



COLORADO
Office of Children,
Youth & Families
Department of Human Services

2023-2024

Statewide Youth Development Plan



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Executive Summary

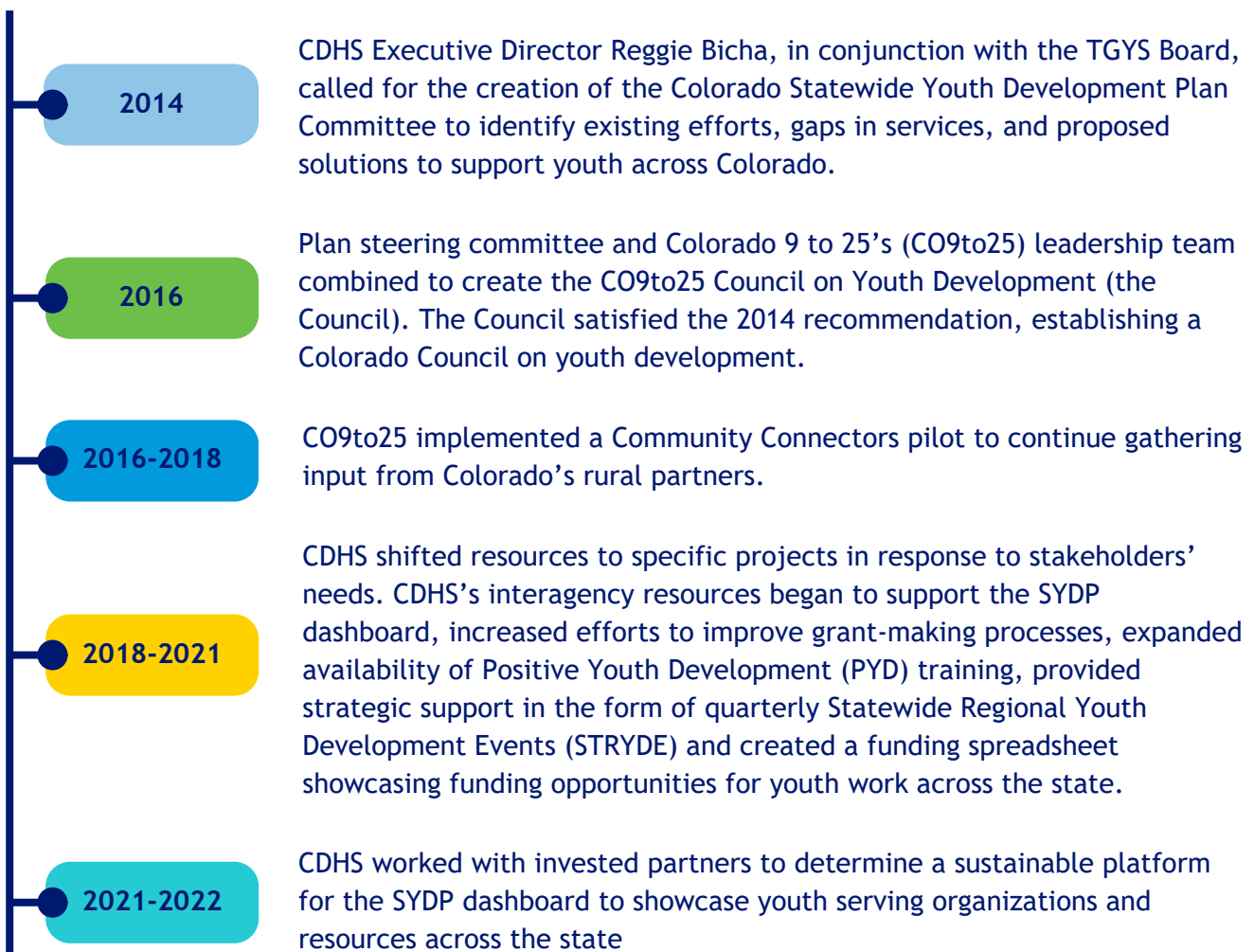
Overview

C.R.S. § 26-1-111.3 (statute) charges the Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS) with creating and updating a Statewide Youth Development Plan (SYDP or the Plan) in partnership with stakeholders and the Tony Grampas Youth Services (TGYS) board. This document presents a vision for a strong youth system, youth development strategies, partners across the state, action steps, and a report on the 2021-2022 Statewide Youth Development Plan.

A Vision for a Strong Youth System

A unified youth system will gather young people alongside youth-serving and grant-making organizations in order to co-create a collaborative, youth-led, and relevant set of supports across the state for youth and those who work alongside them. Youth voices will be heard, valued, supported, and elevated for their identification of strengths and gaps within the youth development system.

History of Statewide Youth Development Plan



Approaches and Frameworks for a Unified Youth System



Statute calls for the Plan to identify successful and replicable youth development strategies both nationally and in Colorado. The frameworks and approaches for prevention, intervention, and treatment presented for the 2023-2024 Plan include:

PYD Framework

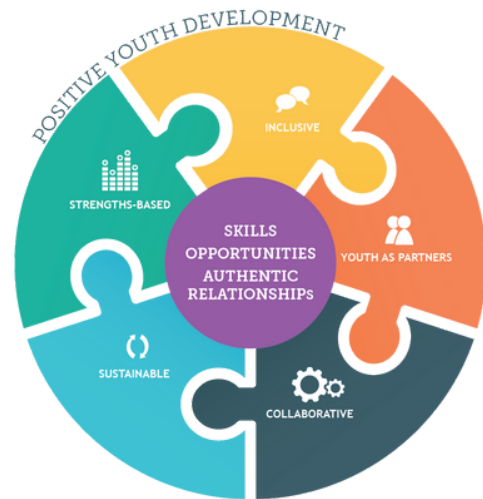
The Plan continues to have a strong grounding in PYD. PYD remains an evidence-based framework that youth service professionals, organizations, and youth-focused state agency programs can utilize to further develop program and funding opportunities.

At its core, PYD focuses on building relationships with youth and engaging them in improving the services that impact them directly.

PYD is more than a mindset; it is a framework modified by the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) to fit Colorado communities and integrated into youth programming statewide.

PYD empowers and engages young people of Colorado to create positive change and grow into successful adults.

The PYD principles include strengths-based, inclusive, youth as partners, collaborative, and sustainable.



Shared Risk and Protective Factors

Effective prevention focuses on reducing the risk factors and strengthening the protective factors most closely related to the problem being addressed.

Research from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) continues to find linkages identifying risk and protective factors that are shared between multiple forms of violence, substance use, and other physical health factors like obesity.

If Colorado youth systems focus on increasing protective factors while addressing the risk factors, outcomes will ultimately be stronger and more sustainable. Refer to [Appendix B](#).

Two-Generation (2Gen) Approach

Youth exist in families, communities, and complex environments.

The 2Gen, or whole-family, approach focuses on services and opportunities for children and youth as well as the adults in their lives. Providing support and interventions that strengthen the family system results in long-term positive impact for youth, families, and communities.

Equity Focus

Certain populations of youth face disparities and disproportionalities. This needs to be considered and addressed in decisions about policies, services, grants, and legislation.

Equity is "just and fair inclusion throughout society and creating the conditions in which everyone can participate, prosper, and reach their full potential." ¹

At its heart, the equity approach addresses the needs of children and youth who experience multiple, overlapping needs and ensures the redistribution of resources and services to those most in need. An equity focus improves inclusivity and equality.

When exploring universal outcomes for youth in Colorado an equity approach will examine policies, dismantle barriers, and ensure fairness and justice for those children and youth who are most marginalized.

Wraparound and Coordinated Services Approach

Youth with complex needs are often involved in multiple systems such as behavioral health, education, juvenile justice, and/or child welfare.

There are multiple models for coordinated services in Colorado including Wraparound and the Collaborative Management Program (CMP). These approaches provide a strategy for collaboration and comprehensive support between systems to improve the experience and outcomes of youth and their families.

¹ Equity Manifesto <http://www.policylink.org/about-us/equity-manifesto>



Partners Across the State



The SYDP collaborates with state agencies, youth serving nonprofits, youth councils, youth serving foundations and local government entities throughout Colorado to support the work mandated within the Plan. While many partners are engaging in meaningful and impactful work that contributes to the SYDP, the following section highlights exceptional achievements and shared resources that were reported to CDHS and may be of value to others.

Colorado Afterschool Partnership



Colorado Afterschool Partnership (CAP) was established in 2014 in order to foster statewide partnerships that improve outcomes for all children and youth through high-quality expanded learning opportunities, such as those found in afterschool and summer programs. In order to support their mission, CAP creates coalitions of diverse organizations that leverage public and private funding and partnerships.

CAP focuses their work in the following areas: policy and partnership, sustainability, and quality. They are one of 50 statewide afterschool networks that comprise the National Network of Statewide Afterschool Networks.

One of CAP's ongoing goals is to create a dashboard of afterschool programs available across Colorado. The aim is to annually collect statewide data relevant to afterschool and summer learning in order to identify strengths, opportunities, and gaps in the state landscape. This dashboard is a work in progress that will continue to expand as the database of afterschool time providers grows. This work provides an easy access point for families and guardians to find registered afterschool programs for their children and youth.

This work directly supports Action Step 1 (please see below in the SYDP Report section) from the 2021-2022 SYDP report.

Youth Move Colorado

Youth MOVE Colorado is a national nonprofit whose vision is to ensure that youth are empowered, educated, and given a decision-making role in their own life, as well as in organizations and programs in their community, state, and nation.

Youth MOVE Colorado is working with AmeriCorps Volunteers in Service to America, or VISTA, to provide peer to peer support and youth driven program improvement.

These lived experience youth participate in community focus groups to find gaps and identify links to connect youth to community, mental health, and workforce development resources.

Youth MOVE Colorado has also implemented the Youth Voice Agency Level (Y-VAL) assessment for agencies working with youth. The goal of Y-VAL is to support local communities to increase youth engagement and voice at the agency level. The assessment is shared with staff, partners, and agency recipients. The data is aggregated anonymously and the organization is provided with a report highlighting strengths and identifying areas of opportunity to integrate youth voice.

Youth MOVE is developing new and innovative ways to communicate and share resources with youth throughout Colorado.

Youth MOVE peer to peer mentors are in the process of developing a geo map, which provides a listing of youth programs.

Additionally, Youth MOVE airs the Next Gen Convos podcast weekly. During the podcast, youth and staff from statewide partners are interviewed to share their experiences and highlight resources available to youth.

These efforts are in direct alignment with Action Step 1 (please see the SYDP Report section below) from the 2021-2022 SYDP report.



Rise Above Colorado



Rise Above Colorado (RAC) has been empowering youth to make healthy connections, decisions, and change since 2008.

In the past year, RAC has partnered with the Attorney General's office and SE2, a Colorado behavior change agency, to convene focus groups of middle and high school youth to inform and develop the [Connect Effect](#), Colorado's statewide fentanyl awareness campaign. Connect Effect highlights youth that are making healthy choices by not taking prescription medications that are not prescribed to them. The campaign demonstrates how connections with peers and trusted adults help youth understand the risks of fentanyl and recognize the signs of an opioid overdose. The creation of Connect Effect utilizes the PYD Framework, Shared Risk and Protective Factors Approach, and 2Gen Approach.

RAC has also continued their Statewide Teen Action Council (TAC), a group of youth that represents the geographical and personal diversity of Colorado. TAC works to ensure all messaging from RAC is relevant, reliable, and powerful to all youth in Colorado. TAC developed the [for teens, by teens](#) website with content focused on facts about drugs and providing a safe space to share positive stories of Colorado teens. RAC provides an example of living the PYD principles of youth as partners, collaboration, inclusivity, and strengths-based through the Statewide Teen Action Council.

RAC continues to follow PYD principles providing stipends to the TAC and by employing two part-time youth partners on staff to ensure a youth lens is applied to all work.

Colorado Department of Public Health and the Environment (CDPHE)

CDPHE is a long standing partner in youth development work. In addition to collecting comprehensive data on the health and well-being of youth across the state through the Healthy Kids Colorado Survey (discussed in the SYDP Report for 2021-2022 section). CDPHE, in conjunction with CDHS, CDE, private funders, and prevention organizations, are working towards a shared prevention approach through the Colorado Prevention Collaborative (House Bill 21-1276). This work will support continuity for children, youth, and adults who are served by prevention organizations and agencies.

Collaborative Management Program (CMP)

In 2004, the Colorado General Assembly passed House Bill 04-1451 to establish collaborative management programs at the county level that would improve outcomes for children, youth, and families involved with multiple agencies.

CMP promotes the adoption of collaborative management structures at the county level to achieve a variety of goals, including:



Develop a more uniform system of collaborative management that includes the input, expertise, and active participation of parent advocacy or family advocacy organizations.



Reduce duplication and eliminate fragmentation, and increase quality, appropriateness, and effectiveness of services delivered to children or families who would benefit from integrated multi-agency services.



Encourage cost sharing among service providers and cost-reduction for services.



Achieve positive outcomes for children and families, particularly in the child welfare system in Colorado.

Partners in local CMPs include county departments of human/social services, local judicial districts, health departments, school districts, community mental health centers, and behavioral health organizations or regional accountable entities, parent or family advocacy groups, and community agencies.

CMP utilizes the PYD Framework, Shared Risk and Protective Factors Approach, 2Gen Approach, and Wraparound and Coordinated Services Approach when serving youth.

Gaps within Organizations and Communities

Youth serving organizations across Colorado were surveyed by CDHS to determine current gaps that impact youth development outcomes.

Partners shared the following barriers to youth development work:

- A lack of funding opportunities for youth engagement and high competition for available funds.
- A lack of understanding from prevention funders regarding the connection between increased Social Emotional Learning (SEL) skills and a decrease in substance use.
- A lack of support for organizations in writing youth engagement policy and program guidelines into their organizational structure.
- A lack of transportation to and from programming and services.
- A decrease in youth participation in programming due to an increased need for youth to work to support family needs in response to the increased cost of living.
- Low availability of mental health care for youth, families, and organizational staff.
- Limited availability of financial incentives for participation and payments for lived experience.

Results and Outcomes: SYDP Report for 2021-2022 Action Steps

Action Step 1: Utilize the SYDP Dashboard

Utilize key indicators from the SYDP dashboard to identify needs and gaps in service, inform funders, and support communities across Colorado to adapt and address these needs.

Update: Over the course of the past two years it was decided by SYDP stakeholders (youth councils, state agencies, youth serving foundations and organizations, city government, and county government) that the SYDP Dashboard is duplicating other dashboards across the state. Feedback from community partners determined that there are three main dashboards that practitioners utilize when identifying needs and developing programming. These are the Healthy Kids Colorado Survey, the Youth Move Colorado Dashboard, and Colorado Afterschool Partnership (described below). Combined, these dashboards report key indicators including mental health, lack of food and housing, sexual violence, graduation rates, school safety, praise on school work, sports participation, caring adults, community service participation, and median household income. Moving forward, CDHS will coordinate with these partners to ensure their work is being elevated and shared.

The Healthy Kids Colorado Survey (HKCS) Interactive Data Dashboard

The Healthy Kids Colorado Survey (HKCS), administered by CDPHE, is the state's most comprehensive survey on the health and well-being of young people.

The survey is administered in the fall of odd-numbered years in public middle and high schools. The survey is an anonymous and voluntary opportunity for young people to report their health status in the areas of mental health, nutrition, physical activity, sexual health, substance use, suicide, experiences of violence and racism, school and community engagement, access to trusted adults, attitudes and perceptions that affect health, and more.

The HKCS results help state and local organizations better understand the youth they serve and support youth in making healthy choices.

CDPHE acknowledges that generations of social, economic, and environmental inequities result in some Colorado youth experiencing negative health outcomes and have a greater impact than individual choices. The HKCS results consistently illuminate disparities in health outcomes for youth of color and LGBTQ+ youth.

Analyses of the HKCS results also consistently show when young people have access to protective factors – like trusted adults who can help with problems, clear family rules, and feeling safe and connected at school – they are less likely to experience poor mental health outcomes and engage in unhealthy behaviors like substance use and violence. Ensuring that all youth have access to protective factors can help them thrive.

CDPHE publishes representative regional and statewide results via an interactive data dashboard on healthykidscolo.org. The HKCS data dashboard features results disaggregated by geography, age, grade, race and ethnicity, sexual orientation, and gender identity. The dashboard is updated by the summer of even-numbered years when new data are available.



The Youth Move Colorado Dashboard

Youth MOVE Colorado is lightly testing a geo map, which lists youth programs available throughout the state. The AmeriCorps Vistas who are completing this work are utilizing the [Youth Move National model](#) to map youth gaps and services within communities.

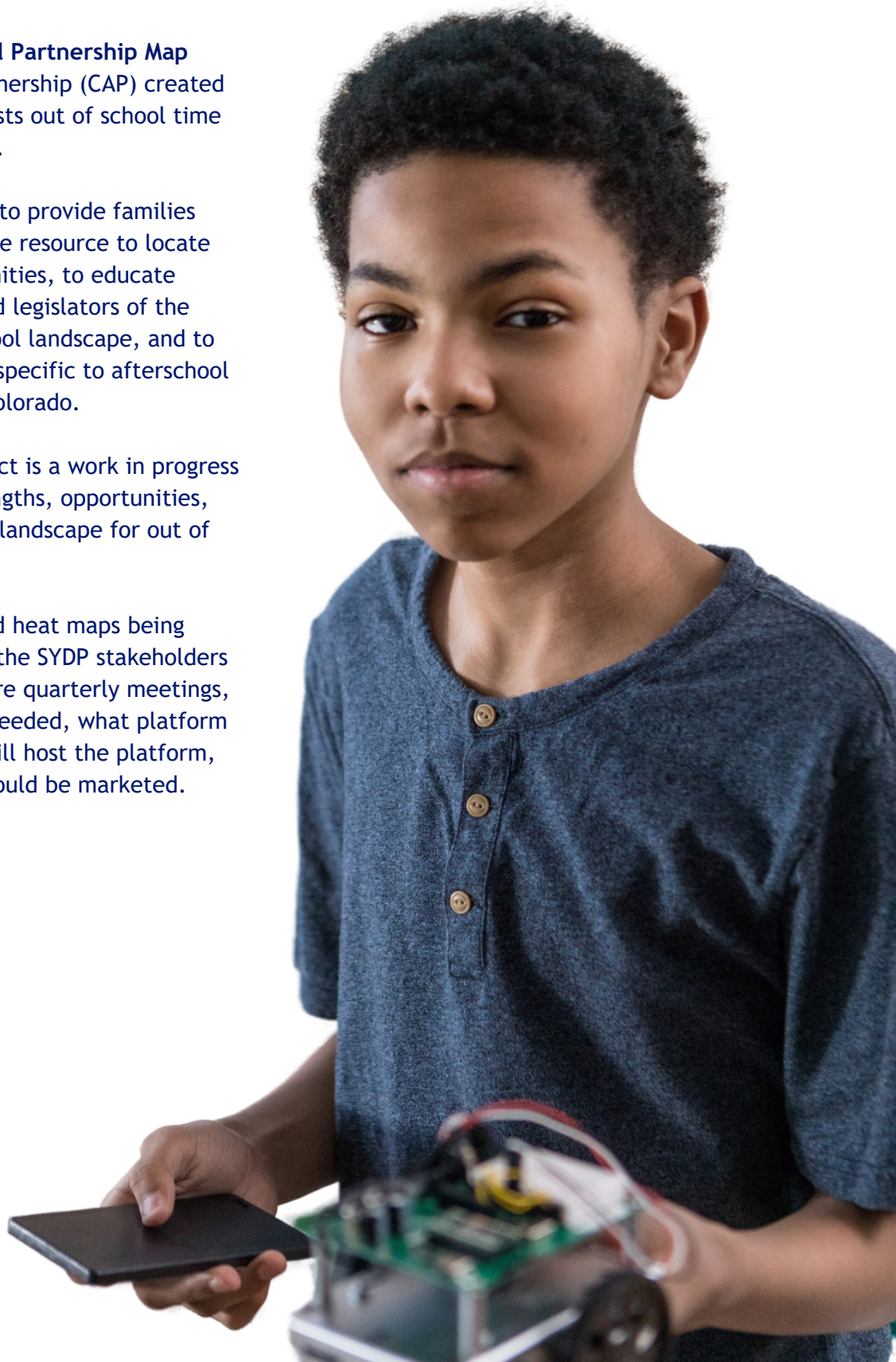
The Colorado Afterschool Partnership Map

Colorado Afterschool Partnership (CAP) created an [interactive map](#) that lists out of school time programs across the state.

This dashboard was built to provide families with a user-friendly, online resource to locate programs in their communities, to educate stakeholders, funders, and legislators of the unique Colorado afterschool landscape, and to allow for future research specific to afterschool and summer learning in Colorado.

CAP's data mapping project is a work in progress that aims to identify strengths, opportunities, and gaps within the state landscape for out of school time programming.

Due to the dashboards and heat maps being created across the state, the SYDP stakeholders should determine, in future quarterly meetings, if a central repository is needed, what platform is most accessible, who will host the platform, and how the repository would be marketed.



Action Step 2: Develop and distribute a compendium of youth resources

Compile a compendium of Colorado resources in a central repository that impacts the youth system and ensures wide access to this resource to support collaboration, access to funding, and best practice implementation.

Update: The first component of this action step, compile a compendium of Colorado resources, is complete. Many state agencies, non-profit organizations, and community partners have compiled resources important to their own youth development work. The work to create a central repository is ongoing.

Many community coalitions utilize LinkTree, a platform that allows you to compile links to multiple resources on one mini-webpage, in order to share resources with youth and families. Internally, state agency action groups utilize platforms such as Notion, a centralized virtual workspace, to share resources across agencies.

The work to develop a central repository will continue. Due to the amount of resources being shared in various ways, the SYDP stakeholders should determine, in future quarterly meetings, if a central repository is needed, what platform is most accessible, and how it would be marketed.

Action Step 3: Support PYD best practices

Update: PYD practices have been elevated through the transition of the PYD program from CDPHE to CDHS, the hiring of a PYD Training Specialist, and the creation of a year-long plan to increase the number of statewide PYD trainings. The training plan includes the development of continued education opportunities and coaching opportunities for PYD trainers and practitioners.

Additionally, CDPHE is hosting the Colorado Prevention Collaborative, a gathering of state agencies engaged in prevention work. The Collaborative aims to support Colorado's Statewide Strategic Plan for Primary Prevention of Substance Abuse. While the Collaborative will focus on prevention science across all ages, it will also support youth prevention work across the state through the creation of common prevention language and training for prevention professionals. The Collaborative will utilize all the approaches and frameworks for a unified system.



Areas of Focus for Organizations

Youth serving organizations identified the following strategies and goals:



Engage groups of youth across Colorado to participate in youth driven program improvement through Positive Community Norming (PCN) messaging, increasing social capacity, building community connections, and improving programs.



Utilize the Equity Focus framework of the Plan to support equity practices and policies.



Support access to post-secondary education through academic and career advisement, financial aid education, transportation support, and concurrent enrollment opportunities for youth.



Create partnerships between youth serving organizations to support each other and reduce duplication of services.

Action Steps for 2023-2024



The Plan has prioritized the following action steps. Each step builds on work completed from the previous plan to support increased capacity of the youth system in addressing the needs of youth and families by implementing proven approaches and creating sustainability.

Action Step 1: Strategic Planning and Goal Setting

Develop a strategic plan to complete any outstanding action items from the previous plan and identify needs for the 2025-2026 Plan.

To support this action step, CDHS will schedule quarterly meetings with invested partners, which may include youth councils, state agencies, youth serving foundations and organizations, and local government officials. During these meetings invested partners will identify gaps, propose solutions, and develop sustainability plans for PYD goals and objectives.

Action Step 2: Support Systems in Embracing Identified Strategies

Support youth systems in embracing the frameworks and approaches outlined in the Plan (See Approaches and Frameworks for a Unified System on page xxx).

The frameworks and approaches are recognized throughout Colorado as necessary for successful youth services development. CDHS will coordinate with the invested partners, outlined in Action Step 1, to determine sustainable methods to disseminate these frameworks and approaches to youth serving organizations. The team of invested partners will also identify the proper support needed for the implementation of each approach or framework at the programmatic, funding, and organizational levels.

Conclusion

To create a youth serving system where all youth are safe, healthy, educated, connected, and contributing, it takes all Coloradans working towards the same outcomes. The Plan presents a vision of collaborative action. By engaging invested partners in strategic planning and providing resources to youth serving organizations to support the use of youth development approaches and frameworks, all youth have the opportunity to reach their full potential.



Appendix

Appendix A: Acronyms

2Gen -- Two-Generation

CAP - Colorado Afterschool Partnership

CDC -- Center for Disease Control

CDHS -- Colorado Department of Human Services

CDPHE-- Colorado Department of Physical Health and Environment

CMP- Collaborative Management Program

PCN - Positive Community Norming

PYD -- Positive Youth Development

SAMSHA -- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

SEL - Social Emotional Learning

SYDP -- Statewide Youth Development Plan

STRYDE -- Statewide Regional Youth Development Event

TGYS -- Tony Grampsas Youth Services

Appendix B: Shared Risk and Protective Factors

[Shared Risk and Protective Factors Approach](#)

