



Strengthening Colorado's Mental Health System A Plan to Safeguard all Coloradans

Aligning and Streamlining Mental Health and Substance Abuse Commitment Statutes

When an individual is experiencing a severe mental breakdown or substance abuse emergency, they may be involuntarily committed to a mental health institute, if they pose an immediate danger to themselves or people in their community. These involuntary commitments, used for treatment or care, are meant to be used a last resort when less restrictive alternatives are unavailable.

Currently, there are three different statutory processes that can be followed to place an individual in an involuntary commitment. Colorado is the only state in the nation with three statutory processes. This creates confusion for individuals being involuntarily committed, and for the providers of mental health and substance abuse services, i.e., psychiatrists, physicians, emergency room doctors, law enforcement, etc.

This proposal would consolidate the statutory process for holding or placing an individual in an involuntary commitment. This alignment protects the civil liberties of people experiencing mental crises or substance abuse emergencies; clarifies the process and options for providers of mental health and substance abuse services; and protects against the potential of abuse of an individual's rights.

This proposal would not change any professional roles or responsibilities for providers.

Ultimately, this proposal would allow Colorado's policy to focus on an individual's needs, ensuring better protection for people with severe mental illness, mental health crises and substance abuse emergencies, and the community as a whole, while also better protecting civil liberties.

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