

Joint Policy Memo on Facility-Based Mobile Crisis Response in Colorado

April 7, 2023

Purpose and Audience

This memo informs Mobile Crisis Response (MCR) service providers and the community of appropriate locations to deliver care within the scope of the MCR program.

The Department of Health Care Policy & Financing (HCPF) administers Health First Colorado (Colorado's Medicaid program), Child Health Plan *Plus* (CHP+) and other health care programs for Coloradans who qualify. The Behavioral Health Administration (BHA) is a new cabinet member-led entity within the State of Colorado, housed within the Department of Human Services, and is designed to be the single entity responsible for driving coordination and collaboration across state agencies to address behavioral health needs. The BHA is responsible for regulating the provision of behavioral health services by developing and monitoring reasonable and proper standards, rules, and regulations. The BHA contracts with Administrative Services Organizations (ASOs) to provide a network of walk-in crisis centers, crisis stabilization centers, respite, and mobile crisis services in their regions known as the Colorado Crisis Services (CCS) continuum. CCS fits into a larger behavioral health response and safety net system, within which other services and programs play an essential role (while not being MCR providers). From July 2024 going forward, these crisis contracts will be administered by the newly awarded Behavioral Health Administrative Service Organizations (BHASOs).

HCPF and the BHA are issuing this joint guidance to MCR stakeholders in Colorado, including those who intend to enroll as Medicaid MCR Behavioral Health Crisis Services Providers with a BHA endorsement for MCR, other providers within the larger behavioral health and safety net system that receive other crisis response funding from the BHA, as well as communities and organizations which receive services from the crisis response system.

Issue in Brief

HCPF and the BHA collaborated to adopt MCR standards based on federal statute and practice guidance in order for the State to be eligible for federal matching funds. These standards support trauma-informed and evidence-based practices with the goal of reducing reliance on criminal justice and emergency departments for behavioral health needs. These updated standards also help address inappropriate use of state-only funds, ensuring that Medicaid is reimbursing for crisis services for their members and the BHA is reimbursing for uninsured and underinsured Coloradans. MCR services are intended to be provided in homes and communities, not in facilities. Based on federal guidance, facilities excluded from receiving community-based MCR include:

- Inpatient Hospitals,

- Inpatient Psychiatric Hospitals,
- Emergency Departments,
- Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facilities,
- Residential Child Care Facilities,
- Qualified Residential Treatment Programs,
- Inpatient Alcohol and Drug Rehabilitation Centers,
- Prisons and Jails, and
- Outpatient settings that offer crisis services, such as Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics or Community Mental Health Centers.

Facility-based providers that offer and are reimbursed for crisis services can provide those services in-house or continue to contract directly with a vendor for emergency psychiatric and crisis stabilization services, but may not utilize community Mobile Crisis Response for the purpose of state funding through the BHA or through Medicaid. Although community MCR is disallowed for facility-based providers, those providers would still be eligible to bill Medicaid utilizing non-MCR billing codes for crisis services rendered onsite. HCPF is in process of developing specific billing guidance, so that these services can continue to be reimbursed.

Timeline of Effectiveness

Spring 2023 Endorsement and Enrollment Dates

- As the BHA crisis rules will not be effective until after October 2023, BHA and HCPF are conducting “readiness reviews” through April. Providers may be approved to provide these new services prior to the July 1, 2023 benefit launch and become eligible to enroll with HCPF as a MCR Behavioral Health Crisis Services provider. HCPF will begin reimbursing for MCR services using the new service definition effective July 1, 2023.
- The BHA will continue to utilize the \$1.75M in American Rescue Plan Act funds granted by HCPF to assist crisis providers in meeting the new MCR standards through June 30, 2024. These funds have been distributed through an interactive process between the state agencies, ASOs and their contracted providers across Colorado in all seven ASO regions. So far, funds have been administered for:
 - Level setting provider access to telehealth technology, assistive communication and interpretation technology, harm reduction/Naloxone training and tools, other required training, DocuSign and telehealth platforms,
 - Covering the cost of certifying new Peer Support Professionals through one of the Colorado peer training organizations if requested,
 - Supporting ASO recruitment efforts for their contracted providers, and
 - Supporting ASOs to develop a regional approach to contracting with priority population providers who MCR teams can access during or directly after a crisis response to support members. This includes providers serving individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, traumatic brain injuries, serious mental illnesses, deaf/Hard of Hearing/Deafblind individuals, and other priority populations.

Effective July 1, 2023 through HCPF regulations and payments:

- MCR services will be allowable and reimbursable by Medicaid for enrolled providers when provided to Medicaid members. MCR cannot be provided in a facility. Crisis stabilization services may be billed to Medicaid using other appropriate crisis codes to receive reimbursement.
- The BHA will provide additional funding for identified rural hospitals supporting bridge contracts through June 30, 2024 (FY24). Bridge funding will not reduce funding budgeted for the ASO crisis contracts.
- To prevent a service gap, BHA and HCPF encourage hospitals to formalize existing relationships with providers that would allow for ongoing behavioral health service delivery beyond June 30, 2024. HCPF is developing specific billing guidance for facilities on how to bill for crisis services to support ongoing access to care, with a focus on hospitals with a low volume of care that do not have onsite BH staff.

Effective July 1, 2024:

- BHA will no longer provide bridge funding. Facilities, including hospitals, should have updated billing processes, updated contracts or other arrangements in place for behavioral health emergency and/or crisis services to be offered onsite.

The BHA and HCPF are committed to supporting our community partners in accessing, providing, and billing for essential crisis care services and supporting providers during this transition to improve our behavioral health system. Most importantly, we will ensure that people across Colorado who are most in need are able to continue to access behavioral health crisis services.

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