

Mental Health Ambassador Program

2023 Program Key Takeaways



METRO DENVER
PARTNERSHIP FOR HEALTH

Program Overview:

Since 2021, the **Metro Denver Partnership for Health (MDPH)** has partnered with community-based organizations (called ambassadors) to reduce stigma associated with mental health among communities experiencing disproportionately negative mental health outcomes in the metro Denver area, including **Latinx, Asian American, African American/Black, LGBTQIA+ individuals, and Medicaid recipients**. In 2023, MDPH facilitated two cohorts of mental health ambassadors: 1) from November 2022 to June 2023 and 2) from June 2023 to December 2023. Including those who participated in both cohorts, MDPH partnered with **17 unique organizations serving the Denver-metro area in 2023**. Throughout the program, liaisons, representing public health and health care organizations, supported ambassadors to implement activities.



Program Goal:

The goal of the program was to reduce the percentage of self-reported mental health stigma by 5% among individuals within priority populations by 2025. **The Colorado Health Institute's Colorado Health Access Survey (CHAS)** assesses the percentage of self-reported stigma.

2023 Ambassador Program Activities:

Ambassadors completed the following activities to promote anti-stigma messages:

- ▶ Information-sharing and networking
- ▶ Hosting community events
- ▶ Creating and distributing anti-stigma messaging materials
- ▶ Participating in monthly community of practice meetings and other peer sharing opportunities



Examples of anti-stigma messaging material created by ambassador organizations Amigos De México (top) and St. Benedict Health and Healing Ministry.

Data Collection:

Ambassadors completed both pre- and post-program surveys as well as bi-monthly reports. Reports gathered information on successes, challenges, and estimated reach. Surveys gauged ambassadors' confidence in addressing mental health stigma in their communities. Additionally, ambassadors were strongly encouraged to complete a community evaluation to assess the impact of events and programming on community members. To track population-level changes in mental health stigma in metro Denver, MDPH analyzed 2021 and 2023 data using mental health stigma indicators from the CHAS. Additional indicators and results can be found in the Mental Health Ambassador Program 2023 Final Report.

Ambassador Outcomes Reach:

The first cohort estimated it **reached 59,125** people over the course of the six-month contracts and the second cohort estimated it **reached 62,243 people**. Overall, MDPH estimates that **ambassadors made over 120,000 connections to communities** across the metro-Denver area in 2023.

Ambassador Outcomes Confidence:

Average answers on pre-and-post surveys on scale of 1 (low) to 3 (high) as related to ambassador's confidence.

Confidence Indicator	Cohort 1		Cohort 2	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Supporting community to access mental health services	2.6 / 3	2.8 / 3	2.3 / 3	2.6 / 3
Decreasing stigma around seeking mental health services	2.4 / 3	2.6 / 3	2.3 / 3	3 / 3

Ambassador Successes

“We received positive feedback from our clients and partners...and had many one-on-one conversations about mental health...We also noticed that folks shared information we didn't previously know about their mental health, and they were able to get connected to ongoing care.”

“Most importantly, we were able to get the community to open their hearts and express themselves.”

Community Outcomes Survey:

Among ambassadors, there were a total of 134 community survey responses. Results indicated that **community members were likely to share knowledge learned with family, friends, and coworkers after learning from ambassadors**. Additionally, community members reported learning new information at ambassador-held events.

Community Outcomes CHAS:

CHAS stigma indicators showed some improvement from 2021 to 2023. Specifically, those who did not get needed mental health services across the metro area reported a decrease in not feeling comfortable talking with health professionals about their personal problems. The survey also showed a 10 percentage point decrease in those who identified as Hispanic and Latino who did not receive needed mental health services due to concern about what would happen if someone found out about their mental health problems (2021: 36%, 2023: 26%).

Next Steps:

In January 2024, MDPH onboarded 17 organizations to participate in a year-long ambassador cohort. The yearly contract is expected to reduce administrative burden for both MDPH staff and ambassadors. Six of the 2024 ambassadors represent Southern Colorado communities, including organizations located in rural La Plata County. MDPH looks forward to learning about challenges and opportunities in rural Colorado and to continue to adapt lessons learned in the metro area.

