The Colorado Health Foundation™

I think healthy is...

Happy enjoy it in moderation
Feeling good inside + out
educated
relationships (family, friends)
mind, spirit, body + soul
managing stress

In this space, add three "sources of health" stickers to show what has the biggest effect on health in your community.





The Colorado Health Foundation™

#HealthiestCO

Learning to Broaden How We Think About Health

When it comes to the meaning of health, we tend to think first and foremost about our physical health. For many of us, our health reflects what we consume, how much we move, how we prevent or manage a disease and what happens in the doctor's office.

For me, personally, health is so much more than simply not being sick. It encompasses our whole mind, body and spirit. As a mother, I really learned what this means when my son — who was only eight-years-old at the time — began experiencing anxiety. He was the first to acknowledge that he couldn't stop overthinking and worrying about things. He was also experiencing physical symptoms, such as digestive issues and hair loss, and suffered a panic attack at a crowded event. While he recognized that something was wrong, I didn't. I couldn't wrap my head around how it was possible for such a young child to have what seemed like such an adult problem. And I could hardly bear to see that his bright, shining spirit was fading.

We were fortunate enough to have access to a behavioral health care provider, who helped my son learn coping strategies – essential tools for dealing with his anxiety. The counselor went further, though, and helped me learn how to let my son share his feelings without judging or interrupting him.

At the Foundation, over the years, we have worked to broaden our idea of health — exploring the roles of education, transportation and physical environments in health, as well as investing in clinics that offer integrated care (addressing physical, behavioral and oral health). We have also expanded our work to apply a health equity lens to all we do, and we continue to broaden the way we think about health.

For us, our picture of health is infinitely tied to how well we are when it comes to our hearts and minds. Our experiences on the ground in Colorado — in addition to the data (according to our 2016 Colorado Health Report Card, there are several mental health indicators that haven't improved in the last decade) — have underscored the fact that many Coloradans are experiencing tremendous behavioral health challenges. For example, I heard from communities in every corner of the state during our listening tour that behavioral health must be a top priority. Coloradans have voiced their concerns about the struggles of treating behavioral health issues, as well as the socioeconomic factors contributing to them. We know there are inequities that drive these issues, along with access and general awareness deficits that need to be remedied.

In fact, as an organization dedicated to improving the health of Coloradans, we have recently committed one of our six focus areas to behavioral health. While we are still defining this focus area and how we will engage within it, our hope is that we can help foster long-term and promising solutions that nurture the hearts and minds of all Coloradans throughout their lives.

As we explore how to have the greatest impact in our new Behavioral Health focus area, we have much to learn about how to intentionally fund those working to improve behavioral health and how we can work together to address the whole picture of health in communities throughout Colorado.

Look for new developments on our upcoming work in behavioral health and keep your stories and feedback coming our way. Perspectives and voices are how we will best shape this bigger story of Colorado’s health. Yours matters.

TYPE

Blog

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