



COLORADO

Department of Human Services

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CDHS requests funding to improve treatment of Coloradans with mental health, substance use issues

DENVER (January 18, 2017) — The Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS) this week requested \$9,645,018 from the Marijuana Tax Cash Fund (MTCF) next fiscal year to address behavioral health needs as they relate to the criminal justice system. The department's request follows recommendations from the Mental Health Hold Task Force and the Commission on Criminal and Juvenile Justice (CCJJ).

The Mental Health Hold Task Force, which was created in 2016 to evaluate Colorado's mental health hold process, released eight recommendations earlier this month to ensure people who are experiencing a mental health crisis receive proper treatment and constitutional protections.

A mental health hold is a legally authorized involuntary civil detention intended to hold people who have not committed a crime but who are exhibiting behavior that is a danger to themselves or others. Persons who meet the criteria for an involuntary hold may be detained for up to 72 hours to be evaluated by a mental health professional.

Primary among the Mental Health Hold Task Force recommendations is that the General Assembly pursue legislation prohibiting the use of jails to hold persons with mental health issues who have not been accused of crimes. The task force was created at the direction of Gov. John Hickenlooper last year after he vetoed Senate Bill 16-169, citing concerns about the due process rights of individuals experiencing mental health crisis.

CDHS is requesting \$3,580,318 in Fiscal Year 2017-18 and \$3,744,438 in Fiscal Year 2018-19 and subsequent years to address five of the eight recommendations – all of the recommendations that can be addressed by the department through a budget request. The complete list of recommendations, which also include statutory and administrative recommendations, is available [here](#).

Following recommendations from the CCJJ on Jan. 13, CDHS is requesting \$6,064,700 and 2.3 full-time positions in FY 2017-18 and \$6,100,591 and 2.3 full-time positions in FY 2018-19 and FY 2019-20 to support local partnerships between law enforcement and behavioral health service providers.

Criminal justice systems in Colorado commonly handle low-level offenders with mental health or substance use issues. Often these low-level offenders are more of a threat to themselves than to

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others. The dollars requested seek to decrease the number of arrests for low-level offenses related to substance use or other behavioral health issues and instead route these individuals to more appropriate treatment and services. The money would also be used to increase access to co-responder models where behavioral health professionals ride along with police officers.

"People experiencing mental health crises need access to treatment and care, not a jail cell," said Reggie Bicha, executive director of CDHS. "We're grateful for the hard work of these task forces in coming up with recommendations to ensure that Coloradans get the treatment they need. We encourage the legislature to approve these budget requests, so we can put these recommendations into action."

The funding requested is in addition to the governor's November 1 budget proposal, which included another \$4 million from the Marijuana Tax Cash Fund in the Department of Local Affairs to develop service-enriched permanent supportive housing units for people with behavioral health needs.

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