

COLORADO HEALTH NETWORKS (CHN) WAS ESTABLISHED AS an equal partnership between ValueOptions® – a managed behavioral health company – and eight community mental health centers across 43 of the state’s 64 counties.

Achieving national recognition for delivering cost effective and quality services, CHN serves 148,000 Medicaid members in southern, central and western Colorado, including urban, rural and frontier communities.

Accomplishments include:

- **Improved cost management:** CHN changed their emphasis from inpatient care to community-based alternative treatments for clients diagnosed with schizophrenia, bipolar disorder and depression. By 2002, a significant shift in utilization patterns was evident across the system with a 7.8 percent decrease in the average cost of providing services per member. By implementing the recovery model, one partner mental health center cut operating costs by over 40 percent. To accomplish this, they changed the mix of services. People with SPMI were moved out of restrictive programs, such as residential treatment and hospitalization, into community based treatment, such as supported employment and clustered housing with home health aide support.
- **Consumer involvement in program design and implementation:** CHN was the first MBHO in Colorado to have an Office of Consumer and Family Affairs. Currently, our partner mental health centers have trained and hired nearly 20 consumer/family advocates and 40 peer/family peer specialists. Advocates and Peer Specialists provide direct services as well as participate in program design, quality studies, and systems advocacy. CHN has also established 50 new self-help support groups and 9 consumer-run programs such as drop-in centers, club houses and empowerment centers. These programs offer peer counseling, psychosocial support and community outreach that add to the continuum of care for people with serious mental illness.

AT A GLANCE

Client: Colorado Dept. of Healthcare Policy and Financing

Covered Lives: 148,000 adults and children

Covered Services: broad range of mental health services

Type of Contract: capitated

Employees: 41

Location: Colorado Springs

Date Started: 1995

National Recognition: National Recognition: NAMI Heroes in the Fight Award, 2006; Psychiatric Services Achievement Award, Silver Award, 2003; Lilly Reintegration Award, 2nd Place, 2002; USA Today Quality Cup Finalist, 1996; NAMI Outcomes Roundtable award, 1996

- **Increased Access in Rural & Frontier communities:** To meet the needs of rural counties, CHN developed an extensive network of crisis and alternative services, enabling people to be treated in the communities where they live and work instead of driving hundreds of miles to an urban area. School-based treatment & after-school programs, respite homes for adults and children, in-home crisis and support services and homeless outreach services all improve access for persons most at risk. Currently, less than one-half of one percent of CHN’s eligible members have to travel more than 30 miles to see a provider.
- **Improved Health Outcomes:** Because CHN has invested more in community based services and less in restrictive levels of care such as in-patient and residential, consumers have experienced improved outcomes. Using the *Basis-32* instrument, consumers showed significant improvement on six of the 32 individual items as well as on three of the five domains measured. In another measure, consumers’ GAF scores increased 3 points.

Not only did GAF scores rise, but housing adequacy improved and there was positive evidence of more social contacts, higher personal income and better family relationships among people with SPMI. One community mental health center found that 38 percent of their clients with SPMI reported working, volunteering or going to school after they made the shift to community based treatment.

- **Impact on social and political issues that affect Medicaid Recipients:** CHN helped to shape and drive Colorado's focus on recovery (moving the system to a recovery model) by training and consulting with state Medicaid directors, legislators and other stakeholders. More recently, CHN mobilized a consumer coalition to advocate for the passage of Referendum C, a 2005 referendum that prevented millions of dollars from vanishing from Colorado's Medicaid system.

- **Robust Data Trail and on-demand analysis:** With the implementation of the recovery model came a need to capture encounters for non-traditional services. CHN has been a state-wide leader in re-designing encounters for alternative services. Our custom-designed reports help our providers analyze business needs and make prompt decisions about how to manage client care effectively and efficiently. In addition to data analysis and reporting, CHN harnesses the power of the Internet to reach out to clients, providers and our partners. Our web-based applications feature secure access to important information anytime, from any web browser and transform paper-based systems into online forms. One such system that was previously 100 percent paper-based now processes over 90 percent of transactions online with 100 percent data accuracy.
- **Increased access to care:** CHN has eliminated waiting lists of up to 30 days for a routine outpatient appointment, with consumers now being offered appointments within seven days. CHN maintains high access standards and the trend has consistently moved in a positive direction. Currently, routine appointments have been scheduled within our access standards 98 percent of the time; urgent appointments (within 24 hours) 100 percent of the time and Emergent appointments (within 1 hour urban and 2 hours rural) 100 percent of the time. In addition, CHN has significantly improved the number of appointments kept within seven days of a client's discharge from an inpatient facility.

