

THE STORY OF A STATE'S HEALTH

Colorado HealthStory has the grand goal of starting new conversations about health and health care in Colorado through the sharing of stories.

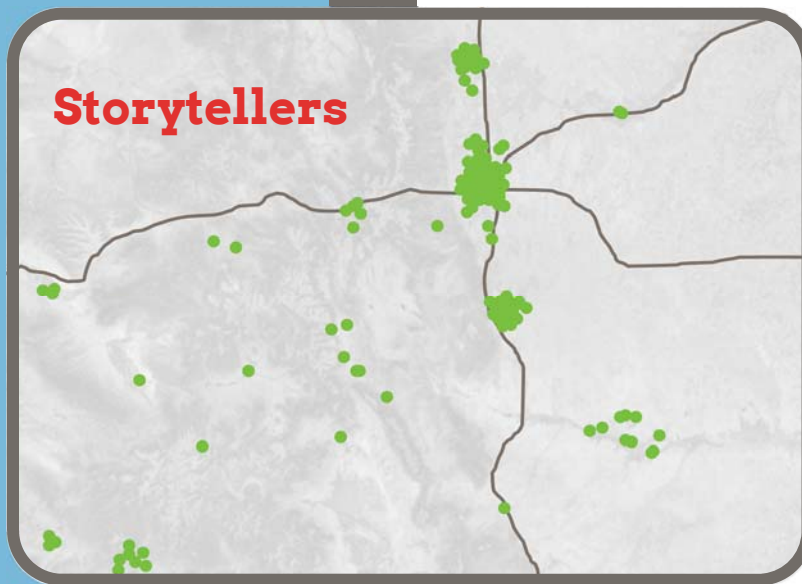
Since our beginning in 2011, as a project of the Colorado Coalition for the Medically Underserved, ClinicNET, and the Colorado Rural Health Center, we have collected more than 230 stories of health and health care from Coloradans

living in 27 different counties.

These stories—all stories—are powerful reminders of our shared humanity, and they help people connect with one another. Health is a very personal topic, and talking about it can be difficult, but stories help us better understand the issues facing our neighbors and our communities. We hope that when people listen to their neighbor's story, and share their own, it will spark new,

meaningful conversations and ensure that the decisions we make as a community—and as a state—are grounded in the experiences of the individuals that live here.

Colorado HealthStory traveled more than 3,000 miles, from the eastern plains to the western slope, and touched thousands of lives along the way. While every story and experience is as unique as the storyteller themselves, we've come to realize that the broad themes are the same. In communities across the state, we heard about ten issues of health and health care that are on the minds of Coloradans. **This is Colorado's health story.**



The Colorado HealthStory Top Ten

1

Health Care Coverage and Access to Care

Achieving statewide coverage is a complex, expensive, and elusive goal; even for Coloradans with health insurance though, access to care is limited.

2

Navigating the Health Care System

The barriers to care many patients face can be difficult to overcome and often lead to a frustrated patient wondering if the care they receive is worth the headache.

3

Educational and Preventive Health Measures

Health education, health promotion, prevention, and early intervention can sustain healthier longer lives.

4

Health and Wellness

Despite Colorado's reputation for healthy lifestyles, we still face an obesity epidemic.

5

Complex Health Conditions

In Colorado and across the United States, complex health conditions are some of the biggest threats to health and wellness.

6

Behavioral Health

An estimated one in five Coloradans will need treatment for mental health at some point in their lifetime—more than 1,000,000 people.

7

Oral Health

Oral disease, although nearly 100% preventable, affects children, adults, and families across the state of Colorado every day.

8

Patient and Provider Relationships

Many Colorado residents understand how a personal relationship with their provider is important to receiving quality care.

9

Being an Engaged Patient

Across Colorado, patients advocate for their own needs, know their own bodies, and don't accept that something can't be done to improve their health.

10

Health Disparities

With racial and ethnic minorities making up approximately 42% of Colorado's uninsured residents, we as a state must pay careful attention to health disparities.

Tesfahunega



"They give you phone numbers where it just keeps ringing, ringing, ringing just to get an appointment. Where do you go? And nobody cares, the way I see it they don't care. They see me going back and forth to the Emergency Room...They know I'm in trouble [and] there is nothing I can do."

Lisa



"Before we moved to La Junta, my daughter was missing a lot of school, she was really overweight. She was failing. We came to our current provider and he put her on a plan. She lost weight, she was eating better – we were having healthy meals...She feels really good about herself, her grades are all A's and B's. She has blossomed into a really great kid."

Sharon



"I had a pediatrician that I had from the time I was a baby to when I turned 18. And he was always so kind and caring...When it came for me to get a doctor as an adult, I looked for those same qualities. And it took awhile. It took me about three times before I found the physician that made me feel the same way that my pediatrician did...I could tell from my first visit with these first two. They were very impersonal, they had a clipboard, they asked me these questions and they never did really look up at me. And I'm not real sure that I want people touching me who won't even look up at me...When I finally found my current doctor who I've had for several years now...he asked about my family, he asked about work, he just asked about everything that made me who I am...he's very humane with his work."

Read more about the top ten and listen to stories:
coloradohealthstory.org/topten

“You are never starting a conversation in a community, you are entering into the middle of one.”

Over the past three years we entered into a countless conversations with communities and storytellers across Colorado. They shared that the act of telling their story helped them understand their experiences better themselves—it validated their reality and made their voice heard. Similarly, listening to these stories has been a powerful experience for the listener. The simple act of listening establishes personal connections, increases understanding, encourages empathy, and has the power to inspire action. We believe that everyone has a story to tell, and these stories need to be heard.

Decisions about our health care system that are made locally or at the state level affect the real health care experiences of Coloradans. We believe those conversations should be informed by the real health care experiences of Coloradans, too. Coloradans should be able to get the health care they need, when they need it, and together we can move our state closer to that commonsense goal. **One story at a time.**

Join the Conversation

Colorado HealthStory is working to create an appreciation of our shared experiences of health, one conversation at a time. A project of the Colorado Rural Health Center, the Colorado Coalition for the Medically Underserved and ClinicNET, it is funded by The Colorado Trust and the Colorado Health Foundation.



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