

Steve,

The purpose of this letter is to respond to your proposal that a behavioral health consortium be established in Larimer County. In my opinion, this proposal is far too narrow in its scope. As there are considerable challenges among the communities of Northern Colorado particularly as it relates to health care, I recommend that the community leaders of Larimer County consider a council or consortium to consider the broader issue of community health.

I will outline the reasons for this perspective below, but I feel that a brief outline of my background might be helpful in providing you with my qualifications to comment on this proposal.

Personal Background:

I served in military health care for over 29 years beginning as a Navy Hospital Corpsman, rendering patient care in a hospital setting, providing medical care to Marines in Vietnam and serving as an independent duty Corpsman with an Aviation Attack Squadron aboard the aircraft carrier USS America.

At the time I had roughly six years of enlisted service I was commissioned as an officer in the Naval Medical Service Corps. The Navy selected me for a bachelors degree program followed by a graduate degree program. I earned a Bachelors in Health Care Administration from George Washington University in Washington DC and a Masters in Financial Management from the Naval Post Graduate School.

I served as the Comptroller for two Naval Hospitals followed by eight years in Washington DC. I had a number of assignments in Washington including installation of computer systems in military hospitals in the United States, responsibility for worldwide collection, analyzing and distribution of health care data to the Navy, Department of Defense, Office of the President and Congress, acting budget officer for the Naval Medical Department and project officer the Department of Defense military unique medical cost reporting system. Also while assigned to the Department of Defense I participated in a joint service initiative to redesign the military health care system along the lines of a managed care model. I was transferred to Naval Hospital San Diego where I became the first Director of Region Nine TriCare an organization functionally responsible for the twelve military hospitals in Southern California. As the Director, I had responsibility for the development and implementation of the managed care model I had worked on in Washington DC which became TriCare Region Nine in Souther Colorado. The purpose of the summary of my experience is simply to convey that I have considerable experience in health care at all levels.

Reasons Why A Broader Scope Is Appropriate:

It is my observation that business and political leaders increasingly recognize the inter-relationship of the Northern Colorado communities in Larimer and Weld counties. This is leading to an ever increasing collaboration among the communities. The following are a few examples.

- ◆ Several county and bi-county business, health care and mental health professionals, faith based and government organizations are collaborating to address health care issues within Larimer and Weld communities. This was initiated by the Northern Colorado Legislative Alliance, a business advocacy organization established by the Chambers of Fort Collins, Greeley and Loveland.

- The purpose of this workgroup is to address the health care issues confronting Northern Colorado, particularly the realization that the demand on Medicaid funds is unsustainable. This workgroup had identified a half dozen major concerns relative to health care.
- ◆ Mental Health, Health Care, faith based, municipal government, school district and business leaders have come together in Loveland to identify three critical issues facing Loveland. This work group identified suicide, homelessness, and opioid abuse as the three most important issues confronting the community and will appear before the Loveland City Council to define each of the issues, inform council of what is currently being done in the community, present successes achieved in other communities, identify the gaps the currently exist and present City Council with opportunities for the City for partner with the existing providers to close the gaps.
 - The purpose of this group is to address what is perceived as the three top issues facing the City of Loveland and although addressed in part by individual organizations, could benefit for coordinations and partnering with the City of Loveland. I suspect these very same issues are of concern among all the communities of Northern Colorado.
- ◆ Mental Health, law enforcement, and elected officials from Larimer and Weld Counties have been meeting over the past year to consider the impact of Opioid use/dependency on two counties.
 - The purpose of this workgroup is to develop a coordinated response to the Opioid crisis as it impacts the communities in Larimer and Weld County. This group has independently developed a four pronged program for addressing Opioid use from the prescriber to the user.

The above examples represent just three initiatives whereby independent organizations have come together to address significant areas of crisis in Northern Colorado. I would not be surprised that there are other examples of organizations coming together to more effectively respond to crisis areas by coordinating their efforts to address issues of mutual concern.

I recommend that you consider expanding your perspective to include issues beyond behavioral health. Earlier I suggest a title of “Community Health” which could extend to a wide range of mutual community issues. Regardless of the title, I believe that there are important mutual issues facing our communities that would benefit from the participation of representatives from health care, mental health, business, faith based, municipal, school district, and elected officials.

I welcome an opportunity to discuss this proposal with you in more depth.

Sincerely,

Steven Olson