



**For Immediate Release**

**Media Contact:**

Sheli Steele  
Marketing and Community  
Relations Director

970-826-3106

[sheli.steele@memorialrh.org](mailto:sheli.steele@memorialrh.org)

**Memorial Regional Health awarded \$3 million over four years to improve regional response to substance use and behavioral health disorders**

**Craig, Colorado – October 18, 2022**

Memorial Regional Health is the recipient of a pair of grants from the federal Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) totaling \$3 million to be used to continue work in Northwest Colorado, expanding prevention, treatment, and recovery services for opioid, substance use, and behavioral health disorders. The two HRSA grants are part of a federal disbursement called the Rural Communities Opioid Response Program (RCORP), a multi-year federal initiative aimed at reducing the morbidity and mortality of substance use disorder (SUD), including opioid use disorder (OUD), in high-risk rural communities. The grant focus has also expanded to include behavioral health needs. The two grants fall within two portions of the RCORP program — Implementation (RCORP-I) and Behavioral Health Care Support (RCORP-BHS).

The grant-funded work will be carried out through the collaborative efforts of MRH and two dozen partners representing health care, social service, law enforcement, and criminal justice agencies. The two grants will support Moffat, Routt, Rio Blanco, Jackson and Grand counties. The consortium, collectively referred to as RAS-Col (Rural Alliance Addressing Substance Use Disorder-Colorado), is proud and excited to support the Northwest Colorado region in continuing this work into the future with the help of this funding. The partnership, among other successes, has broadly distributed harm reduction kits across the target region, built a website, [SolvingSUDTogether.org](http://SolvingSUDTogether.org), to increase community education, reduce stigma aimed at individuals and families affected by SUD, and improve access to resources to treat SUD and maintain recovery, funded recovery homes, and built a recovery-friendly workplace initiative in the region.

“We are tremendously grateful to HRSA for recognizing our need for financial support in addressing substance use disorder and behavioral health needs, and trusting in our ability to use funding in a meaningful way,” said Paula Belcher, director of Population Health & Care Coordination Services for MRH, who was the program director for a previous RCORP grant and will continue to be actively involved in the facilitation of both RCORP awards. “To be one of 58 awardees of the RCORP-BHS grant, and the only Colorado recipient is a huge honor, and speaks well of the confidence HRSA has in our ability to effectively use this funding.

Additionally, MRH was one of 65 awardees of the RCORP-Implementation grant, and one of two Colorado awardees.

Among the focus areas of which the consortium, led by MRH, is committed through these two new grants are expansion of outreach and resources for the Spanish-speaking community, SUD and behavioral health support for the agricultural community, increased coordination with jails and criminal justice systems, improved cooperation with employers for recovery-supportive workplaces, life skills for people working to sustain their recovery from SUD, breaking down numerous barriers to treatment, increasing the volume and quality of treatment in the region, and training care providers and community leaders in supporting those suffering from an SUD or recovering from SUD, and people who have other behavioral health needs that put them at risk for developing an SUD.

RAS-Col has grown to include a diverse membership (past and present) including: Colorado Consortium for Prescription Drug Abuse Prevention, Colorado Farm Bureau, Culinary Hospitality Outreach and Wellness (CHOW), Colorado Workforce Center, The Foundry, Front Range Clinic (formerly Mountain Medical), Grand County Rural Health Network, Grand County Sheriff's Office, The Health Partnership, Memorial Regional Health, Mind Springs Health, Moffat County Public Health, Moffat County Sheriff's Office, Northwest Colorado Health, Open Heart Advocates, Oxford House, Partners for Youth (formerly Grand Futures Prevention Coalition), Providence Recovery Services, Rio Blanco Public Health, Rio Blanco Sheriff's Office, Routt County Public Health, Routt County Sheriff's Office, Sk8 Church, The Steadman Group, Yampa Valley Medical Center / University of Colorado Health, and Young People in Recovery. RAS-Col extends a welcome to other regional agencies who have an interest in taking an active part in completing the work associated with the grants.

"The RAS-Col partners have a huge heart for the work associated with SUD and behavioral health services, but without funding it is a huge barrier to provide people with the support and resources they need," Belcher said. "We are incredibly fortunate to be awarded this continued funding to carry forward with the work we started three years ago, and we plan to make the most of this opportunity."

Memorial Regional Health is a Craig-based healthcare system that includes a 25-bed critical access hospital as well as two primary care clinics, rapid care center, occupational therapy, speech language pathology and physical therapy services, a retail pharmacy, and multi-specialty clinics in both Craig and Steamboat Springs.

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