

COMPASS

Pandemic and slowdown brings our **EMOTIONAL HEALTH** into focus



Local support available now

by julie estlick

After a spring spent in home confinement, many Coloradans are breathing a sigh of relief as they emerge from the strict stay-at-home orders and feel the sunshine of summer on masked faces. And yet, many others are left wondering why that anxious feeling in the pit of their stomach just won't go away.

Those of us with similar feelings are not alone. A poll by the Kaiser Family Foundation found 45 percent of Americans say stress from the global pandemic has harmed their mental health, and calls and texts to national support lines have jumped significantly since this time last year. Coloradans are concerned about financial insecurity, anxiety over illness and death, and an uncertain future, according to a Colorado Health Foundation survey.

“No one needs to go through this alone. Call **970-221-5551** for help.
~ Health District's Kristen Cochran-Ward **”**

Just as scientists describe a potential series of “peaks” of COVID-19 cases, experts across the country anticipate a steady increase in behavioral health needs in the next weeks and months, says Kristen Cochran-Ward, director of Connections mental health program for the Health District of Northern Larimer County.

the country anticipate a steady increase in behavioral health needs in the next weeks and months, says Kristen Cochran-Ward, director of Connections mental health program for the Health District of Northern Larimer County.

“We’ve never dealt with anything like this before in our lifetime, all of these stressors and disappointments coming at us at once,” Cochran-Ward says. “Feeling occasionally anxious or having a heightened sense of awareness is a normal response to an abnormal situation. But if it’s causing regular anxiety or fear, a sense of feeling overwhelmed, intense sadness, a sense of loss or isolation, more anger than you normally have, or disrupting your sleep or concentration—or if you just feel worse emotionally than usual, it’s important to know that help is available. Making that call may help you on your way to feeling better.”

In Larimer County, a 24/7 COVID-19 emotional support line was established in response to the pandemic. From 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. it is staffed by specialists from the Health District’s Connections program, and SummitStone Health Partners’ staff cover it overnight. Trained staff listen to concerns, answer questions, and offer emotional support and resources.

Emotional fallout

Now that we have more freedom to move around in our communities again and aren’t stuck looking at the same walls, shouldn’t our mental health improve? Well, our brains are a little more complex than that.

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 Health District of Northern Larimer County
 120 Bristlecone Drive
 Fort Collins, CO 80524
 970-224-5209 • fax 970-221-7165
 healthdistrict.org
 compass@healthdistrict.org

Follow us on:   

communications director Richard Cox

editor Julie Estlick

graphic designer Kristen Gilbert

contributing writers/editors Kathy Hayes
 Pam Klein
 Susan Skog

executive director Carol Plock

medical director James Stewart, D.O.

board of directors Michael D. Liggett
 (president)

Molly Gutilla
 (vice president)

Faraz Naqvi, M.D.
 (liaison to PVH Board)

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meetings Board meetings are usually held monthly on the fourth Tuesday at 4:00 p.m. at the Health District offices. Due to COVID-19, meetings are being held remotely. Visit healthdistrict.org/board-meeting-schedule for more information.

programs and services Community Impact Team
Organizing community efforts to make systemic changes that will improve the health of the community

Connections
Mental health and substance use answers, options, and support

Family Dental Clinic
HealthInfoSource.com

Heart Health Promotion
Cholesterol and blood pressure testing and education

Integrated Primary Care/
 Mental Health Program
A partnership with Salud Family Health Centers and Family Medicine Center

Larimer Advance Care
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Engaging and supporting individuals in completing advance care plans

Larimer Health Connect
Connecting people to affordable health insurance including Connect for Health Colorado and CHP+/Health First Colorado (Colorado's Medicaid Program) and help affording prescriptions.

Quit Tobacco Program

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Green up your plate with **COOKED SPINACH**

by julie estlick

A healthy diet is something most of us can control during a time of medical fears and anxiety over the novel coronavirus. Summertime is often when fresh spinach leaves make a regular appearance on our meal plates, adding a satisfying crunch to sandwiches and salads.

Spinach is an excellent source of vitamins and minerals including vitamin A, vitamin C, and vitamin K1, folic acid, iron, and calcium, as well as potassium and magnesium. But did you know that cooking the dark, leafy greens helps our bodies absorb some of its key nutrients?

The reason is that spinach is loaded with oxalic acid, which blocks the absorption of iron and

calcium, but the acid breaks down under high temperatures. Cooking spinach briefly on high heat can unleash the vegetable's full potential for nutrition and taste.

Sautéing, or quickly heating it in a small amount of oil or fat with a bit of seasoning, is a nice option for serving cooked spinach as a healthy side dish or topped with a grilled protein of your choice as a summer entrée.

Editor's note: Despite its health benefits, consuming spinach may cause adverse effects in some individuals, so always check with your primary care provider before adding any new foods to your diet. ✨

Quick Sautéed Spinach

Ingredients:

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 shallots, minced
- 10 ounces baby spinach
- Kosher salt
- Freshly ground black pepper

Directions:

Heat the olive oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add the garlic and shallots and sauté until fragrant, 1 minute. Add the spinach by the handful and toss with tongs until it wilts, 3 to 5 minutes. Season the spinach with salt and pepper. Serve immediately. Yields 4 servings.

~ Recipe from *The Food Network Kitchen*, courtesy of The Neelys
foodnetwork.com/recipes/patrick-and-gina-neely/quick-sauteed-spinach-recipe-2107210

Correction: The family members for Health District Board of Directors candidate Johanna Ulloa Girón were listed incorrectly in the spring issue of Compass. Johanna is married to Carlos Girón and their children are Esteban and Sofia. We very much regret the error.



Help for survivors of child abuse and their families

by kathy hayes

One in 10 children will be sexually abused before they turn 18, according to Darkness to Light, the leading child sexual abuse prevention organization in the United States. Left untreated, child sexual abuse can lead to short- and long-term physical and emotional health consequences such as depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), risky sexual behaviors, substance use disorder, and increased risk for suicide.

These are sobering realities, but there is a safe place for help. ChildSafe in Fort Collins is a comprehensive outpatient treatment program that helps victims of childhood abuse, particularly child sexual abuse, and their family members to heal. “The work we do addresses the trauma experienced in childhood to help our clients find their path in life and, with support, thrive,” says ChildSafe Executive Director Carol Bennis.

The demand for ChildSafe’s services has more than doubled in the last 10 years. “In 2019, we treated 839 clients and their families—more clients in one year than we have had in the organization’s 34-year history,” says Bennis.

Trained therapists use a combination of individual, group, and family therapy when working with children and adult survivors of childhood abuse. ChildSafe’s comfortable environment allows clients to feel safe enough to process the trauma they have experienced.

“Healing starts to occur the minute a child, their parents, or an adult survivor walk in the door and know they don’t have to keep that secret anymore,” says ChildSafe Clinical Director Val Macri-Lind.

After closing the office due to COVID-19, the clinic slowly began taking steps in late May to reopen and plans to continue with remote telehealth appointments and group therapy sessions. In-person appointments are scheduled on a case-by-case basis.

During the first appointment, Macri-Lind meets with parents, or an adult, to learn what happened, if there have been other traumas in the person’s life, and if the case is in the criminal justice system. They develop a preliminary treatment plan and determine which therapist would be a good fit for the family.

“Parents are also traumatized and often don’t know how to talk to their child about what happened,” says Macri-Lind. “Therapy includes helping and supporting caregivers, which is healing for the child and helps create an environment at home where they’re supported.”

Experiential therapies such as sand tray, play, art, music, and journaling are especially effective with children and teens, she notes. “We have sand, art supplies, costumes, and toys to engage kids in ways that allow them to express [themselves] and process through their experiences.” (Supplies may be sent to the client’s home for use as needed.)

Children have loved interacting with Chester the therapy dog, and Chester loved being with them, too. When one little girl asked to dress up as a fairy, she wanted to dress Chester as a fairy, too. He willingly obliged.

“Chester was born to do this work,” says Bennis. “His presence is very



Chester the therapy dog is a treasured member of the ChildSafe staff. He is trained to help calm clients who have experienced child abuse trauma.

~ Photo courtesy of ChildSafe

calming, and he’s very intuitive. He’ll sense when someone is upset and will go to that person to be close and available for petting. He helps kids and adults regulate their emotions when they’re upset.”

Helping clients develop coping and regulation skills is a big part of the work that ChildSafe therapists do. “We explain that even though bad things happen, you can still be OK working through your experience, as long as you’re keeping yourself grounded in the present while you work through it,” says Macri-Lind.

There are several options for help paying for care including the Victim Compensation Fund, grants, a sliding scale based on income, and a specialist to check into any private insurance coverage.

ChildSafe also offers free group therapy and parenting classes for parents who are raising traumatized children. No referral is required, and anyone may attend. Check the website for up-to-date information on classes and therapy groups.

“Sexual abuse can be a very isolating experience,” says Macri-Lind. “Victims feel like they’re the only ones this happened to. Working through their trauma with others who have been through it too is something that individual therapy alone can’t do.”



Upcoming fundraising event

Be a Hero 5K Race and Fun Run

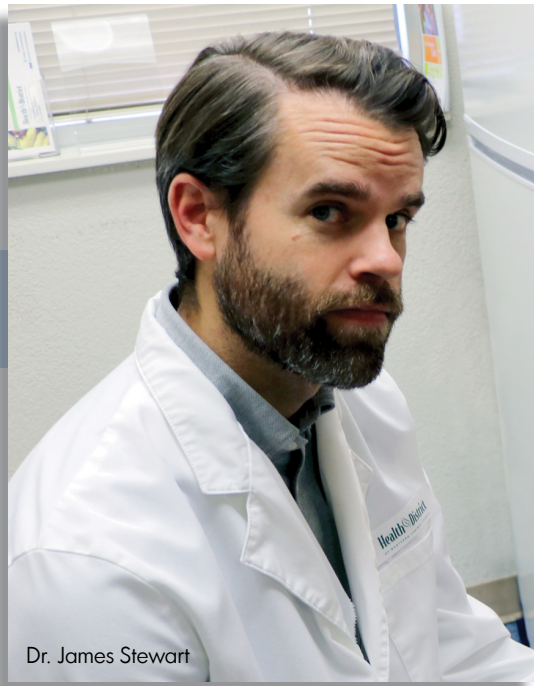
Sunday, Aug. 30

Find the latest event information at childsafecolorado.org/events or call 970-472-4133.

ChildSafe Colorado

2001 S. Shields, Building K, Fort Collins
970-472-4133 - Call for an appointment (telehealth is available)

Childsafecolorado.org – information on programs, free resources for parents, volunteer opportunities, and training events for health-care professionals, teachers, and counselors



Dr. James Stewart

What lies ahead with COVID-19

An interview with Health District Medical Director Dr. James Stewart

In this interview, the Health District's medical director talks about the continuing threat of COVID-19 and why it is important to maintain a "I protect you, you protect me" approach to keeping our community healthy.

Is coronavirus still in our community?

Absolutely. Although we have experienced some decline in the rate of spread and the number of cases locally, other states have recently seen sharp rises. It is very much still here, and its presence is expected to fluctuate widely over time.

If the number of infections is going down, do we still need to take precautions?

The important thing to remember is the reason the numbers have gone down is because of all the strict precautions we put in place and not because the virus decided it didn't want to be around any longer. It's because we were staying home, we were social distancing, we were wearing masks, and we were washing hands religiously. If we loosen up, we see the same thing we saw back in March, which is an increase in spread. The big risk is that we overwhelm our hospital system so that it can no longer meet the needs of the community.

How long will we have to social distance?

Our best estimate is that 90-95 percent of us are still vulnerable to the disease. If we are exposed, we are at risk. Until there is a vaccine, social distancing is the only way we have—along with masks and respiratory hygiene measures (coughing or sneezing into a mask or tissue)—to keep the curve flat. So it's very important for the foreseeable future.

If I don't have any risk factors for COVID-19, do I need to practice any precautions?

We've learned that even young, healthy people can get very sick. We've seen young adults die from this. Even in children, we're learning that there can be severe vascular consequences from COVID-19. Although kids and young adults are generally safer than older people, this is not a risk that anyone should take.

We're all in this together. If we want our neighbors to help protect us and the people we care about, then we have to do our part to protect our neighbors and the people in the community who are more vulnerable.

Is it safe to socialize with others?

For the most part, I think it's relatively safe to see people in small groups if you're outside, you wear a mask, and you keep your distance. It's not without risk, but the vast majority of cases are spread through indoor exposures. Obviously make sure that if you have any symptoms consistent with COVID-19 that you don't socialize or go out in public. People who are at highest risk for complications from COVID-19 (65 and over, and certain underlying health conditions) are encouraged to stay home. If they socialize, they should take extreme precautions.

Does wearing a mask really protect me or others from coronavirus?

There has been a lot of recent research that masks are effective, and that even cloth masks are effective. If a large proportion of society is doing a good job of wearing masks, it's thought that this measure alone could keep the curve flat for a long period of time.

Isn't this just like the flu?

We know that COVID-19 is 5-10 times more deadly than the flu, maybe more. In less than four months, we've seen it spread and kill more than 130,000 people in the United States. If this were to run its course without a vaccine, you're looking at maybe anywhere from 800,000 to a couple of million people dying over 18 months. Those numbers are startling. And COVID-19 patients with an underlying condition are 6 times as likely to be hospitalized and 12 times as likely to die, compared with those who have no such condition, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Another difference is that, unlike COVID-19, we have a vaccine for the flu and many people have immunity to different strains of flu.

Also important is how this virus has disproportionately affected marginalized communities. A lot of the outbreaks have been in prisons and in low-income jobs, meat-packing plants especially. And in communities of black and brown people, people have been dying in disproportionate numbers.

Will we have another wave of cases?

It's difficult to predict, but a number of infectious disease experts and epidemiologists who have been looking at this closely say cases are likely to go up and down, depending on how we all act, and that it is very likely that we will have another surge of cases that will coincide with cold and flu season.



#Pandemiclife

Youths can seize the moment to expand interests, spread happiness

by susan skog

It was opening night, and 16-year-old Eli Brandt was excited to play the character of the Pharaoh in a production of Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat. But instead, something more dramatic happened. The curtain never went up on the play, and much of the world retreated into COVID-19 lockdowns.

“I was really disappointed, and it was unsettling. The hardest part was not knowing what would come next,” says Brandt, a member of the theatrical Academy by Divabee in Fort Collins.

The next day, Brandt began to hear a song in his head. Instead of concentrating on sheltering at home, he focused on bringing his “cheesy little song” to life. His aunt, the academy founder, recorded him and his siblings performing “The Quarantine Song.” Lincoln, 19, used a nine-pack package of toilet paper as his “drum,” while 13-year-old sister Amelia shook bottles of disinfectant and liquid soap like maracas.

The song attracted the attention of Broadway star Laura Benanti, whose social media campaign Sunshine Songs highlights the artistic gifts of kids whose performances were canceled due to the pandemic. Out of thousands of submissions, Benanti chose their song as one of the acts in her YouTube Sunshine Songs productions.

“That was really great! This song helped us deal with our feelings and express them in a funny way that a lot of people maybe can relate to,” Eli says.

From virtual museum camps, to mowing lawns for older neighbors, to learning how to cook, young people can find ways to positively channel their passions, skills, and energy now, according to Fort Collins psychotherapist Michael Gitter.

“It’s tough for kids, teens, and young adults to be more isolated from their peers. But how they respond to these times will impact the rest of their life,” says Gitter. “If they stay bored and frustrated, they will get nothing out of this moment. But if young people decide, ‘I can bring even more light to myself and others now,’ they will make the absolute best of this pandemic, and learn how to cope and thrive in uncertain times.”

Gitter says it’s been heartening to see teens, for instance, seize these challenging times for good. “One 17-year-old girl said she’d always wanted to learn sign language, so she did. Two sisters learned how to sew from their mother and made masks for others.”

Then there’s 13-year-old Hazel Reyes. “My softball season was canceled, we switched to online learning, and it was really hard wondering when I would see my friends again.”

But Hazel decided to “look for the good” and “spread positivity” to retirees, teachers, and her school principal. “I took some chalk and wrote sidewalk and driveway messages like, ‘If there was no change, there would be no butterflies,’ or ‘You are loved,’ and ‘Don’t worry be happy.’ Over three weeks, I chalked about 95 homes. It felt really good to bring some happiness to others.”

As Hazel shows, even during these unsettling times, how we choose to show up in the world is under our control, Gitter says. “If we use this experience to deepen our character, cultivate courage, creativity, and helpfulness, this time can be a gift.”



Hazel Reyes uses chalk art to spread positive messages near the homes of her principal, teachers, and neighbors.



~ Photos courtesy of the Reyes family

Make it a summer to remember

- Help Make History**
 The Fort Collins Museum of Discovery wants pandemic experiences—stories, interviews, videos, scrapbooks—from people of all ages to record what life is like for them during COVID-19. These will become part of the museum’s permanent archive.
fcmuseum.org/blog/category/archive-collections
- Free Metropolitan Opera Global Summer Camp**
 July 13- August 7. Stream a Met opera performance a week, participate in artist chats and at-home projects. Broken into two groups – grades 3-6 and grades 7-12 – register at
metopera.org/discover/education/global-summer-camp/home/
- OtterCares Foundation Project Heart for Clubs**
 Teaches elementary-age kids about philanthropic giving and how to design their own projects to make an impact.
myprojectheart.org/clubs
- Volunteering**
 Healthy young people can fill open slots left by older adults and those with underlying health conditions who regularly serve but are forced to quarantine.
nocovolunteers.org (United Way of Larimer County) or call 970-407-7000

“Our first focus as humans is on survival,” Cochran-Ward explains. “Once stay-at-home orders are lifted and we begin to feel a bit more physically safe, our minds turn to the financial and emotional impacts of the shutdowns on our family and community—that’s when people start to realize that the emotions can be tough to handle alone.”

The emotional support line will continue throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, thanks in part to a Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) grant that covers the cost of three additional full-time positions to help with the expected increase in call volume on the support line.

“We all need to take care of our emotional wellbeing, so please don’t be afraid to call the support line and take advantage of these increased resources during these difficult times,” says Nick Christensen, a member of the Larimer County Behavioral Health Policy Council.

A new kind of grief

“One issue not getting enough attention is the grief most of us are experiencing over the loss of our normal way of life,” Cochran-Ward notes. All the missed graduations, family gatherings, baby showers, weddings, and cancelled vacations are important life events that we depend on to get us through the tough times.

These losses coupled with the fact that the virus has not left us—we are still asked to wear masks and stay 6 feet apart until there is a vaccine—can be frustrating and sad.

Callers to the support line struggle with this new, unexpected reality, but there are options for getting the appropriate help. In addition to just being able to call and talk to a supportive person, individuals who want to talk with other community members working through similar things may want to participate in pandemic-related support groups.

“Groups help connect people with a support network, decrease their isolation, and provide tools on how to handle the stress and anxiety that COVID-19 caused or increased,” explains Jenna Raymond, a Connections behavioral health specialist who helps facilitate the groups.

Virtual get-togethers

While we’re cut off from visiting many family and friends, virtual events where you chat or cook or make something at the same time have become a popular way to socialize and let off steam. If your get-togethers involve alcohol, remember to stick to moderate amounts (one drink per day for women, up to two drinks for men) and pay attention to your state of mind.

“If you’re using substances to deal with emotions it can lead to problems,” Cochran-Ward says. “Bottom line is don’t use substances to cope—check in with yourself and make sure it’s not becoming a problem. If it is, call us now.”

Also, people in recovery from drug and alcohol addiction and those with pre-existing mental health issues may be experiencing additional stress. Help

“One issue not getting enough attention is the grief most of us are experiencing over the loss of our normal way of life.”

~ Kristen Cochran-Ward
Director of Connections adult mental health program, Health District of Northern Larimer County



is available, so if you’re struggling, don’t wait to see if you get better—reach out right away, she advises.

In addition to the support line and support groups, the Connections program and its Child, Adolescent, and Young Adult Connections (CAYAC) Team are also providing their regular services through mostly telehealth appointments, including assessments and connections to the mental health and substance use services most likely to meet individual’s and family’s needs, when needed.

Given the unprecedented time we’re living through and all the unknowns that lie ahead, how do we find mental balance and stay positive?

Focus on taking care of each other, Cochran-Ward suggests. Reach out to neighbors and friends and ask how they are doing. And don’t be afraid of the answer. “Remember that professional help is available to enhance coping skills or simply listen and offer support. No one needs to go through this alone.”

If you are experiencing ANY of the following:

- desire to improve emotional health
- feeling overwhelmed
- more worried or anxious than normal
- sleep issues
- agitation or anger
- difficulty concentrating or making decisions
- you need to talk to someone supportive

Call the Emotional Support Line at **970-221-5551**. Someone is available to help 24/7.

If you are having a mental health crisis:

Call the SummitStone Health Partners Crisis Hotline at **970-494-4200**, ext. 4, text TALK to 38255, or call 911.

Walk-in services are open at SummitStone Crisis Services at 1217 Riverside Ave. in Fort Collins. However, anyone who is experiencing symptoms of the coronavirus is encouraged to call the numbers above or text to receive crisis support.



Blood pressure program targets heart health during pandemic

Mounting scientific evidence shows that the novel coronavirus causes infection and inflammation in blood vessels. The high prevalence of blood clots, strokes, and heart attacks in COVID-19 patients may be linked to these factors, says Health District Clinical Nurse Manager Cheri Nichols.

“There are widespread, significant benefits to preventing or managing any condition that compromises the blood vessels, including high blood pressure, heart disease, and diabetes. It’s important now during the pandemic, and always,” Nichols says.

The Health District can help. The Improving Blood Pressure Program offers free individual sessions with a registered nurse. These sessions cover how high blood pressure can be improved with medications and healthy

lifestyle, how to self-monitor your blood pressure (BP) at home, and how to have an effective discussion with your health-care provider about concerns and treatment options.

High blood pressure is one of the easiest conditions to diagnose and treat effectively and is best accomplished through active patient involvement and partnership with a provider. Participants in the program may borrow an automatic BP cuff for several weeks free of charge, and get advice on how to shop for one. Consultations are done over the phone or by telehealth.

Nurses are available to answer questions and for program enrollment—call 970-224-5209.

Care in recovery



Health District staff continue working with community partners to help individuals experiencing homelessness during the COVID-19 outbreak. So far, eight guests have been isolated at our Myrtle Street recovery center for those with COVID or COVID-like symptoms. Pictured are Taylor Kelley, Homeward Alliance COVID-19 recovery site manager, and MJ Jorgensen of the Health District’s Community Impact Team at the check-in station for the Myrtle Street recovery center.

Staff members wrapped up work at the now-closed Northside Aztlan Community Center’s (NACC) temporary homeless shelter after performing 25,216 temperature checks and testing over 300 guests and staff for the coronavirus (just one positive result). A total of 24 guests with symptoms were served in the Health District’s isolation and recovery area at the NACC.

~ Photo by Brian Ferrans

Health District Statement on Racism

The Health District believes Black Lives Matter and is committed to listening, learning, and acting in ways that are anti-racist, to support and encourage change within and beyond our organization.

As a public entity, as an employer, as a health services provider, and as a member of the northern Colorado community, we pledge to take the following actionable steps to help dismantle systemic racism:

We will listen.



Health District
OF NORTHERN LARIMER COUNTY

#BlackLivesMatter

We will learn.



Health District
OF NORTHERN LARIMER COUNTY

#BlackLivesMatter

We will act.



Health District
OF NORTHERN LARIMER COUNTY

#BlackLivesMatter

We will do better.



Health District
OF NORTHERN LARIMER COUNTY

#BlackLivesMatter

Read our full statement at:
healthdistrict.org/health-district-statement-racism

Kling, Naqvi re-elected to Health District board

In May, Celeste Holder Kling and H. Faraz Naqvi were both re-elected to three-year terms on the board of directors for the Health District of Northern Larimer County.

Eight candidates ran for two open seats on the Health District board. A total of 1,998 ballots were cast in the special district election.

Naqvi, 54, is a physician and businessperson. Kling, 62, is an attorney and mediator. Both are from Fort Collins.



Celeste Holder Kling



H. Faraz Naqvi

Need someone to talk to? We're here to listen.

COVID-19 emotional support for Larimer County is available 24 hours, 7 days a week. No cost.

970-221-5551



We're back!

The Family Dental Clinic is now taking appointments for your general dental care needs, including routine cleanings. Emergency appointments available daily.

MEDICAID • CHP+ • SLIDING FEE SCALE

Health District

FAMILY DENTAL CLINIC

Call us for an appointment, 7:30 a.m. - 6 p.m., M-F
970-416-5331

healthdistrict.org/dental

Patients must live in the Health District, have no private dental insurance, and meet income guidelines.

Can't afford your prescriptions?



We may be able to help you get your medications for lower or no cost.

Options may be available for those with or without health insurance.

For more information, please call to set up an **appointment**—our services are **free!**

970-416-6519

Health District

PRESCRIPTION ASSISTANCE

healthdistrict.org/prescription-assistance

Thinking of QUITTING?

We're still here to help you quit tobacco, with counseling by phone and free nicotine patches, gum, or lozenges by mail.

- Experienced tobacco treatment specialists
- Positive, supportive approach
- Sliding fees for those who qualify
- Covered benefit for Health First Colorado (Medicaid) enrollees

970-224-5209

healthdistrict.org/quitsmoking

Health District

QUIT TOBACCO PROGRAM

Get covered during COVID

No job? No health insurance?

Health First Colorado (Medicaid), Connect for Health Colorado, or Child Health Plan Plus (CHP+) may be a more affordable option for you.

For Medicaid:

- Stimulus money does not count toward your income.
- Income changes will not end your benefits (FOR A LIMITED TIME).
- Enroll at any time of the year. No deadlines!

For marketplace plans:

- If you've lost your health insurance, you have 60 days to enroll in a marketplace plan.

**Free, local enrollment help.
Schedule your appointment!**

970-472-0444

larimerhealthconnect.org



Health District

LARIMER HEALTH CONNECT

