statewide and regional impact on the health care system. In 2013, the Network's first foray into this collective work included developing shared messaging to help alliances communicate about the remaining uninsured after the Affordable Care Act is fully implemented.

REGIONAL PROFILES

As a state, Colorado is as diverse and varied as its people. The three distinct regions of the **Mountain**, **Front Range**, and **Eastern Plains** communities face unique health care challenges, but also bring a unique set of resources and ideas to the table.



Colorado's Eastern Plains are known for their expansive landscapes, fertile river valleys, and agricultural commerce. Much of the region is sparsely populated, although larger city centers like Sterling, Fort Morgan, and Lamar serve as hubs for surrounding areas.

The Eastern Plains face a shortage of primary care physicians¹ and higher rates of underinsurance², in addition to higher rates of obesity¹ and children in poverty³, as compared to the rest of the state. The health care system is made up of large anchor institutions, like Critical Access Hospitals and safety net clinics, that provide services to large catchment areas.

Rural Solutions, a coalition of community-based organizations, providers, and health and human services agencies in ten Eastern Plains counties, was founded in 1994 to encourage collaboration across the resource-scarce region. The health alliance has implemented creative programs to directly address the main challenges facing its communities, including implementing several poverty reduction and health promotion classes.



The Front Range of Colorado is made up of sprawling metropolises bordered on the west by the Rocky Mountains and on the east by the Great Plains. Over eighty percent of the state's population is concentrated up and down the Front Range with a full two-thirds in the Denver metro area.

Front Range communities face health challenges common to urban settings, such as pockets of high poverty and uninsurance rates as well as health disparities across race and socio-economic status. Its health care system is characterized by competition; most large cities have more than one hospital system and a multitude of private and safety net provider groups.



There are two distinct regions within Colorado's mountains: tourist-driven resort communities, such as Aspen and Steamboat Springs, and rural mountain communities driven by agricultural, oil, and gas industries.

Like those in the east, communities in the Mountains face a provider shortage¹ and higher rates of uninsurance² in comparison to Colorado as a whole. Local health care systems are generally driven by large hospital and safety net agencies. Resort areas face additional challenges in designing health systems to serve both high-income, tourist populations and lower-income residents and transient populations.

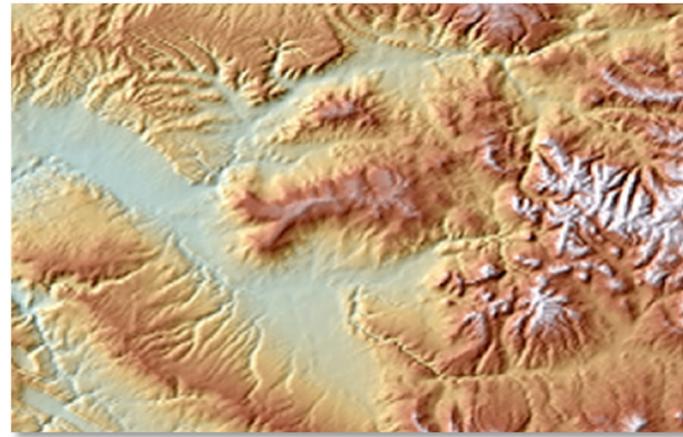
The **Pueblo Triple Aim Coalition**, a health alliance formed in 2011 that includes executives from key health and human service agencies, works to increase quality of care, decrease health care costs, and improve population health outcomes in Pueblo County. The group puts collaboration above competition by working across agencies on coordinated efforts to reduce avoidable Emergency Department use, increase pharmaceutical adherence, and support tobacco cessation.

The **Summit Health Care Collaborative**, an alliance of health care leaders in Summit County, was born out of a community health needs assessment in 2007. It aims to deliver exceptional, comprehensive, and collaborative health care services. Over the past six years they have made great strides in developing a system of coordinated health information exchange, integrating mental health services with physical health services countywide, and conducting health promotion campaigns.

COMMON THEMES

Colorado's health alliances use many strategies to achieve their goals. Some alliances have specific programs or interventions, such as patient navigation services or health promotion efforts, while others focus solely on bringing the different health care players together in their community to develop and work toward a common vision and collective goals. All of the alliances strive to be neutral conveners in their communities, monitor their health care landscapes, identify gaps and opportunities for collaboration, and serve as "back-bone" organizations to keep community-wide initiatives moving forward.

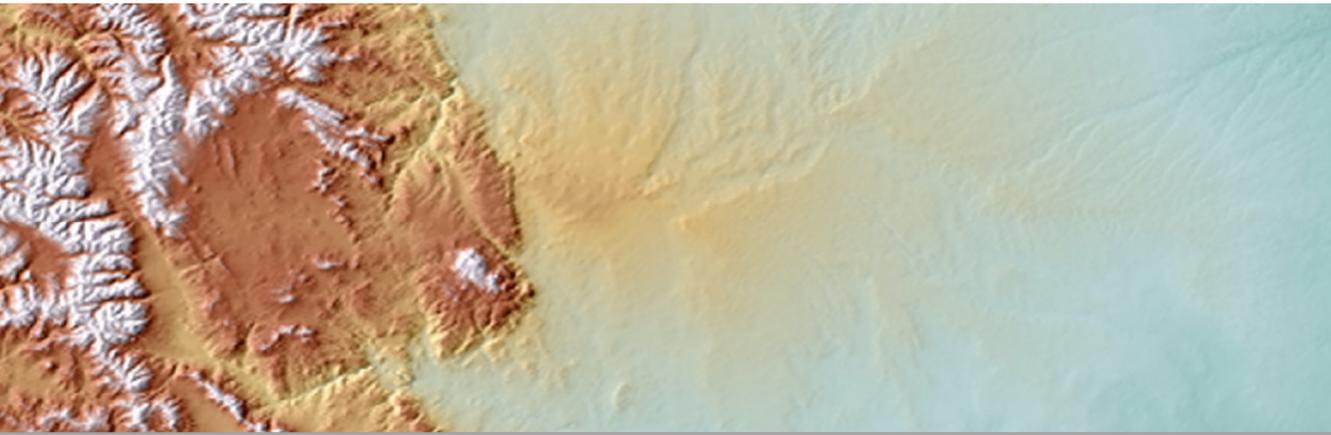
When looking across the membership of the Network, their collective work can be broadly categorized into three strategies: 1) **Developing Health Care Leadership for Change**, 2) **Increasing Access to the Health Care System**, and 3) **Improving the Health Care System**. Although specific challenges and interventions vary regionally and even locally, these three strategies remain consistent across the state.



DEVELOPING HEALTH CARE LEADERSHIP FOR CHANGE

Health alliances have the unique ability to bring diverse and high-powered leaders and stakeholders together to work toward common goals. Most of the alliances in the Network have CEO and Executive-level leaders of major health agencies on their leadership teams or Boards of Directors and have the ability to recruit other high-powered leaders into their collaborative. This approach leads to mission alignment across the community and encourages collaborative leadership approaches to top community challenges.

The **Grand County Rural Health Network**, formally organized in 1999, is a coalition of community leaders, politicians, health care professionals, and local businesses working to educate on health issues and improve the accessibility and efficiency of the healthcare system. Their Grand County Healthcare Professionals Society has developed into a robust network of 30 providers working to "put the patients first." The Society published the Healthy Grand County 2020 Plan, which includes common, measurable goals to improve Grand County's health.



INCREASING ACCESS TO THE HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

State and federal health reforms provide new tools to increase local access to health care and coverage. Many alliances, including the **Tri-County Health Network**, the **North Colorado Health Alliance**, the **Northwest Colorado Community Health Partnership**, and the **West Mountain Regional Health Coalition** have become certified Assistance Sites for Connect for Health Colorado, our new health insurance marketplace. These efforts build on other access to care initiatives that alliances have run or catalyzed throughout the state.

Community Health Partnership, a 21-year-old health care collaborative in Colorado Springs, runs a voluntary physician and prescription assistance network for uninsured and underinsured adults in the region called the Coordinated Access to Community Health program.

In 2013, the **La Plata Citizen's Health Advisory Council**, an alliance of health care leaders founded in 2001, led a community-wide initiative to launch a sliding scale safety net clinic, called the La Plata Community Clinic, for underserved residents.

IMPROVING THE HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

Leaders across the state are searching for ways to limit duplication, pool resources, and coordinate services. As health care systems evolve and grow in complexity, collaborative approaches to change are necessary. Challenges like high-utilization, prescription drug misuse, and health information exchange, cannot be solved by an individual health agency. Through formal arrangements, often bound by memorandums of understanding, health alliances have been able to develop collaborative approaches to these issues.

The **Tri-County Health Network** provides community programs that improve the quality and coordination of care, reduce costs and increase access. Since 2009, they have been recruiting providers and adopting care innovations, like patient navigation and electronic medical records.

The **North Colorado Health Alliance**, which formed in 2002, is a national model for collective initiatives like automated point of care clinical guidelines, chronic disease management, preventive care promotion, and health status and outcomes monitoring.

BY THE NUMBERS

2013 was a major success! Over the last year, the Network:

- Engaged **21** Health Alliances
- Covered **39** counties
- Published **3** toolkits
- Facilitated **5** learning webinars
- Held **3** collective conference calls
- Hosted **1** annual statewide meeting and **2** regional meetings

2013 was a year of tumultuous change in the health care system and much more is on the way. Colorado's health alliances are poised to lead our state toward stronger and more inclusive health care systems. In 2014 and beyond, the Network has the potential to effectively create significant and lasting health care change in Colorado, and to be a model of collaboration and collective action for the nation.

Beyond the specific efforts mentioned in this report, alliance members have numerous other initiatives underway.

Learn more: www.ccmu.org/network

REFERENCES

- ¹ County Health Rankings 2013. University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute. The rankings are based on the latest data publicly available for each county. Accessible at www.countyhealthrankings.org.
- ² Colorado Health Access Survey 2013. Denver, CO: The Colorado Trust. The 2013 CHAS was a telephone survey of over 10,000 randomly selected households in Colorado, administered from April 2013 to July 2013. The CHAS was funded by The Colorado Trust and administered by the Colorado Health Institute. Accessible at www.coloradohealthinstitute.org.
- ³ KIDS COUNT 2013. Denver, CO: Colorado Children's Campaign. A project of the Annie E. Casey Foundation to track the education, health, and general well-being of children in the United States. Accessible at www.kidscount.org.

***We believe everybody should have the opportunity to lead a healthy life.
We are an agent of change. Thought leaders. Collaborators. Advocates.***

The Colorado Coalition for the Medically Underserved serves as a bridge, bringing together ideas and resources with people who can make real change happen. CCMU convenes the Colorado Network of Health Alliances, a statewide network that fosters strategic shared learning, networking, and collaboration between local health efforts across the state. Network members are focused on developing health care leadership for change, increasing access to care in their communities, and improving and strengthening local health care systems.