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Pathways to Purpose:

Strengthening Denver's Behavioral Health Talent Pipeline

A Guide to Career Progression, Training, and Employer Partnerships

AT A GLANCE

Colorado faces a persistent shortage of behavioral health workers, especially in entry- and mid-level roles that anchor care teams. Young adults, meanwhile, are seeking purpose-driven work with belonging and growth. This guide illustrates how structured career pathways can connect those motivations to Colorado's workforce needs.

What's Inside

- Two advancement pathways from accessible entry roles to licensure.
- Role rungs with requirements, local training options, and next-step guidance.
- Cross-cutting supports and programming gaps where partners can invest.
- Appendices mapping the broader ecosystem: full role inventory, employer directory, and program directory.

Acknowledgments

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- CareerWise Colorado
- Colorado Workforce Development Council
- Colorado Youth for a Change
- Denver Economic Development & Opportunity
- Denver Health and Hospital Authority
- Denver Public Schools
- Front Range Community College
- Kaiser Permanente Colorado
- Young adult representatives

About Jobs for the Future

[Jobs for the Future](#) (JFF) transforms U.S. education and workforce systems to drive economic success for people, businesses, and communities.

About Kaiser Permanente Colorado

[Kaiser Permanente Colorado](#) recognizes that access to care is a cornerstone of good health. Expanding educational and career pathways within the health sector creates life-changing opportunities for individuals, families, and communities to access care and thrive. This is especially important for people who have historically faced barriers to healthcare and representation in health professions.

As part of the Healthcare Workforce Strategy, Kaiser Permanente is investing in workforce development to increase access to healthcare-related education and training. These efforts help grow an equitable and skilled healthcare workforce and strengthen the overall health system.

As the nation's largest nonprofit integrated health system, Kaiser Permanente is committed to building a more inclusive and representative healthcare system—because improving access to care starts with investing in the people who deliver it.

About the Colorado Health Institute

[The Colorado Health Institute](#) (CHI) strengthens communities and systems with trusted analysis and collaborative solutions to improve health. As a nonprofit public health institute, CHI works to improve the systems that influence people's health and well-being. CHI was founded in 2002 to fill a need for independent data and evidence-based analysis to support decision-makers. As Colorado's health policy landscape has changed, CHI has grown to meet the challenge, answering critical questions, making sense of complex issues, and supporting others to reach actionable solutions.

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1. Why Behavioral Health Pathways Matter

Colorado's behavioral health system is straining under persistent workforce shortages—especially in entry- and mid-level roles that anchor care teams. For instance, behavioral health job openings in the state are projected to increase by about [30% from 2023 to 2030](#), outpacing the growth in the provider pipeline (Appendix C). These gaps directly limit access, increase wait times, and drive burnout among existing staff. These workforce gaps coincide with a new generation of young adults seeking meaningful, purpose-driven careers, creating both a challenge and an opportunity for Colorado's behavioral health system.

Young adults are seeking purpose-driven work, and behavioral health roles offer meaningful connection, community impact, and transferable skills (communication, crisis response, cultural humility). Yet workers often cite two persistent challenges: *wages are often low*, and *advancement is unclear*. Without intentional structures—tuition support, paid supervision, bridge programs—many early career workers stall before reaching higher-wage licensed roles.

This guide responds to those challenges by:

- **Demystifying role progression** by showing how an individual can move from entry-level positions into higher-skill jobs.
- **Aligning training with the credentials and role requirements employers use in practice** — including Medicaid-recognized service provider categories — so the education and training workers pursue connect to real jobs and advancement.
- **Identifying gaps** where new models (e.g., apprenticeship, work-based learning, paid supervision, bridge credentials) are needed to strengthen retention and advancement.

A broad range of occupations exists across Colorado's behavioral health continuum, from peer, technician, and navigation roles to licensed clinical and supervisory positions.

2. How Behavioral Health Jobs Are Structured

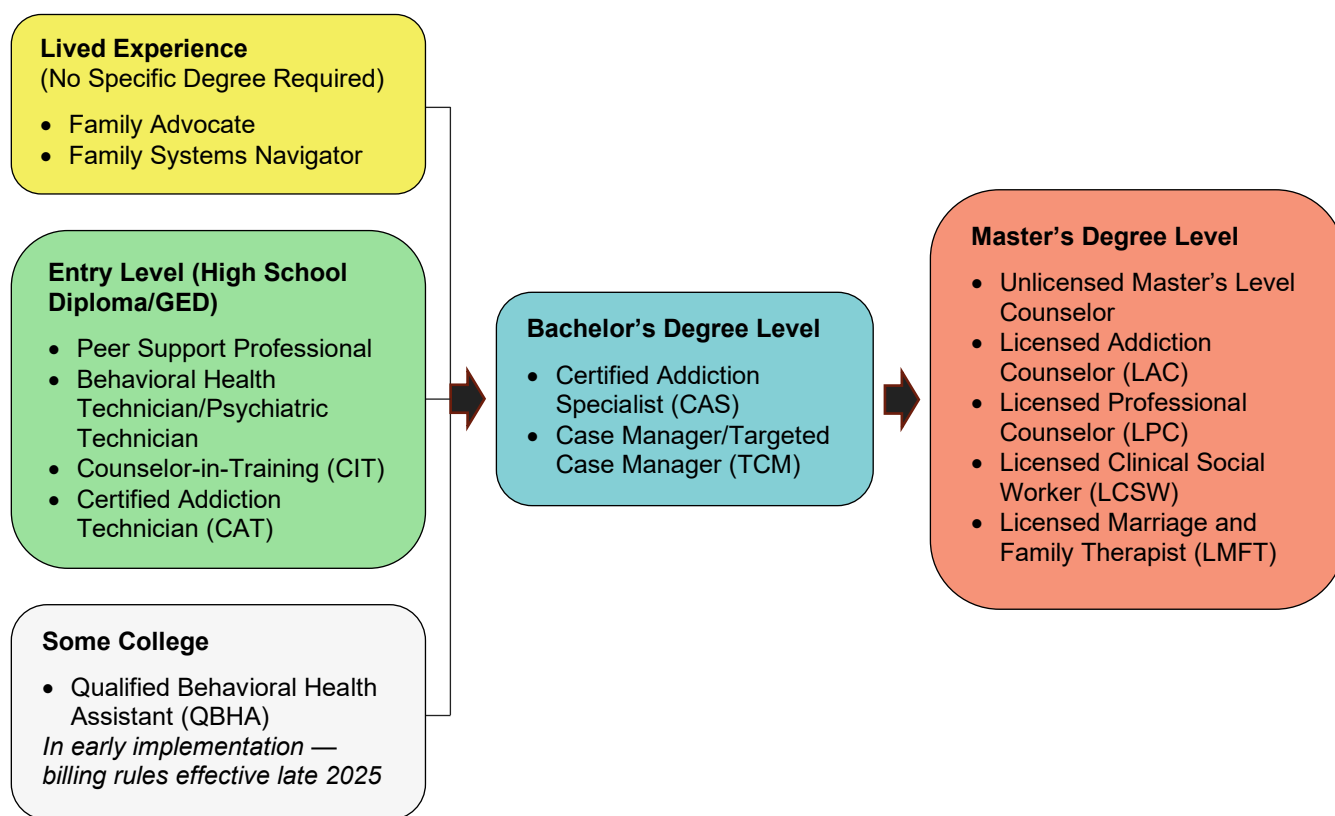
Most behavioral health services in Colorado are financed through insurance, and Medicaid is a major payer. Medicaid policy helps define which credentialed provider types can deliver specific services and the level of oversight needed to bill for these services. This guide uses Medicaid-recognized categories as a reference point while staying grounded in how jobs are structured in practice.

Roles typically progress through the following tiers (see Figure 1 for a visual overview):

- **Yellow—Lived Experience Roles:** Positions such as peer support specialists or family advocates, where having lived experience with mental health and/or substance use disorder recovery is a core requirement.
- **Green—Entry Level (High School Diploma/GED):** Roles such as behavioral health technicians (BHTs) that provide frontline support and typically require a high school diploma or equivalent.

- **White—Some College/Micro-Credential:** Emerging paraprofessional roles, such as qualified behavioral health assistants (QBHA), designed to fill the “missing rung” between entry-level and bachelor’s degree positions.
- **Blue—Bachelor’s Degree Level:** Roles such as case managers, targeted case managers, or certified addiction specialists that typically require a four-year degree in a related field.
- **Orange—Master’s Degree Level:** Licensed clinical roles such as licensed clinical social worker (LCSW), licensed professional counselor (LPC), licensed marriage and family therapist (LMFT), or licensed addiction counselor (LAC) that require graduate education, supervised practice hours, and state licensure.

Figure 1: Behavioral Health Occupations by Entry Requirements



Family-sustaining wages are most common at the bachelor’s and especially the master’s degree levels. Yet many workers enter through roles that pay lower wages with limited guidance on how to climb. As reference, the living wage, based on values from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Living Wage Calculator, translates to an hourly wage of \$40.01 for a single adult and \$41.65 for a family with one adult and one child in the Denver MSA. Missing rungs (mid-level roles, registered apprenticeship programs, credit transfer, paid supervision, tuition assistance) make advancement slow and uncertain.

This tiered system offers both challenges and opportunities:

Challenges

- **Missing Rungs:** A significant gap exists between entry-level roles and bachelor's degree positions. Workers often accumulate frontline experience but lack recognition of that learning, slowing their progress. The Colorado Community College System and the Behavioral Health Administration (BHA) have begun addressing this gap through the development of the qualified behavioral health assistant (QBHA) certificate.

Opportunities

- **Elevating Lived Experience:** The integration of peer roles into care teams has created structured pathways for young people and individuals in recovery to transform lived experience into professional expertise. This innovation both expands capacity and ensures that services are more culturally relevant and responsive.
- **Strengthening Compensation:** Advancing policies that align rate-setting with wages that enable workers to support themselves and their families would support recruitment and retention, making behavioral health a more competitive career choice.
- **Reducing Licensure Barriers:** Innovative partnerships—such as Kaiser Permanente's collaboration with the National Council for Mental Wellbeing—are piloting models to streamline the transition from graduate education to licensed practice, ensuring that supervision and supports are in place to move candidates more quickly into clinical roles.

Understanding how the system is structured—and where workers encounter both barriers and opportunities—sets the stage for the role ladders and advancement pathways presented in the next section.

3. How to Use This Guide

This guide is designed as a practical tool for career coaches, educators, employers, and policymakers who are working to strengthen Colorado's behavioral health workforce. It organizes complex information into clear role ladders and highlights where investments in training, support, and policy change can make the biggest difference.

Here's what you'll find:

- **Section 4: Overview of Behavioral Health Roles** provides a comprehensive look at behavioral health roles in Colorado, including Medicaid-recognized provider categories where they shape credentialing and oversight
- **Section 5: Pathways in Focus** does a deep dive into two high-potential pathways that begin in accessible entry-level roles and progress toward licensure:
 - Direct service and case management to licensed clinician
 - Peer support professional to licensed addiction counselor
 Each pathway includes role descriptions, required credentials, advancement steps, and available training programs to support advancement.

- **Appendices** provide detailed tables and crosswalks that offer additional depth, including:
 - A full inventory of roles, settings, and credentials.
 - A directory of training providers and programs aligned to these roles.
 - A glossary and acronyms.

We envision this structure being used to counsel jobseekers, align curricula, and identify where new models (e.g., apprenticeships, work-based learning, tuition assistance, paid supervision) are required to complete the ladder.

4. Overview of Behavioral Health Roles

The table that follows summarizes key behavioral health roles and pathways – and notes where Medicaid-recognized provider categories influence credentialing and oversight and how they are typically organized by entry requirements. To align with the visual, roles are grouped by tier—**Yellow (Lived Experience)**, **Green (Entry Level/High School)**, **White (Some College/Micro-Credential)**, **Blue (Bachelor’s)**, and **Orange (Master’s/Licensed)**—and list common titles, core functions, minimum credentials, and typical service settings. Use this section to see where a role sits on the ladder and what it takes to enter it; then turn to the pathway pages for step-by-step advancement. For current wage estimates, see [My Colorado Journey](#), which pulls up-to-date data from the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment and is supported by the Colorado Department of Higher Education, the Colorado Workforce Development Council, and the Colorado Department of Human Services.

Role (Common Titles)	Core Functions	Minimum Education and Credential Requirements*
Lived Experience Roles		
Peer Support Professional (Peer support specialist, recovery coach, peer navigator)	Use lived experience with mental health/substance use recovery to provide emotional support, resource navigation, hope, and engagement.	High school diploma/General Educational Development (GED) recommended; completion of 60–72-hour peer core training encouraged; IC&RC peer exam certification optional (after required work hours).
Family Advocate/Navigator (Family advocate, parent partner, wraparound specialist)	Support families using personal experience navigating systems; educate, advocate, participate in care planning.	Lived family experience; 40–60 hours of training in family systems/advocacy; certification not required.
Entry Level		
Behavioral Health Technician (BHT) (Psychiatric tech, residential counselor, mental health aide)	Frontline milieu support: observation, basic documentation, crisis de-escalation; may administer medication with qualified medication administration personnel (QMAP).	High school diploma/GED; employer onboarding; optional QMAP certification.

Counselor-in-Training (CIT)	Staff actively completing certified addiction technician (CAT) requirements while delivering supervised substance use disorder (SUD) services.	Employed while completing CAT coursework/hours; high school diploma/GED.
Certified Addiction Technician (CAT)	Provide structured SUD services (group facilitation, basic assessment) under supervision.	High school diploma/GED; 220 hours approved coursework; 1,000 hours of supervised experience; NCAC I exam; Colorado Department of Regulatory Agencies (DORA) credential.
Micro-Credential/Some College		
Qualified Behavioral Health Assistant (QBHA)	Care coordination, engagement, documentation; structured paraprofessional role.	Completion of BHA-recognized certificate/boot camp (≈10 credits/noncredit equivalent) with competency assessments.
Bachelor's Degree Level		
Targeted Case Manager (TCM) (Case manager, care coordinator)	Assess needs, service planning, cross-system coordination, monitoring outcomes.	Bachelor's in a related field <i>or</i> equivalent experience per employer; Medicaid TCM orientation.
Certified Addiction Specialist (CAS) (Substance use counselor, CAC II)	Autonomous SUD counseling: assessment, treatment planning, individual/group therapy; may supervise CATs.	Bachelor's degree; 300 hours approved training; 2,000 hours supervised experience; NCAC II exam; DORA credential.
Prevention Specialist (Prevention coordinator)	Plan and deliver community prevention/education programs targeting substance use disorder and mental health risk factors.	Bachelor's degree; prevention training (state or national standards); certification optional.
Graduate/Licensed (Master's or higher)		
Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW)	Independent psychotherapy, assessment, treatment planning; supervision/leadership.	Master of Social Work (MSW); 3,000 post-degree supervised hours; ASWB Clinical + jurisprudence exams; DORA license.
Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC)	Independent mental health counseling, assessment, treatment planning.	Master's in counseling or related field; supervised hours (per Board rules); national exam + jurisprudence; DORA license.
Licensed Marriage & Family Therapist (LMFT)	Therapy addressing relational/family systems; assessment and treatment planning.	Master's in MFT or equivalent; supervised hours; national exam + jurisprudence; DORA license.

Licensed Addiction Counselor (LAC)	Independent addiction and cooccurring disorder treatment; may supervise CAS/CAT.	Clinical master's/doctoral degree; prescribed coursework; supervised experience; exams + jurisprudence; DORA license.
Psychologist (Licensed psychologist)	Psychological testing, diagnosis, psychotherapy; program evaluation.	Doctoral degree (PhD/PsyD); internship + postdoc hours; Examination for Professional Practice in Psychology (EPPP) + jurisprudence; DORA license.
Psychiatric Nurse Practitioner (PMHNP)	Medication management, psychiatric evaluation, therapy.	Master of Science in Nursing (MSN)/Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) with PMHNP specialization; national certification; state Advanced Practice Registered Nurse (APRN) license.
Psychiatrist	Medical diagnosis, medication management, complex treatment oversight.	Clinical doctorate (MD/DO) + residency; board exams; state medical license.

*Requirements reflect typical state standards at time of drafting; employers may set higher thresholds.

5. Pathways in Focus

This comprehensive role landscape offers multiple career routes. The following two pathways demonstrate how this framework applies to specific advancement scenarios, providing detailed guidance on credentials, training programs, and progression milestones.

5.1 Addictions Counselor Pathway

Purpose: Show how an individual with lived experience can progress through Colorado's addiction counseling credential ladder toward independent practice as a licensed addiction counselor (LAC).

Figure 2. Addictions Counselor Pathway



Lived Experience Role: Peer Support Professional

Peer support professionals draw on their own lived experience with mental health and/or substance use disorder recovery to offer emotional support, resource navigation, and hope to others as part of interdisciplinary care teams.

About This Role

- **Common Job Titles:** Peer support specialist, recovery coach, peer mentor, peer navigator
- **Common Settings:** Outpatient clinics, crisis stabilization units, residential treatment, school-based programs, community outreach
- **Local Employers Hiring for This Role (examples):** Jefferson Center for Mental Health, Denver Health, AllHealth Network, Community Reach Center, Mental Health Partners, Colorado Coalition for the Homeless

Entering the Role

- **Education and Credential Requirements:** High school diploma or GED. Completion of a 60- to 72-hour, state-recognized peer support training is encouraged but not required for initial employment.
- **Experience:** Lived experience with mental health and/or substance use disorder recovery (self or family); many training programs require at least one year in stable recovery.
- **Credentialing Entity:** [Colorado Providers Association](#) administers the IC&RC Peer Recovery exam. Certification is optional—most Colorado employers hire peers first and then support them to complete training and sit for the exam after accruing required work hours (the exam cannot be taken until minimum experience is met).
- **Training Programs:** [Colorado Mental Wellness Network Peer Support Training](#) (currently the only state-recognized peer curriculum); Youth MOVE Colorado (family advocacy training).

Progression Milestone: Six to 12 months' peer experience and enrollment in BHA-approved CAT coursework.

Entry-Level Role: Certified Addiction Technician (CAT)

Certified addiction technicians deliver structured substance use disorder services, such as group facilitation, basic assessment, and documentation, under clinical supervision. Some employers use the title counselor-in-training (CIT) for staff who are actively completing CAT requirements; once all requirements are met, the CAT credential is issued.

About This Role

- **Common Job Titles:** Counselor-in-training (while working toward CAT), certified addiction technician, recovery technician.
- **Common Settings:** Outpatient and residential SUD programs, withdrawal management units, medication-assisted treatment (MAT) clinics. *Not* accepted as an independent clinician in psychiatric inpatient or general outpatient mental health programs.
- **Local Employers Hiring for This Role:** Denver Health, AllHealth Network, Community Reach Center, Mile High Behavioral Healthcare, residential SUD providers.

Entering the Role

- **Education and Credential Requirements:** High school diploma/GED; [220 hours BHA-approved coursework](#); 1,000 hours of supervised experience; pass [NCAC I](#) (or equivalent) national exam; pass the [Jurisprudence Exam](#)
- **Experience:** Supervised practice while completing coursework/hours (often hired as a CIT during this period)
- **Training Programs:** [Community College of Denver](#) and [Community College of Aurora](#) Addiction Recovery Assistant Certificate, [Denver Health Counselor Training Center](#), [Noeticus Counseling Center](#) and Training Institute, [Seven Cedars](#)

Progression Milestone

- Complete or pursue a bachelor's degree, accrue additional supervised practice, and finish advanced coursework to meet certified addiction specialist (CAS) requirements.

Bachelor's Degree-Level Role: Certified Addiction Specialist (CAS)

Certified addiction specialists provide higher-autonomy counseling, conducting assessments, individual and group therapy, treatment planning, and documentation. They may supervise CATs/CITs and staff progressing toward the CAS.

About This Role

- **Common Job Titles:** Certified addiction specialist (CAS), substance use counselor, CAC II
- **Common Settings/Levels of Care Allowed:** Outpatient and co-occurring clinics, intensive outpatient programs (IOP), residential SUD treatment, withdrawal management, MAT clinics
- **Local Employers Hiring for This Role:** WellPower, Mental Health Partners, Denver Health, Community Reach Center, private residential and outpatient SUD providers

Entering the Role

- **Education and Credential Requirements:** Bachelor's degree in a behavioral health-related field; 300 hours approved training; 2,000 hours supervised experience; passing [NCAC II](#) (or [state](#)) exam. Credential issued by the [Colorado DORA Board of Addiction Counselor Examiners](#).
- **Experience:** Supervised practice documenting required hours across approved levels of care; may begin some advanced coursework while completing a bachelor's degree.
- **Training Programs:** Advanced coursework at [Noeticus](#), [Seven Cedars](#), [Denver Health Counselor Training Center](#). Local bachelor's completion programs, such as [Metropolitan State University of Denver](#) (B.S. in human services with an addiction studies concentration) and [University of Colorado Denver](#) (B.A. in integrated health studies with a drugs-and-addiction cluster or B.A./B.S. in public health), accept transfer credits from community colleges and may evaluate professional training credits from programs like Noeticus or Seven Cedars upon transcript review.

Progression Milestone

- Admission to an accredited graduate program (counseling, social work, clinical behavioral health) that meets licensed addiction counselor (LAC) educational standards; align practicum/internship to fulfill LAC competencies.

Bachelor's Degree-Level Role: Licensed Addiction Counselor (LAC)

Licensed addiction counselors independently deliver comprehensive addiction and co-occurring mental health treatment and may supervise CAT/CAS staff or lead program quality initiatives.

About This Role

- **Common Job Titles:** Licensed addiction counselor, clinical addiction counselor
- **Common Settings:** Outpatient and residential SUD programs, integrated primary care, MAT clinics, telehealth platforms
- **Local Employers Hiring for This Role:** Denver Health, UCHHealth/Center for Dependency, Addiction, and Rehabilitation (CeDAR), community mental health centers (Mental Health Partners), private SUD providers

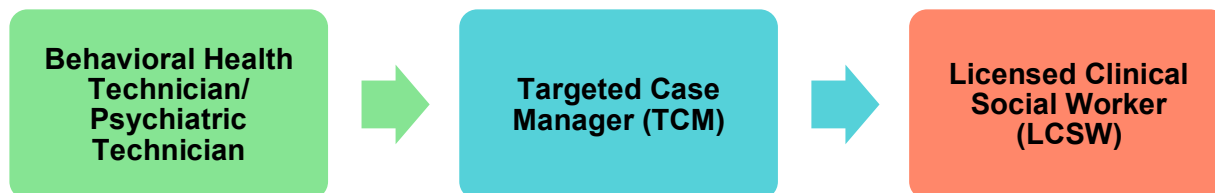
Entering the Role

- **Education and Credential Requirements:** Clinical master's or doctoral degree (e.g., counseling, social work, marriage and family therapy) meeting [LAC curriculum standards](#); completion of required post-degree supervised hours; passing national/state licensing exam ([MAC](#)) and [Colorado jurisprudence exam](#).
- **Experience:** Supervised clinical practice hours accumulated after the graduate degree (often following work as a CAS during or after school).
- **Credentialing Entity:** [Colorado DORA Board of Addiction Counselor Examiners](#) (issues LAC license).
- **Training Programs:** Graduate programs such as MSU Denver Clinical Behavioral Health (MS) or other accredited counseling/social work/MFT programs; supplemental coursework from approved training institutes; employer-funded supervision cohorts.

5.2 Licensed Clinical Social Worker Pathway

Purpose: Show how an early-career worker can progress from frontline direct care into a licensed clinical social worker (LCSW) by stacking short credentials, bachelor's attainment, and a master's degree with supervised clinical experience.

Figure 3: Licensed Clinical Social Worker Pathway



Entry-Level Role: Behavioral Health Technician (BHT)

Behavioral health technicians provide frontline support in residential, crisis, and inpatient settings, monitoring clients, documenting services, and assisting with de-escalation under clinical supervision.

About This Role

- **Common Job Titles:** Behavioral health technician, psychiatric technician, residential counselor, mental health aide
- **Common Settings:** Residential treatment, inpatient/crisis stabilization units, intensive outpatient (IOP), partial hospitalization (PHP), withdrawal management
- **Local Employers Hiring for This Role (examples):** WellPower, AllHealth Network, Jefferson Center for Mental Health, Community Reach Center, Denver Health, Mental Health Partners

Entering the Role

- **Education and Credential Requirements:** High school diploma/GED; employer onboarding. Optional: qualified medication administration personnel (QMAP) certification if administering medications.
- **Experience:** None beyond employer standards.
- **Credentialing Entity:** No formal state license for BHT; QMAP credential issued through state-approved providers.
- **Training Programs:** High school career and technical education (CTE) (Cherry Creek Innovation Campus), employer training academies, AmeriCorps service (Corps for a Change).
- **Optional Micro-Credential:** BHTs may complete the qualified behavioral health assistant (QBHA) certificate/boot camp at local community colleges to strengthen skills, earn college credit, and accelerate progress toward a bachelor's degree.

Progression Milestone

- Enroll in and complete a bachelor's degree (using any QBHA credits toward the degree) to qualify for targeted case manager roles.

Bachelor's Degree-Level Role: Targeted Case Manager (TCM)

TCMs assess client needs, develop service plans, coordinate across systems (housing, benefits, medical/behavioral health), and monitor outcomes.

About This Role

- **Common Job Titles:** Targeted case manager, case manager, care coordinator
- **Common Settings:** Community mental health centers, hospital transition/discharge teams, supportive housing programs, school-linked services
- **Local Employers Hiring for This Role:** WellPower, Jefferson Center for Mental Health, Denver Health, Colorado Coalition for the Homeless, AllHealth Network

Entering the Role

- **Education and Credential Requirements:** Bachelor's degree in a behavioral health-related field or equivalent combination of education/experience per employer policy; completion of Medicaid Targeted Case Management orientation/onboarding.
- **Experience:** Prior paraprofessional/BHT experience; familiarity with documentation and community resources.
- **Credentialing Entity:** No standalone state license; training provided by Medicaid-enrolled agencies following state guidance.
- **Training Programs:** Bachelor's completion pathways (leveraging QBHA credits), employer TCM training, service year programs (Youth Mental Health Corps) supplying relevant experience.

Progression Milestone

- Apply to and enroll in an accredited Master of Social Work (MSW) program.

Master's Degree-Level Role: Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW)

LCSWs provide independent psychotherapy, assessment, and treatment planning; they may supervise paraprofessional staff and lead program initiatives.

About This Role

- **Common Job Titles:** Licensed clinical social worker (LCSW), behavioral health therapist
- **Common Settings:** Outpatient therapy clinics, hospital/health-system behavioral health, school-based services, integrated primary care, telehealth platforms
- **Local Employers Hiring for This Role:** WellPower, Denver Health, UHealth, Mental Health Partners, private group practices

Entering the Role

- **Education and Credential Requirements:** Master of Social Work (MSW) from an accredited program; completion of required post-degree supervised hours (often 3,000 including clinical supervision); passing national ASWB clinical exam and Colorado Jurisprudence Exam.

- **Experience:** Supervised clinical practice during MSW field placements and post-graduate employment.
- **Credentialing Entity:** Colorado DORA Board of Social Work Examiners (issues LCSW license).
- **Training Programs:** MSW programs (e.g., [MSU Denver](#), [University of Denver](#)) with field placements at community mental health centers; employer-funded supervision cohorts to complete post-degree hours.

Progression Milestone

- Post-licensure advancement into clinical supervision, program management, specialty certification (e.g., trauma, integrated care), or administrative leadership.

Appendix A: Behavioral Health Employers in the Denver Metro Area

The table below lists major behavioral health employers across Denver, Adams, Arapahoe, Jefferson, Douglas, and Boulder counties. It includes nonprofits—community mental health centers and others—hospital systems, residential treatment providers, and telehealth organizations. Each entry notes the levels of care offered, common job titles by Medicaid tier (from paraprofessional through master’s level), and hiring observations.

Employer Name (Location; Type)	Levels of Care Offered	Common Job Titles (Mapped to Medicaid Tiers)
AllHealth Network (Arapahoe/Douglas counties, Community mental health center)	Outpatient therapy (multiple clinics); adult and adolescent IOP (mental health and substance use); psychiatry (medication management); 24/7 walk-in crisis center and acute treatment unit (Bridge House for stabilization); mobile crisis unit and co-responder teams; school-based counseling; SUD treatment including Residential Harmony Recovery program (Estes Park)	Paraprofessional: Behavioral health technician (crisis and inpatient support); Lived-Experience: Peer support coach (PATH homeless outreach); Short-Term Credentialed: Certified addiction specialist (CAS, bachelor level in CO); Bachelor’s Level: Case manager, care coordinator; Master’s Level: Clinician (LPC, LCSW, LMFT, LAC)
Asian Pacific Development Center (APDC) (Aurora/Denver, Nonprofit)	Outpatient counseling and psychiatry for immigrants and refugees (integrated care clinic); youth and family therapy; victim assistance program; case management and navigation (in clients’ native languages); community health education; collaborates with Aurora Mental Health for higher levels of care if needed (crisis, inpatient, etc.)	Paraprofessional: Behavioral health navigator (bilingual aide); Lived-Experience: Community health worker (refugee peer educator); Short-Term Credentialed: N/A (generally hires degreed staff or trained interpreters); Bachelor’s Level: Case manager, advocate (often bilingual); Master’s Level: Therapist (LPC/LMFT with specific language skills)
Aurora Mental Health & Recovery (Aurora, Community mental health center)	Outpatient counseling (13 clinic locations); school-based therapy; specialty programs for refugees (in partnership with APDC); walk-in crisis center and crisis stabilization unit; mobile crisis response teams; residential treatment (10 community-based residential facilities for adults); psychiatric medication services	Paraprofessional: Clinic assistant, medical assistant; Lived-Experience: Peer navigator (refugee and immigrant peer counselors); Short-Term Credentialed: Addiction technician (CAT); Bachelor’s Level: Case manager, housing navigator; Master’s Level: Mental health counselor (LPC, LCSW)

<p><u>Centennial Peaks Hospital</u> (Louisville, Private Hospital – UHS)</p>	<p>Acute inpatient psychiatry (104-bed hospital for adults and adolescents); partial hospitalization program (PHP) for adults (daytime treatment); intensive outpatient for adults (evening group therapy programs); dual diagnosis treatment (mental health + substance use disorder tracks); aftercare and alumni support groups</p>	<p>Paraprofessional: Mental health associate (milieu tech); Lived-Experience: (uncommon formally; may involve peer volunteers for alumni groups); Short-Term Credentialed: Detox technician (for dual-diagnosis unit); Bachelor's Level: RN, many with Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN)/Associate Degree in Nursing (ADN) fill nursing roles, case management specialist; Master's Level: Primary therapist (LPC, LCSW), discharge planner (MSW)</p>
<p><u>Children's Hospital Colorado</u> (Aurora, Nonprofit Pediatric Hospital)</p>	<p>Outpatient specialty clinics (pediatric psychology and psychiatry for anxiety, mood, developmental disorders, etc.); partial hospitalization program (PHP) for children and for teens (day-treatment programs); intensive outpatient programs (IOP) (e.g. evening IOP for adolescents with depression, obsessive-compulsive disorder, intensives, eating disorder IOP); inpatient psychiatric units (total ~50 beds across child, adolescent, neuropsychiatric units); 24/7 psychiatric emergency intake (through the ER); telepsychiatry and school-based consult services; family support and education programs</p>	<p>Paraprofessional: Mental health counselor/technician (inpatient unit staff); Lived-Experience: Family peer advocate (parent of a child with mental health issues, in pilot programs); Short-Term Credentialed: Applied behavior analysis (ABA) therapist (for autism programs); Bachelor's Level: Milieu therapist, care coordinator, special education teacher; Master's Level: Pediatric therapist (LCSW, LMFT), clinical psychologist, psychiatric nurse (MSN)</p>
<p><u>Clinica Family Health & Wellness</u> (Boulder/Broomfield, Community mental health center)</p>	<p>Outpatient mental health and substance use services (clinic and telehealth); 24/7 walk-in crisis and addiction services center (includes mental health crisis intervention and detox); acute treatment unit (short-term inpatient stabilization at the crisis center); addiction recovery center (detoxification and SUD recovery programs); specialty programs for families, early childhood, and adults with serious mental health issues; intensive in-</p>	<p>Paraprofessional: Detox technician, residential support staff; Lived-Experience: Peer recovery coach (addictions); Short-Term Credentialed: Certified addiction specialist (CAS); Bachelor's Level: Case manager, client advocate; Master's Level: Clinician (LPC, LCSW), substance use counselor (LAC)</p>

	home therapy for children/families; residential treatment for co-occurring disorders (transitional housing with support)	
<u>Colorado Coalition for the Homeless</u> (Denver, Nonprofit Federally Qualified Health Center)	Integrated primary care and mental health clinic (Stout Street Clinic); outpatient behavioral health (therapy and psychiatric medication for homeless clients); street outreach teams (outreach to people without homes with mental health focus); supportive housing programs with on-site counselors; no inpatient or IOP (partners with hospitals for acute needs); specialty services for homeless veterans and families (trauma-informed care)	Paraprofessional: Behavioral health technician (shelter/clinic de-escalation); Lived-Experience: Peer support specialist (homeless outreach peer); Short-Term Credentialed: Certified addiction technician (in SUD program); Bachelor's Level: Outreach case manager, housing navigator; Master's Level: Behavioral health clinician (LCSW/LPC)
<u>Community Reach Center</u> (Adams County, Community mental health center)	Outpatient behavioral health clinics (individual, group, family therapy); on-site pharmacy and primary care integration; residential treatment homes for adults (24/7 supervised, various intensity levels); day treatment program (therapeutic school for youth); 24/7 crisis walk-in center with 23-hour observation and 16-bed crisis stabilization unit; mobile crisis team and peer respite house; SUD counseling and case management	Paraprofessional: Residential mental health worker; Lived-Experience: Peer support specialist (drop-in center peer mentor); Short-Term Credentialed: Certified addiction technician; Bachelor's Level: Care manager, community support specialist; Master's Level: Therapist (LPC, LAC), licensed psychologist
<u>Denver Health</u> (Denver, Public Safety-Net Hospital)	Outpatient mental health clinics (adult and child psychiatry, therapy, integrated primary care behavioral health); acute inpatient psychiatric units (adult 40+ beds; adolescent unit via partnership); psychiatric emergency services (24/7 specialized ER for mental health); mobile crisis team and co-responders (with Denver Police and EMS); medication-assisted treatment and addiction recovery programs (outpatient); specialty programs (e.g. ACUTE Eating Disorders Medical Unit, HIV/AIDS behavioral health, school-based health center therapists)	Paraprofessional: Psychiatric technician (inpatient aide), medical assistant; Lived-Experience: Peer support specialist (hired in some SUD and MAT programs); Short-Term Credentialed: Certified addiction specialist (CAS) in outpatient MAT clinic; Bachelor's Level: Clinical case worker, care coordinator; Master's Level: Behavioral health provider (LCSW), psychiatric social worker, therapist (LPC), nurse practitioner (PMHNP)

<p><u>Denver Springs</u> (Englewood, Private Hospital – Springstone)</p>	<p>Inpatient mental health and addiction treatment (96-bed facility for adults and adolescents); medical detoxification; partial hospitalization program (adult daytime treatment); intensive outpatient programs (adults and teens, mental health and substance use tracks); outpatient medication management; family support groups</p>	<p>Paraprofessional: Behavioral health associate (tech) – monitors patient safety; Lived-Experience: not typically employed in this setting; Short-Term Credentialed: Recovery coach (for addiction IOP); Bachelor’s Level: Registered nurse, intake coordinator; Master’s Level: Therapist (LPCC, LMFT), utilization review clinician (LCSW)</p>
<p><u>Jefferson Center</u> (Jefferson, Gilpin, Clear Creek counties; Community mental health center)</p>	<p>Outpatient therapy (adult and youth); medication-assisted treatment; 24/7 New Vistas Crisis Stabilization Unit (short-term inpatient); residential rehab program (24-hour supervised homes); withdrawal management (detox); mobile crisis and co-responder teams</p>	<p>Paraprofessional: Residential counselor, milieu technician; Lived-Experience: Peer specialist (peer mentor); Short-Term Credentialed: Certified addiction technician; Bachelor’s Level: Case manager, health educator; Master’s Level: Clinician/therapist (LPC, LMFT, LCSW)</p>
<p><u>The Medical Center of Aurora</u> (HealthONE) (Aurora, Private Hospital)</p>	<p>Inpatient psychiatric hospital (behavioral health and wellness center – 128 beds across adult, adolescent, and geriatric units); partial hospitalization program (adult day program); intensive outpatient program (adult and teen tracks, evenings available); ECT clinic (electroconvulsive therapy for depression); specialized therapies (art, music, occupational therapy integrated on units); medical detox services (within hospital)</p>	<p>Paraprofessional: Mental health technician (psychiatric aide); Lived-Experience: rare in private hospitals – peers not routinely employed; Short-Term Credentialed: Addiction counselor (CAC II) for IOP; Bachelor’s Level: Registered nurse (RN)—often entry BSN, case manager RN; Master’s Level: Therapist, Clinical Mental Health Counselor (CMHC)/LMFT for group therapy), psychiatric nurse practitioner</p>
<p><u>Mile High Behavioral Healthcare</u> (Comitis Crisis Center) (Aurora, Nonprofit)</p>	<p>Emergency shelter with behavioral health services (Comitis Crisis Center provides 24/7 shelter for youth, families, veterans); crisis intervention and counseling for shelter residents; short-term respite for individuals in crisis (alternative to hospital ER); mobile outreach (street outreach in Aurora); SUD treatment (outpatient, including a detox unit in Aurora)</p>	<p>Paraprofessional: Shelter support staff (crisis de-escalation); Lived-Experience: Peer mentor (e.g. formerly homeless peer); Short-Term Credentialed: Recovery coach (CAC I/II); Bachelor’s Level: Case manager, program navigator; Master’s Level: Counselor (LPC, CAC III)</p>

<p><u>Rocky Mountain Crisis Partners</u> (Denver-based, Statewide Crisis Line)</p>	<p>24/7 statewide crisis hotline (phone counseling for mental health crises via Colorado Crisis Services – 844-493-8255 and 988); crisis text and chat counseling; statewide warm line for peer support (phone-based, for less acute needs); follow-up outreach (calling back individuals after crisis to check in); resource referral network (connecting callers to local services)</p>	<p>Paraprofessional: Crisis line operator (entry-level triage); Lived-Experience: Peer support line specialist (trained peer, often with lived mental health experience); Short-Term Credentialed: (N/A – counselors generally have degrees/licensure); Bachelor's Level: Crisis counselor (BA in psychology, etc., answering 844-493/988 calls); Master's Level: Clinical supervisor (LPC/LCSW overseeing call staff)</p>
<p><u>Servicios de la Raza</u> (Denver, Nonprofit)</p>	<p>Outpatient mental health counseling (individual and family, in English and Spanish); substance use disorder treatment (DUI classes, relapse prevention groups); peer support groups (e.g. Latina empowerment groups); case management and wraparound services; No inpatient, but coordinates referrals for clients needing higher care; community outreach and education on behavioral health (in Spanish)</p>	<p>Paraprofessional: Promotora/outreach worker (community health worker); Lived-Experience: Peer support professional (Spanish-speaking peer); Short-Term Credentialed: Certified addiction counselor I/II; Bachelor's Level: Case manager, family advocate; Master's Level: Bilingual therapist (LPC, LAC)</p>
<p><u>Tennyson Center for Children</u> (Denver, Nonprofit Residential Youth)</p>	<p>Intensive in-home and community-based therapy (statewide for children 0–18); residential treatment program (24/7 campus for children ~5–14 with complex trauma); day treatment school (on-campus K–12 schooling with therapy); respite and short-term stabilization for younger children; outpatient and telehealth services (for program graduates and families)</p>	<p>Paraprofessional: Youth treatment counselor (residential direct care); Lived-Experience: Mentor parent (foster family advocate); Short-Term Credentialed: Not typical (some staff may hold QMHA/QBHA certificates); Bachelor's Level: Teacher's aide, caseworker; Master's Level: Child therapist (MSW, LPC), clinical supervisor</p>
<p><u>Third Way Center</u> (Denver, Nonprofit Residential Youth)</p>	<p>Residential treatment for older adolescents (5 secured group-home facilities for teens ages ~16–20); on-site school (education and life skills training); transitional living program (helping youth aging out of care to independent living); outpatient aftercare (therapy for</p>	<p>Paraprofessional: Mental health technician (residential counselor); Lived-Experience: not formal (some staff share similar backgrounds to clients informally); Short-Term Credentialed: N/A (prefers degree or experience); Bachelor's Level: Case manager, residential supervisor;</p>

	alumni youth as needed); No acute inpatient or crisis unit (serves longer-term rehabilitation needs)	Master's Level: Therapist (LPCC, LCSW), clinical director
<u>UCHealth</u> (University of Colorado Hospital) (Aurora, Academic Hospital System)	Outpatient behavioral health center (adult therapy and psychiatric care, including specialty clinics for treatment-resistant depression, obsessive-compulsive disorder, etc.); embedded behavioral health in primary/specialty clinics (consultation liaison teams); new inpatient behavioral health unit (40-bed state-of-the-art psychiatric unit opened 2023); electroconvulsive therapy (ECT) and interventional psychiatry services; substance use treatment (opioid treatment program and CeDAR residential rehab); virtual behavioral health center (telebehavioral health for rural patients); co-responder and community programs (partnerships with law enforcement for crisis intervention)	Paraprofessional: Behavioral health tech (inpatient aide), medical assistant; Lived-Experience: Peer support specialist (in certain clinics or research programs); Short-Term Credentialed: Addiction counselor (CAC II) at CeDAR; Bachelor's Level: Clinic case manager, research assistant (psych trials); Master's Level: Licensed therapist (LCSW/LPC), behavioral health clinician (embedded in clinics), psychiatric PA/NP
<u>WellPower</u> (formerly Mental Health Center of Denver, Community mental health center)	Outpatient therapy; intensive outpatient (adult IOP); 24/7 crisis stabilization unit (acute treatment); supportive housing (transitional residential); mobile crisis teams and Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) programs	Paraprofessional: Residential counselor, behavioral health tech; Lived-Experience: Peer support specialist; Short-Term Credentialed: Certified addiction technician (CAT); Bachelor's Level: Case manager, care coordinator; Master's Level: Mental health therapist (LPC, LCSW)

Sources: Employer websites and service descriptions, managed care provider directories, Colorado Behavioral Healthcare Council data, news reports on workforce and expansions, and job postings.

Appendix B: Behavioral Health Training Program Directory

Program Name	Addiction Counselor Clinical Training Program	
Organization(s)	Colorado School for Family Therapy	
Time Commitment	Occupations	Program Type
Time commitment varies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certified addiction technician • Certified addiction specialist • Licensed addiction counselor 	Training

Program Description

All addictions counseling courses are approved to meet the criteria of the various addictions counseling registrations through the Colorado Department of Regulatory Agencies.

Eligibility

1. Personal lived experience with a mental health and/or substance use disorder condition
2. High school diploma or GED
3. Desire to assist others in their recovery journey
4. Feeling established in one's own recovery for a minimum of one year
5. Internet access and basic computer skills
6. Commitment to attend and participate in all days of training

Program Name	Addiction Recovery Assistant Certificate	
Organization(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Colorado Community College System • Community College of Denver • Community College of Aurora 	
Time Commitment	Occupations	Program Type
20 credits (2 semesters)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addiction recovery assistant • Addiction Technician 	Certificate

Program Description

The Addiction Recovery Assistant certificate is designed to provide students with skills to support individuals in their treatment of substance use disorder or dependence, as well as coursework focused on socio-emotional skills and knowledge. This curriculum includes the required course credits for the CAT certification.

Eligibility

1. The Colorado Community College System has an open admissions policy. People 17 years of age or older, who have a high school diploma or GED, or who are not enrolled in high school, are admitted.
2. Certificate programs might have their own requirements. It's recommended that prospective students consult with an advisor for guidance or to request additional information.

Program Name	<u>Behavioral and Mental Health</u>	
Organization(s)	Future Forward	
Time Commitment	Occupations	Program Type
Time commitment varies	General behavioral and mental health	In-school program

Program Description

In this advanced course, students will:

1. Continue to expand their knowledge in all concepts introduced in the level-one course
2. Study human growth and development from conception through death, emphasizing physical, cognitive, emotional, and psychosocial factors
3. Examine abnormal behavior and its classifications, causes, treatment, and prevention
4. Have a familiarity with Prime for Life, Victim Empathy, Community Reinforcement and Family Training, and Moral Reconciliation Therapy curriculums

Students may earn college credit and receive certificates for Thinking for a Change and Motivational Interviewing.

Eligibility

FutureForward classes are available for Adams 12 10th, 11th, and 12th grade students.

Program Name	<u>Behavioral and Mental Health Internship</u>	
Organization(s)	Adams School District	
Time Commitment	Occupations	Program Type
Time commitment varies	General behavioral and mental health fields	Internship

Program Description

Behavioral and Mental Health Internship 1 and 2: designed to prepare students to enter the workforce through on-the-job training. Students will have the opportunity to apply knowledge and skills in supervised practical experience on the job to become effective in behavioral and mental health fields. Students earn 0.5 high school credit per scheduled class period.

Adams County School District 12 students may be required to provide transportation to the job site.

Eligibility

1. Students will have to complete an individual company's pre-hiring approval process.

Program Name	<u>Behavioral Health (Addiction Recovery)</u>	
Organization(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Colorado Community College System • Community College of Aurora • Community College of Denver 	
Time Commitment	Occupations	Program Type
67 credits (2.5 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certified addiction technician • Peer recovery specialists • Prevention specialists 	Associate of Applied Science Degree

Program Description

The AAS degree in behavioral health with an emphasis on addictions and addiction recovery prepares students for many different careers in the field. Graduates will be able to pursue work as certified addiction technicians, as well as peer recovery or prevention specialists. They can also seek positions in residential treatment centers. After finishing the program, students are ready to complete the remaining requirements to become Certified Addiction Technicians through the Colorado Department of Regulatory Agencies (DORA).

Eligibility

1. The Colorado Community College System has an open admissions policy. People 17 years of age or older, who have a high school diploma or GED, or who are not enrolled in high school, are admitted.
2. Certificate programs might have their own requirements. It's recommended that prospective students consult with an advisor for guidance or to request additional information.

Program Name	<u>Behavioral Health and Wellness Program (BHWP)</u>	
Organization(s)	University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus	
Time Commitment	Occupations	Program Type
Time commitment varies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interdisciplinary health care providers • Public health professionals • Peer specialists 	Formal academic program

Program Description

BHWP has created a rich portfolio of evidence-based training curricula that supports wellness through behavior change, working from a motivational interviewing approach.

Utilizing in-person, distance learning platforms, and learning communities, BHWP has trained over 10,000 interdisciplinary health care providers, public health professionals, and peer specialists.

Eligibility

1. CU School of Medicine requires all prospective students to apply through the American Medical College Application Service (AMCAS). The AMCAS online application usually opens in early June.
2. The school requires that students have a baccalaureate degree from an accredited college or university prior to matriculation, other than those who have received a Doctor of Pharmacy (Pharm D.) degree without having first obtained a baccalaureate degree.
3. For more eligibility requirements, visit: <https://medschool.cuanschutz.edu/education/md-admissions/requirements#ac-admission-procedures-10>

Program Name	<u>Behavioral Health Assistant II</u>	
Organization(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Colorado Community College System • Arapahoe Community College • Community College of Denver • Community College of Aurora • Front Range Community College 	
Time Commitment	Occupation	Program Type
16 credits (one semester)	Qualified behavioral health assistant	Certificate

Program Description

Building upon the Qualified Behavioral Health Assistant certificate through service-learning experience and a deeper analysis and understanding of different populations, students develop both theoretical and experiential knowledge of behavioral health care and practice.

Eligibility

1. The Colorado Community College System has an open admissions policy. People 17 years of age or older, who have a high school diploma or GED, or who are not enrolled in high school, are admitted.
2. Certificate programs might have their own requirements. It's recommended that prospective students consult with an advisor for guidance or to request additional information.

Program Name	<u>Behavioral Health Career Pathway</u>	
Organization(s)	Poudre School District Career Tech Center	
Time Commitment	Occupation	Program Type
30 credits (two semesters)	Behavioral health assistant	In-school program

Program Description

Prepares students for the behavioral health assistant program at the Community College of Aurora. The PSD Career Tech Center is a Poudre School District program designed for high school students to explore careers, develop in-demand skills, and earn industry-recognized credentials and college credit.

Eligibility

1. This program is open to students who will be an 11th or 12th grader for the upcoming school year.

Program Name	<u>Behavioral Health (Mental Health and Social Work)</u>	
Organization(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Colorado Community College System • Community College of Aurora • Community College of Denver 	
Time Commitment	Occupations	Program Type
67 credits (2.5 years)	General	Associate of Applied Science Degree

Program Description

The AAS degree in behavioral health with an emphasis on mental health and social work focuses on preparing students for careers in the mental health and social services field. Coursework provides foundational behavioral health knowledge as well as the ability to apply a wide array of concepts and skills within different behavioral health settings. There is a particular focus on understanding and addressing mental health issues. Graduates are prepared to work in various mental health settings, such as clinics, hospitals, community centers, and social service agencies.

Eligibility

1. The Colorado Community College System has an open admissions policy. People 17 years of age or older, who have a high school diploma or GED, or who are not enrolled in high school, are admitted.
2. Certificate programs might have their own requirements. It's recommended that prospective students consult with an advisor for guidance or to request additional information.

Program Name	<u>Behavioral Health Plus</u>
Organization(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Colorado Community College System • Arapahoe Community College • Community College of Denver • Community College of Aurora • Front Range Community College

Time Commitment	Occupation	Program Type
6 credits (7 weeks)	Effective addition to any public-facing role in health care.	Certificate

Program Description

This program is an effective addition to almost any role, ensuring the development of foundational behavioral health knowledge that can be applied in a variety of settings.

Eligibility

1. The Colorado Community College System has an open admissions policy. People 17 years of age or older, who have a high school diploma or GED, or who are not enrolled in high school, are admitted.
2. Certificate programs might have their own requirements. It's recommended that prospective students consult with an advisor for guidance or to request additional information.

Program Name	<u>Behavioral Health Services Counselor Training Center</u>	
Organization(s)	Denver Health	
Time Commitment	Occupations	Program Type
CAT: 154 training hours	• Certified addiction technician	Training courses
CAS: 161 training hours	• Certified addiction specialist	
LAC: 112 training hours	• Licensed addiction counselor	

Program Description

The Behavioral Health Services Counselor Training Center offers classes to meet specific requirements for both Colorado and national counselor certifications, as well as continuing education for professional development.

Courses

As derived by the competencies created by the Colorado Office of Behavioral Health, all required classes seek to enhance the ability of the counselor to offer treatment services in a manner that respects gender, race and ethnicity, sexual orientation, cultural, familial, and socioeconomic differences. [See the full course listing.](#)

Learn more about the counselor training programs:

1. [Certified addiction technician \(CAT\)](#)
2. [Certified addiction specialist \(CAS\)](#)
3. [Licensed addiction counselor \(LAC\)](#)

Eligibility

1. [CAT Requirements](#): High school diploma/GED)
2. [CAS Requirements](#): Behavioral health bachelor degree; Non-conforming bachelor's degree approval will be decided at the discretion of the Addiction Board
3. [LAC Requirements](#): Clinical behavioral health master's or doctorate degree; Non-conforming master's or doctorate degree approval will be decided at the discretion of the Addiction Board.

Program Name	<u>Behavioral Health Technician</u>	
Organization(s)	Cherry Creek Innovation Campus	
Time Commitment	Occupation	Program Type
One year	Behavioral health technician	Formal academic program

Program Description

This course explores the basic principles of behavioral health in a behavioral health care setting. This course develops interpersonal and technical skills while working with clients in psychiatric care settings. Students obtain skills used daily by behavioral health technicians (BHTs), such as therapeutic communication and relationship building and conducting psychoeducational therapy groups. Students will also explore aspects of mental health and factors that influence human development and behavior. Opportunities in the field may be available to students during their second semester. Additional fees will be required for off-campus experiences.

Certifications: Behavioral health technician certificate preparation, basic life support (BLS) through American Heart Association CPR/FAS/AED

Concurrent Enrollment: Pueblo Community College (PTE 1010 - 3 credits, BEH 1001 - 3 credits, BEH 1030 - 1 credit, BEH 2030 - 3 credits)

Eligibility

1. Students grades 11-12

Program Name	<u>Certified Addiction Counselor Courses</u>	
Organization(s)	Seven Cedars Live and Online Training	
Time Commitment	Occupations	Program Type
CAT: 156 hours CAS: 161 hours LAC: 112 hours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certified addiction technician • Certified addiction specialist • Licensed addiction counselor 	Training courses

Program Description

Online training offers the advantages of flexible scheduling, greater accessibility, cost effectiveness, and meets the requirements of the CAC Clinical Training Program at the Colorado Behavioral Health Authority.

Hybrid classes enable students to study didactic material online for a week, then have two days of virtual live practice via Zoom.

Live classes meet Colorado BHA requirements for more advanced and skills-based courses. All live classes are offered virtually via Zoom or other meeting platforms.

Instructors are BHA-approved leaders in the addiction treatment field with a strong commitment to workforce development and keeping the field fresh, energized, and viable.

Eligibility

1. CAT: High school diploma/GED
2. CAS: Requires human services bachelor's degree (psychology, social work, human services)
3. LAC: Training classes required with a clinical master's or doctorate degree (no educational equivalency available)

Program Name	<u>Corps for a Change</u>	
Organization(s)	Colorado Youth for a Change	
Time Commitment	Occupation	Program Type
One term of service and receive rigorous training plus	Behavioral health assistant	Service Learning Program

ongoing supervision throughout the year.		
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Program Description

This is an AmeriCorps service member position within an AmeriCorps program, Corps for a Change. The student engagement support member is placed at one high school or middle school to provide individualized support to a caseload of 20-40 students who exhibit low attendance and/or lack of engagement. The member will support students to be more engaged in school, improve attendance, provide mental health resources, and help support a path toward academic success. Engagement support members receive ample training and support throughout their service. All members gain valuable on-the-job experience, receive a stipend, and earn credits toward a qualified behavioral health assistant credential to advance their career.

Eligibility:

1. 18 – 24 years old on August 18
2. Be a U.S. citizen or lawful permanent resident
3. Have a high school diploma or GED
4. Not have served more than three AmeriCorps terms previously
5. Submit to a full background check, including a sex offender registry check, state criminal history registry check, and FBI fingerprint-based check
6. Speak, read, and write English fluently
7. Basic computer skills, including the ability to navigate online systems and email.

Program Name	<u>Counselor Training</u>	
Organization(s)	Colorado Counselor Training	
Time Commitment	Occupations	Program Type
CAT: 9 courses CAS: 11 courses LAC: 7 courses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certified addiction technician • Certified addiction specialist • Licensed addiction counselor 	Training courses

Program Description

The Certified Addiction Counselor Clinical Training Program is designed to train addiction counselors to work effectively within a variety of treatment settings and with a variety of addictive behaviors. Certified and licensed addiction counselors possess a body of knowledge, skills, training, and work experience in

the treatment of addictive behaviors that distinguishes the addiction counseling profession from other health care professions.

Preparation for a career as an addiction professional is available through Behavioral Health Administration (BHA)-approved training classes; clinically supervised work experience; demonstration of a knowledge base through passage of a national exam; and passage of the state's Jurisprudence Exam. Counselor certification is available to individuals with various levels of academic preparation in the counseling field and is comprised of three levels:

1. [Certified addiction technician \(CAT\)](#) is defined as a counselor who may provide counseling services including skill-based education, group facilitation, service coordination, and referral and discharge planning.
2. [Certified addiction specialist \(CAS\)](#) is defined as a counselor who may conduct addiction treatment services independently and may perform the complete range of duties associated with addiction treatment including supervision for those working toward a CAT or CAS.
3. A [licensed addiction counselor \(LAC\)](#) is a credentialing level that requires a clinical master's degree.

Eligibility

1. **Certified addictions technician counselor:** To become a CAT, you usually have to be working in an addictions program as a counselor or therapist. You would need a bachelor's degree for this position, along with having been doing your internship at an addictions program for some time. Certified addiction counselor requires CAT courses such as addiction counseling skills, case conceptualization, documentation, and culturally informed treatment.
2. **Certified addiction specialist:** A CAS counselor usually has an advanced degree in addiction counseling, emphasizing one type of addiction including alcohol, drugs, or gambling. Certified addictions specialist courses include, but are not limited to, courses in advanced pharmacology, advanced motivational interviewing, and advanced case conceptualization.
3. **Licensed addiction counselor:** A licensed addiction counselor is someone who has gone through the process of becoming licensed by the state to work with people addicted to drugs and/or alcohol. The difference between a LAC counselor and a CAS or CAT counselor is that this person will have advanced education in addiction counseling, including principles of addiction treatment, pharmacology I, infectious diseases in addiction treatment, and more. A licensed addiction counselor course includes counseling addiction course, theory courses in addiction counseling, practicum, and internship with addiction counseling.

Program Name	CU Pre-Health Scholars Program (CUPS)	
Organization(s)	University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus	
Time Commitment	Occupations	Program Type
1-4 weeks + six Saturdays	Health care, research, and STEAM careers	Youth development program

Program Description

The CU Pre-Health Scholars Program (CUPS) serves grades 6 through 12 and exposes scholars to high-impact events, research, STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics), and health care careers. At the same time, the program prepares students to be competitive applicants for post-secondary education and matriculation into professional health careers or graduate school programs.

Eligibility

1. Application is open to any student in Colorado from grades 6 to 12. Students from Title 1 Aurora Public Schools and Denver Public Schools who identify as first-generation students or students with financial need are prioritized.

Program Name	<u>Hummingbird Initiative</u>	
Organization(s)	Young Aspiring Americans for Social and Political Activism	
Time Commitment	Occupations	Program Type
Time commitment varies	General behavioral health	In-school program

Program Description

The Hummingbird Initiative is located in high schools in Colorado. This program is for high school students, primarily juniors and seniors, to obtain hands-on, experiential learning, college credit, and mentorship toward future careers in the behavioral health field. The Hummingbird Initiative serves rural, suburban, and urban Colorado students.

Hummingbird Scholars receive academic high school credit for their in-class program participation as well as certifications in CPR, first aid/basic life skills, mental health first aid, opioid overdose prevention, and Stop the Bleed. Students participate in lectures where health professionals educate students in various subjects in medicine. Hummingbird scholars have access to national and statewide events and collaborations. Wraparound support services and resources are distributed to students, families, and the community.

Eligibility

1. The Hummingbird Initiative serves high school students in Colorado interested in starting their careers in behavioral health and health care fields.
2. There is no minimum GPA required.

Program Name	<u>Introduction to Certification (CAC) Requirements BHA/DORA</u>	
Organization(s)	Odyssey Training Center	
Time Commitment	Occupations	Program Type
1- 3 week period	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certified addiction technician • Certified addiction specialist • Licensed addiction counselor 	Training courses

Program Description

This course introduces participants to the Colorado Certification Addiction Counselor (CAC) program. The training will provide a brief overview of CAC requirements and will assist students in understanding the application process with DORA. This class will cover all information needed to get your CAC, from those who hold a master's degree to those who have no degree.

Eligibility

1. CAT: High school diploma/GED
2. CAS: Must already be a CAT (or unlicensed psychotherapist, or registered in the DORA database with a behavioral health entity) before becoming a CAS
3. LAC: Clinical master's degree or higher in substance use disorders/addiction and/or related counseling subjects (social work, mental health counseling, marriage and family, psychology, medical doctor) from a regionally accredited institution of higher learning

Program Name	<u>Master of Science in Clinical Behavioral Health, emphasis in Addictions Counseling</u>	
Organization(s)	Metropolitan State University of Denver	
Time Commitment	Occupations	Program Type
61 credits (two years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Licensed addictions counselor • Licensed professional counselor 	Graduate program

Program Description

The Master of Science in Clinical Behavioral Health, emphasis in addictions counseling program prepares students to work in a variety of treatment and recovery settings. Students will integrate research, skill development, education in treatment and recovery, evidence-based practices, and field work in treatment and recovery. This program meets the educational requirements needed to pursue licensure as a licensed addictions counselor (LAC) and licensed professional counselor (LPC) in Colorado.

Eligibility

Before beginning the application, students should review the program's specific admission requirements, as these requirements vary.

Common requirements can include:

1. Transcripts
2. Minimum grade point average (GPA)
3. Personal statement (ask about specifics.)
4. Academic/professional references

Program Name	<u>Master of Social Work</u>	
Organization(s)	University of Denver	
Time Commitment	Occupations	Program Type
12 – 21 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Behavioral Health Clinician • Mental Health Counselor • Evaluator Psychiatric Social Worker 	Graduate program

Program Description

This program offers both full- and part-time options for the Denver Campus MSW Program (for students who have a bachelor's degree in any field other than social work) and the Denver Campus Advanced-Standing MSW Program (for students who already have a bachelor's degree in social work).

With a concentration in Advanced Social Work Practice, you can follow one of several specialization pathways or create your own customized MSW degree to meet your personal interests or career goals. You can also choose from several dual-degree programs and certificates in Global Social Work, Human–Animal–Environment Interactions, Latinx Social Work and School Social Work.

Eligibility

For eligibility requirements, please visit: <https://info.onlinemsw.du.edu/requestinfo/index/>

Program Name	<u>Mental Health Academy</u>	
Organization(s)	Red Rocks Community College	
Time Commitment	Occupation	Program Type
Six 8-week terms	Licensed professional counselor	Formal academic program

Program Description

The Mental Health Academy at Red Rocks Community College partners with The Chicago School and Mile High Behavioral Healthcare to offer students a streamlined route to become Licensed Professional Counselors in Colorado.

Students attend Red Rocks Community College for an associate degree with a guaranteed transfer of credits to The Chicago School to complete a bachelor's degree online and begin a master's degree in either clinical mental health counseling or forensic psychology - licensure track. Students who attend a Mental Health Academy orientation during the semester and maintain a GPA of 2.3 or above, upon application, will receive early admission to The Chicago School and become a member of the Mental Health Academy.

Credits from the associate degree are guaranteed to transfer to online bachelor's and master's degree programs with The Chicago School.

Eligibility

1. Anyone interested in working in the mental health field and seeking an Associate of Arts degree in psychology or criminal justice at Red Rocks Community College may apply.

Program Name	<u>Noeticus Addiction Counselor Clinical Training Program™ (NACCTP)</u>	
Organization(s)	Noeticus Counseling Center and Training Institute	
Time Commitment	Occupations	Program Type
CAT: 154 hours	• Certified addiction technician	Training courses

CAS: 161 hours	• Certified addiction specialist	
LAC: 112 hours	• Licensed addiction counselor	

Program Description:

The Noeticus Addiction Counselor Clinical Training Program™ (NACCTP) is one of the many programs of the Noeticus Center for Professional Development™ (NCPD) and specializes in providing Colorado Behavioral Health Administration (BHA)-approved addiction counselor classes to mental health professionals and graduate students who have or will have a clinical graduate degree by the time they apply for their licensed addiction counselor (LAC) credential in Colorado.

Those seeking only the certified addiction technician (CAT) and/or certified addiction specialist (CAS) credentials are also welcome, though the majority of learners come into the CAC/LAC classes already having strong academic backgrounds in mental health counseling along with clinical experience through practicum, internship, and postgraduate work experience.

Eligibility

1. **CAT:** High school diploma/GED
2. **CAS:** Requires human services bachelor's degree (psychology, social work, human services)
3. **LAC:** Training classes required with a clinical master's or doctorate degree (no educational equivalency available)

Program Name	<u>Patient Navigator Certificate</u>	
Organization(s)	Community College of Aurora	
Time Commitment	Occupation	Program Type
12 credits (one semester)	Patient navigator	Certificate

Program Description

The Patient Navigator Certificate ensures that students are prepared to support clients in identifying resources as well as navigating behavioral health care services and systems. Students will focus on promoting client health and wellbeing. While not directly providing services, navigators are equipped with valuable skills. These include empathy, cultural competency, understanding of behavioral health care systems, effective communication, and boundaries.

Eligibility

1. The Community College of Aurora has open door admissions, allowing students to enroll without asking for evidence of previous education, experience, or references. Students 17 years of age or older, who have a high school diploma or GED, or who are not enrolled in high school, are admitted. Students younger than 17 must complete a Request for Waiver of Admission Requirements form.
2. All students must meet requirements of English, mathematics, and reading skills through assessments or other evidence. If needed, students must take developmental courses within their first 30 hours of coursework at the college.
3. Certificate programs might have their own requirements. It's recommended that prospective students consult with a Pathways Advisor for guidance or to request additional information. Pathways Advisor appointments can be scheduled by calling (303)-360-4929.

Program Name	<u>Peer Support Professional Training</u>	
Organization(s)	Colorado Mental Wellness Network	
Time Commitment	Occupation	Program Type
72 hours	Peer support professionals	Training

Program Description

The 72-hour curriculum is comprehensive, robust, and in-depth. Topics of training include trauma-informed support, self-care, ethics, communication skills, and resilience. Graduates are also qualified to sit for the IC&RC Certification Exam through the [Colorado Providers Association \(COPA\)](#).

Eligibility

1. Personal lived experience with a mental health and/or substance use disorder condition
2. High school diploma or GED
3. Desire to assist others in their recovery journey
4. Feeling established in one's own recovery for a minimum of one year
5. Internet access and basic computer skills
6. Commitment to attend and participate in all days of training

Program Name	<u>Qualified Behavioral Health Assistant</u>	
Organization(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Colorado Community College System • Arapahoe Community College • Community College of Denver • Community College of Aurora • Front Range Community College 	
Time Commitment	Occupation	Program Type
10 credits (one semester)	Qualified behavioral health assistant	Certificate

Program Description

The Qualified Behavioral Health Assistant Certificate ensures students build a strong foundation of behavioral health knowledge and competencies. The areas of focus include behavioral health and wellness, intercultural competency, therapeutic communication, case management, and crisis intervention. Upon completion of this coursework, students will be a Qualified Behavioral Health Assistant as outlined by the Behavioral Health Administration.

Eligibility

1. The Colorado Community College System has an open admissions policy. People 17 years of age or older, who have a high school diploma or GED, or who are not enrolled in high school, are admitted.
2. Certificate programs might have their own requirements. It's recommended that prospective students consult with an advisor for guidance or to request additional information.

Program Name	<u>Qualified Behavioral Health Assistant (QBHA) Bootcamp</u>	
Organization(s)	Colorado Community College System	
Time Commitment	Occupation	Program Type
10 credits (one semester): Self-paced	Qualified behavioral health assistant	Boot camp

Program Description

The QBHA Bootcamp is a flexible, self-paced training program developed with guidance from the Colorado Behavioral Health Administration (BHA). This non-credit program includes four courses, each

with a competency assessment. Participants who score at least 80% on all assessments will earn their QBHA certification and be better equipped to support individuals in behavioral health crises.

Eligibility

Eligibility for the QBHA Bootcamp is based on meeting one of the following criteria:

1. At least one year of experience in mental health, behavioral health, or substance use disorder settings in a frontline capacity; or
2. Current pursuit of a secondary or postsecondary CTE teaching credential as part of required teaching qualifications.

Please note: The QBHA Bootcamp is designed for people who are actively serving on care teams and is not intended for administrative staff.

Program Name	<u>Undergraduate Public Health Program</u>
Organization(s)	University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus
Time Commitment	Occupations
Time commitment varies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Behavioral Health specialist • Addiction Counselor • Peer specialists

Program Description

The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (CLAS) and the Colorado School of Public Health (CSPH) together created the Undergraduate Public Health Program. Public health professionals work to protect the environment, identify sources of illness in population groups, control disease outbreaks, evaluate the economic ramifications of changing demographics, develop interventions to promote healthy behavior and produce health policy legislation. Public health draws from a broad array of disciplines, including a range of social, behavioral, and natural sciences, each provides unique insights for the diverse set of activities involved in public health practice.

Students in the BS program develop a specialty in the natural sciences and public health. Graduates with a BS in Public Health will be prepared for pursuit of graduate degrees in a broad range of fields, including the natural, social, and behavioral sciences, public health, law, medicine, dentistry, pharmacy, nursing, business administration, and health services research.

Eligibility

To earn a degree, students must satisfy all requirements in each of the three areas below, in addition to their individual major requirements.

1. [CU Denver General Degree Requirements](#)

2. [CU Denver Core Curriculum](#)
3. [College of Liberal Arts & Sciences General Degree Requirements](#)
4. For more eligibility requirements, visit the [program's website](#).

Program Name	<u>Y Incubator</u>	
Organization(s)	Young Aspiring Americans for Social and Political Activism	
Time Commitment	Occupations	Program Type
Time commitment varies	General behavioral health	Internship/fellowship

Program Description

YAASPA has partnered with various industry partners to create a codified social science workforce development program entitled the Y Incubator. This program offers paid internships and paid fellowships for youth to attain work-based learning experiences.

The following are pathways they are building and/or have created: behavioral health, education, public administration, public health.

Eligibility

1. In-school youth

Program Name	<u>Youth Mental Health Corps</u>	
Organization(s)	Youth Mental Health Corps	
Time Commitment	Occupation	Program Type
1-2 years	Mental health navigator	Service-learning program

Program Description

Through its school-based and community health worker pathways, Colorado's Youth Mental Health Corps AmeriCorps members will provide youth mental health support and increase workforce opportunities in the behavioral health space for young adults with lived experience.

School-based stackable certification/higher education credit pathway:

Support students in high-need K-12 schools as a mental health navigator. YMHC member activities may include referring students to resources, communication with stakeholders, identifying barriers to mental health services, engaging families, and developing action plans for mental health trends in schools.

Members receive recognized work-based training to earn certifications. Partnering with the Colorado Community College System, this pathway offers in-person and online micro-credential training. This leads to an Associate of Applied Science, with plans for a Bachelor of Applied Science.

Community health worker state certification pathway:

Serve as a community mental health navigator connecting with youth in local community-based organizations.

YMHC member activities may include coordinating mental health care, assisting with navigating services, providing case management and cultural mediation, offering mental health education, evaluating program curriculum, and maintaining records of youth served.

Members can earn a community health worker state certification by building on Colorado's existing U.S. Department of Labor-registered apprenticeship program. This expansion aims to develop a skilled, culturally competent workforce to address mental health needs in communities with limited access to services.

Eligibility

1. Must be 18-24 years old at start of service
2. Must have a high school diploma or GED equivalent
3. Must be a U.S. citizen, U.S. national, or lawful permanent resident

Appendix C. Glossary and Acronyms

AmeriCorps/Service Year – National service programs that provide stipends, education awards, and work experience (e.g., Youth Mental Health Corps, Corps for a Change) that can serve as on-ramps into behavioral health careers.

ASWB (Association of Social Work Boards) – Organization that administers the national *clinical* exam required for LCSW licensure.

BHA (Colorado Behavioral Health Administration) – The state entity overseeing behavioral health policy, funding, and some credential recognition.

BHT (Behavioral Health Technician) – A frontline direct-care worker providing observation, documentation, crisis de-escalation, and daily living support in residential, crisis, or inpatient settings.

CAS (Certified Addiction Specialist) – A mid-level Colorado addiction counseling credential permitting autonomous substance use disorder counseling and supervision of CATs. Requires a bachelor's degree, 300 training hours, 2,000 hours of supervised experience, and the NCAC II exam.

CAT (Certified Addiction Technician) – An entry-level Colorado addiction counseling credential allowing the delivery of structured SUD services under supervision. Requires a high school diploma/GED, 220 hours coursework, 1,000 hours supervised experience, and the NCAC-I exam.

CIT (Counselor-in-Training) – A job title for staff actively completing CAT requirements; not a standalone state credential.

DORA (Colorado Department of Regulatory Agencies) – The state agency that houses professional licensing boards (e.g., social work, addiction counselors) that issue state credentials.

EPPP (Examination for Professional Practice in Psychology) – The national exam required for psychologist licensure.

IC&RC (International Certification & Reciprocity Consortium) – The organization that provides standardized peer recovery and addiction counseling examinations used for Colorado credentials.

IOP (Intensive Outpatient Program) – A structured treatment level providing several therapy/group sessions per week while clients live at home.

Jurisprudence Exam – The Colorado law and ethics examination required for certain professional licenses (e.g., LAC, LCSW).

LAC (Licensed Addiction Counselor) – The highest Colorado addiction counseling credential, which permits independent practice of addiction and co-occurring disorder treatment. Requires a clinical master's/doctoral degree, prescribed coursework, supervised experience, and exams.

LCSW (Licensed Clinical Social Worker) – An independent clinical social work license allowing psychotherapy, assessment, and supervision. Requires an MSW, post-degree supervised hours, and ASWB clinical + Jurisprudence Exams.

LMFT (Licensed Marriage & Family Therapist) – An independent license specializing in relational/family systems therapy. Requires a master’s degree, supervised hours, national exam, and Jurisprudence Exam.

LPC (Licensed Professional Counselor) – An independent mental health counseling license. Requires a master’s degree, supervised hours, national exam, and Jurisprudence Exam.

MAT (Medication-Assisted Treatment) – Use of FDA-approved medications in combination with counseling to treat substance use disorders.

MSW (Master of Social Work) – Graduate degree required for LCSW licensure.

NCAC I / NCAC II (National Certified Addiction Counselor) – Examinations (Levels I and II) used to meet CAT and CAS exam requirements respectively.

Peer Support Professional – Individual with lived experience of mental health and/or substance use disorder recovery who provides support, navigation, and engagement. Certification via the IC&RC peer exam is optional in Colorado.

PHP (Partial Hospitalization Program) – Day-treatment model offering intensive services during the day with clients returning home at night.

PMHNP (Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner) – An advanced practice nurse providing psychiatric evaluation, medication management, and therapy.

QBHA (Qualified Behavioral Health Assistant) – Micro-credentialed paraprofessional role focused on engagement, care coordination, and documentation; certificate/boot camp recognized by the BHA.

QMAP (Qualified Medication Administration Personnel) – A state credential that authorizes trained unlicensed staff to administer medications in certain settings.

TCM (Targeted Case Manager) – A bachelor’s-level role coordinating services, benefits, and supports for clients under Medicaid guidelines.

Withdrawal Management – Medically monitored detoxification services; often a setting for CAT entry-level practice.