

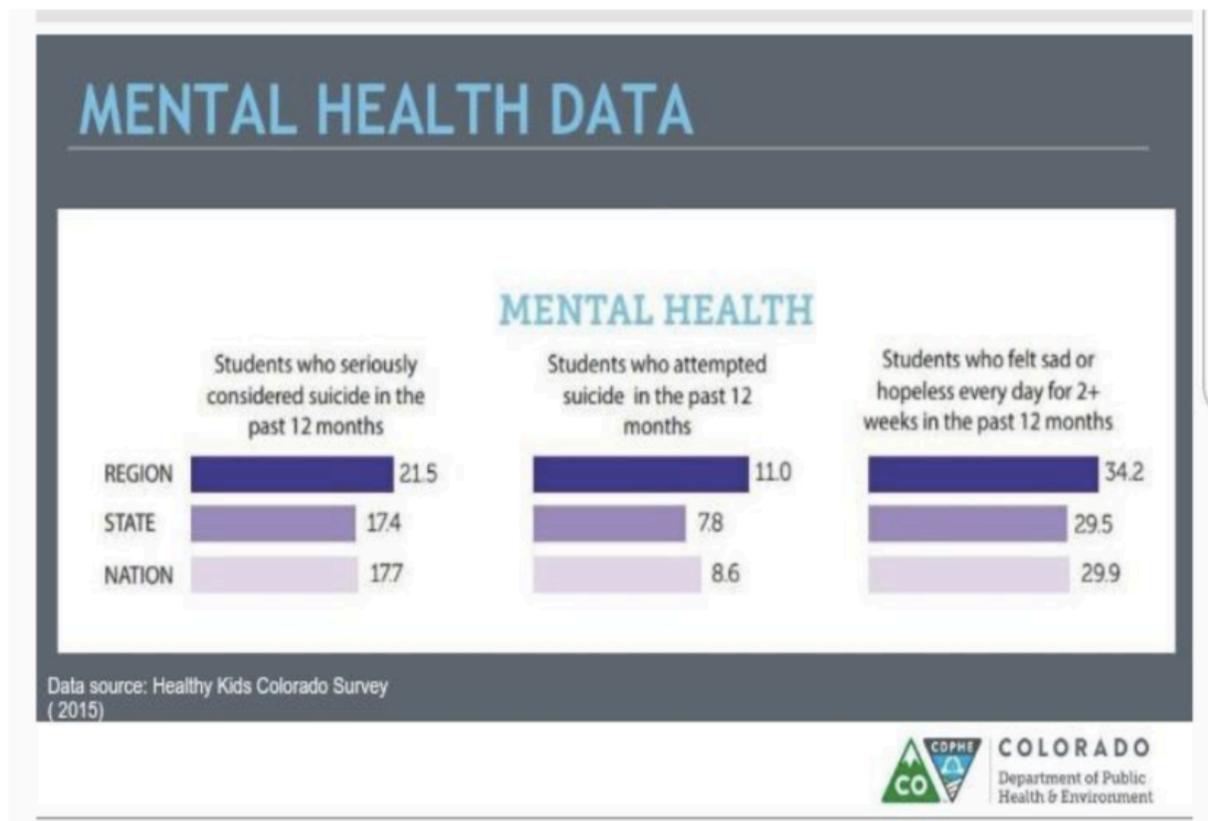


**2017-18 NBA Ministry and Mission Grantees
Impact Report:
Living Your Life: Coping with Depression and Anxiety
(Project Bright Hope)
Salida, Colorado**

Mission Area: At-Risk Youth and Children **Catalyst Grant:** US \$3,000

We began our research working to identify the needs of youth in Chaffee county, CO. We reviewed statistics using an existing data source - Healthy Kids Colorado Survey, focusing on the Mental Health survey. We quickly identified that Chaffee county youth have higher percentages of hopelessness and consider substance abuse or suicide as a remedy more frequently than Colorado or National statistics.

Youth Mental Health Statistics for Chaffee County, State of Colorado & the Nation:



Voices of the At-Risk Youth:

A Youth Alliance group has been working with Chaffee County Human Services to identify why Chaffee county youth are at such a high percentage for hopelessness, depression and at risk for suicidal thoughts and actions. A focus group of these at-risk youth assisted in identifying the factors that contribute to these high statistics among Chaffee county youth. The findings of this focus group were:

- 1) early initiation substance abuse (under age 13)
- 2) easy access to alcohol & drugs
- 3) financial constraints, wait times, and transportation to access assistance during a mental health crisis
- 4) lack of appropriate healthy youth activities

We have a team of trained mental health counselors within our county, as well as the support of school counselors, but there is very little funding to support the program and significantly impact these statistics. These youth are dropping through the cracks and not identified until they enter the system through law enforcement, who are responding to the substance abuse or attempted suicide, or there is an article in our newspaper about a youth's suicide and it is too late to change the outcome. Currently, a youth is referred to this program by the juvenile court system or the probation system. The program was not funded to meet the needs and motivate a youth to complete the program.

Our goal with this project has been to identify at-risk youth before they enter the juvenile system and to tackle the obstacles that hinder at-risk youth, so they have the opportunity to change their path to a better future.

How We Are Supporting this Program:

We have 5 first time offenders currently in the Moral Resonance Therapy (MRT) program. They need to attend classes 2 times a week, and the course generally takes 6 months to complete. They submit to testing during this program to be sure they are not continuing with the substance abuse. This program is geared to helping them identify how to change their course in life to a more productive approach and not be a repeat offender. This program is open to youth, ages 8-18, and if they successfully complete this course by their 18th birthday and adopt a more appropriate path for their future, the juvenile charges are dropped and will not continue to impact their adult life.

We are supporting this program with transportation to the classes. Chaffee county is large and some of these youth must travel 100 miles, twice a week, to access the program. Many of the families do not have the resources for transportation due to the current economic climate; they are in the group that does not qualify for county financial services but are just above the poverty guidelines. The family is focused on housing, food, and everyday needs. The transportation issue prevents the youth from focusing and receiving the full benefit of the frequent classes, which will help them learn to use the tools that will effectively change their path. By helping to meet this transportation need, we keep our youth focused on the change, rather than the obstacles. We also offer incentives - a small gift card - when they meet set goals throughout their program. These incentives also keep them focused on attending, so they are experiencing incremental improvements leading them to a more successful life path.

We currently have a 17-year-old who travels 100 miles, twice a week. He is committed to the program and has been working to successfully complete the program. The cost of the frequent travel has, however, been an obstacle to his completion by his 18th birthday. We are assisting with this need to support him in meeting his goal, get his charges dropped, and have this opportunity to go forward with the skills he has developed within the program for an improved future.

In addition, we are putting together a teen-focused brochure that can be handed out by social workers, school counselors and other youth groups in Chaffee county, in order to assist youth in being advocates for themselves or their peers when they are aware there is a crisis. We learned that youth are not aware of county resources which can be difficult to identify when immediate assistance is critical; that is why law enforcement is often the first intervention. This brochure will make these resources more available and visible, in a youth friendly way. This is an attempt to identify youth who are proceeding toward an inappropriate path and may become at risk, to provide earlier intervention before they are in crisis.

We used this grant to meet the immediate needs of the youth identified as at-risk in Chaffee county. Going forward, and very much in the scope of this project, we will be actively working with the Youth Alliance and Human Services to develop more appropriate and healthy activities for Chaffee county youth. This will allow us to be effective in identifying at-risk youth earlier, so we can share appropriate resources for change prior to any inappropriate action on their part.

We want to continue to partner with existing county resources; we will seek funding and volunteers beyond this grant. We are identifying funding for mental health access and vouchers for immediate treatment. We will work with county youth groups to support and chaperone teen town events, support teen group events such as soda get togethers, outdoor activities with a goal of being able to offer consistent healthy youth activities.

We have been able to apply the full amount of this grant to the critical needs of the MRT program and the brochures because we are receiving donations of time, materials and talent within our church. We have identified a large opportunity to share our love and concern with Chaffee county youth. We pray we are able to significantly impact the dismal statistics and make a difference in the lives of Chaffee county youth.

As the health and social services general ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the National Benevolent Association partners with congregations, regions, general ministries, and a variety of Disciples-related health and social service providers to create communities of compassion and care. Founded in 1887 by six women responding to the needs of the day and on their doorsteps, for more than 130 years the NBA has continued to serve "the least of these." Learn more at www.nbacares.org.