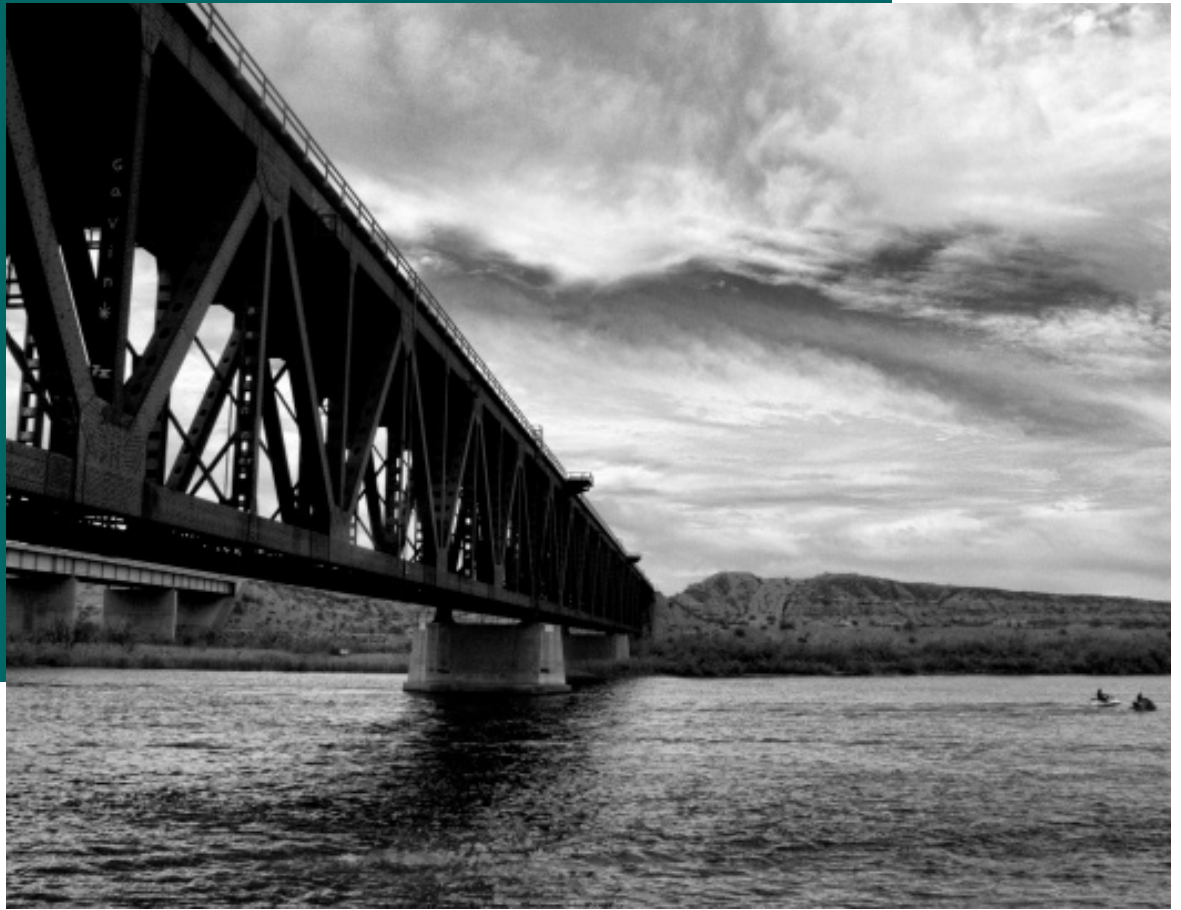




Bridges of Colorado

§§ 13-95-101 – 13-95-109, C.R.S. (2024)

Annual Legislative Report Fiscal Year 2024

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Bridges of Colorado

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Bridges of Colorado, established as a program in 2018, facilitates collaboration between the criminal justice and behavioral health systems through the placement of dedicated court liaisons in all 22 judicial districts. Due to the success of the program and statewide needs, Bridges was established as an independent state office in 2023. In FY24, the Office laid the foundations for operations and hiring, which ultimately grew the team from 29 court liaisons and two administrative staff to a team of 77 court liaisons, 12 regional managers, and 10 administrative staff. In FY25, Bridges will continue its development with the implementation of two programs added through legislative action in 2024. A competency diversion model is being developed for individuals likely to be found incompetent to proceed and instead redirected to Bridges, along with a psychological services assessment team to assist in improving participant outcomes.

Our recidivism rates have decreased because when people are stable in the community and having their behavioral health needs met, they are less likely to continue to commit crimes that result in new charges/cases.

- Judicial Officer

Court Liaison Program

Court liaisons serve defendants (referred to as participants) with mental and/or behavioral health needs, prioritizing individuals undergoing competency evaluations and restoration. A primary intention of the enabling legislation was to mitigate the critical delay defendants experience in accessing competency services, often leading to significant decompensation of mental health, especially in jail settings.

Liaisons address comprehensive needs beyond competency, supporting long-term stability and positive outcomes for defendants while simultaneously reducing the burden on courts and jails, which often serve as a repository for individuals struggling with unmet mental and/or behavioral health needs. This means that liaisons work with participants to address barriers including disabilities, housing, and transportation, among many others. To coordinate this person-centered model of care, liaisons partner with myriad providers, attorneys, and often families, ensuring that necessary and relevant parties are included and informed.

Liaisons also function as court-appointed experts, providing judicial officers with a broader context for legal problem solving and decision making through regular reports to the court and attendance at hearings. Their reports detail participant needs, available community-based services, and individual and systemic barriers and related solutions.

While liaisons are neutral non-parties to the case, they advocate for the best interests of the participant's behavioral health. Liaisons are integral when in-custody participants transition to community settings, providing support to participants' engagement with community-based services.

Bridges continues to exhibit high utilization by court partners and strong indicators of success as evidenced by the following FY24 data:

Program Utilization

- Bridges' team of 29 court liaisons provided services on approximately **4,799 legal cases**, 3,108 of which were new, and 1,691 of which were appointed in the previous year.
- Liaisons served **2,715 participants**, an **average of 94 participants per liaison**, with 1,758 of those being new appointments and 957 carried over from the previous fiscal year.

Informing Judges and Attorneys

- Liaisons provided **17,118 reports**, informing courts and attorneys of participants' individual needs, available services, and case planning for release from custody.

Referrals and Crisis Interventions

- With the support of their liaison, participants on bond connected to approximately **2,501 community-based services**.
- Of the referrals, **53% were to behavioral health services**, and **47% were to other support services**, such as housing, social support programs, and healthcare.
- Court Liaisons collaborated in **169 mental health crisis interventions** and facilitated cross-agency responses that resulted in **94 successful suicide interventions**.

Custody Status

- Of the **1,758 participants entering the program in FY24**, **55% were in custody** and **45% were on bond** in the community.
- For the **1,107 participants whose cases closed in FY24**, **29% remained in custody** while **71% were in the community**. Ultimately, these outcomes indicate **up to a 47% rate of release** for participants who enter the program while in custody, a 10% increase over the previous year.

Competency Cases

- Approximately **74% of Bridges cases are competency-related**, and the remaining 26% represent participants with significant behavioral and/or mental health challenges but for whom competency has not been raised.

Bridges looks forward to continued evaluation and development of resources and best practices to connect the behavioral health and criminal justice systems in ways that promote positive outcomes for individuals with mental and/or behavioral health challenges.

OVERVIEW OF STATUTORY REPORTING REQUIREMENT

Reporting Requirement

As outlined in §13-95-109(1)(a-b), C.R.S. (2023), Bridges of Colorado must report annually to the Joint Budget Committee, “about the Office’s work and administration of the Bridges Program during the prior year.” The report must include:

“(a) the number and competency status of cases in the past year when a court liaison was appointed and outcomes in those related to the legislative intent and statewide goals of the program, as set forth in this Article 95, including data related to alternatives to competency services, alternatives to custody, and alternatives to criminal justice system involvement;”

We have seen a dramatic improvement in case outcomes and management of cases while they are pending. This is demonstrated in a reduction of the number of defendants who fail to appear in court, violate bond conditions or get charged with new crimes while on bond.

- *Judicial Officer*

NOTE: The data in this annual report includes alternatives to custody, represented by numbers of participants released from custody during engagement with Bridges. As of September 1, 2024, Bridges of Colorado has implemented a comprehensive database and case management system (called DIMS) that will track data regarding additional alternatives, to include, but not limited to types of service referrals made, referral outcomes, and participants diverted from the competency systems through the newly established Competency Diversion/Wraparound Care Program.

and

“(b) information concerning the use of money from the bridges program participant service fund, including a summary of how money from the fund is being used to alleviate system gaps and barriers to services.”

NOTE: the participant service fund is not appropriated until FY25, so there is no related information in this report.

The Legislative declaration and intent in the enabling statute, §§ 13-95-101 - 13-95-109, C.R.S. (2023), further recognizes that, “Colorado’s citizens who are living with mental

health and substance use disorders are over-represented in the criminal justice system, and they are at a significantly greater risk of incurring criminal justice involvement, longer terms of involvement, and harsher consequences of that involvement when compared to the general public.”

Bridges’ primary outcomes and statewide goals aim to address the issues articulated in the legislative intent and are summarized below (see also Attachment A, *Bridges Mission Statement*, and Attachment B, *Bridges Logic Model*).

Bridges was my hope in the biggest despairing part of my life. They became my hope when I had lost all hope.

- Participant

Primary Outcomes

- Participants’ time of involvement with the criminal justice system is brief, barriers are reduced, and stability factors are increased.
- Courts and attorneys are well-informed on the needs of the participants and the availability of community-based services.
- Court, attorneys, providers, and jails collaborate so that services for the target population are readily accessible.
- Ancillary outcomes of the program are also assumed to positively impact public safety, alleviate waits for hospital beds at the Office of Civil and Forensic Mental Health (OCFMH), and reduce criminal justice and behavioral health costs.

Statewide Goals

- Liaisons identify participants’ individualized needs and both advocate for and connect them to appropriate and meaningful community-based, residential, and/or jail-based services.
- Liaisons provide judicial officers and attorneys with information on the needs of the participants and the availability of community-based services.
- Participants have an equitable opportunity to engage in services that appropriately and meaningfully meet their needs.
- Participants’ time of involvement with the criminal justice system is brief, barriers are reduced, and stability factors are increased.
 - *NOTE: This goal could be further measured by longitudinal, cross systems data from Judicial and BHA.*
- Participants are treated fairly, regardless of their behavioral health history or mental state.
 - *NOTE: This goal could be further measured by longitudinal, cross systems data from Judicial.*
- Participants have a reduced risk of criminal justice involvement in the future.

- *NOTE: this necessitates an evaluation design that would identify meaningful measurements and analysis from cross-systems data points.*
- Participants have a fair chance of living a healthy and productive life.

Data Collection Methods

Bridges worked throughout FY24 to build a comprehensive database and case management system. As of September 1, all participant data tracking was converted to this system. In conjunction with data from the Judicial database, the Office will now be able to assess the impact of Bridges programming on participants, courts, and community partners more comprehensively, and looks forward to sharing more robust reporting in future years.

For FY24, Bridges has continued to utilize provisional means of collecting data and analyzing outcomes through the direct reporting efforts of court liaisons. For purposes of this report, it is important to note that participant-level data reporting relies on liaisons to accurately track and report their daily activities and inherently carries a larger possibility for margin of error. Case-level data in this report is compiled from the Judicial database.

Ultimately, because of the collaborative nature of the program model, comprehensive analysis of outcomes for Bridges will best be served by a robust evaluation design that examines the intersection of data across multiple systems, including Judicial, BHA, jails, and community-based providers.

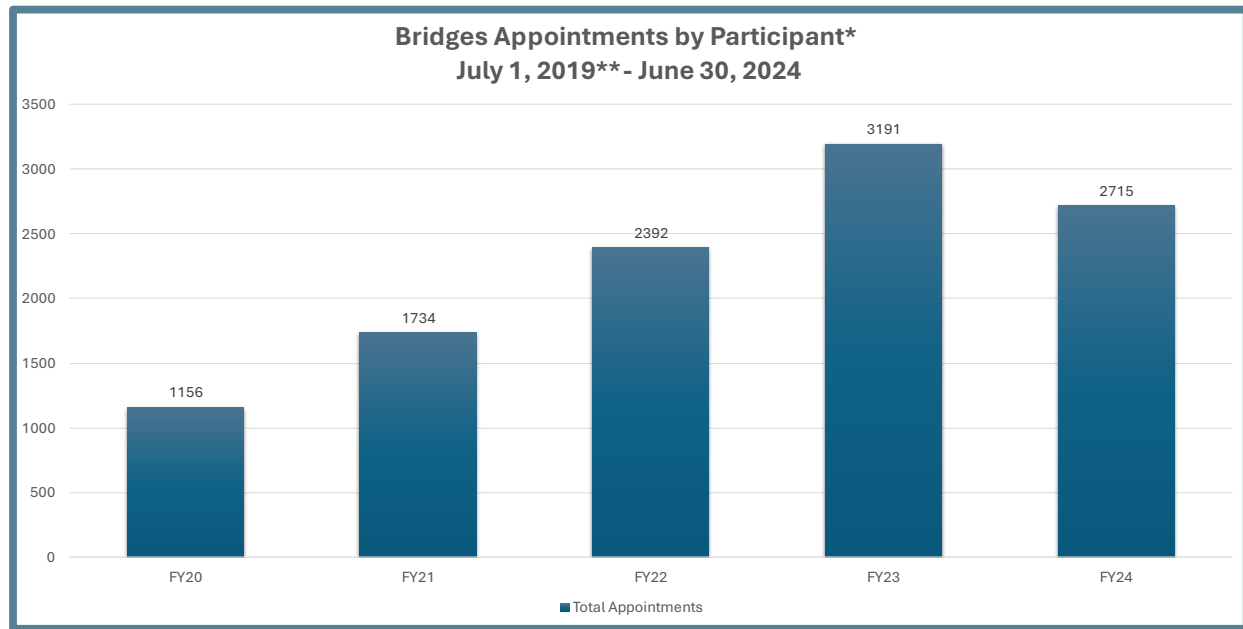
The quantitative and qualitative data on the following pages are illustrative of Bridges' continued progress toward its goals and the legislative intent for the Office.

I was in horrible shape. I was suicidal, horribly depressed. My health was poor. [The court liaison] saved me from that. I really appreciate [her], and she made such a difference in where I am now.

- Participant

DATA AND ANALYSIS

Program Utilization



*Based on data obtained from Judicial reports July 1, 2023 - June 30, 2024

**First case appointment in April 2019

Liaisons served 2,715 participants in FY24, a 15% decrease from the previous year, with 1,758 of those being new appointments and 957 carried over from the previous fiscal year. However, Bridges continues to see an upward trend since its inception, with a 13% increase over the previous two years and a 57% increase since its first full year of services. At any one point in time in FY24, there were approximately 1,012 active participants in the program, served by a total of 29 liaisons throughout the state.

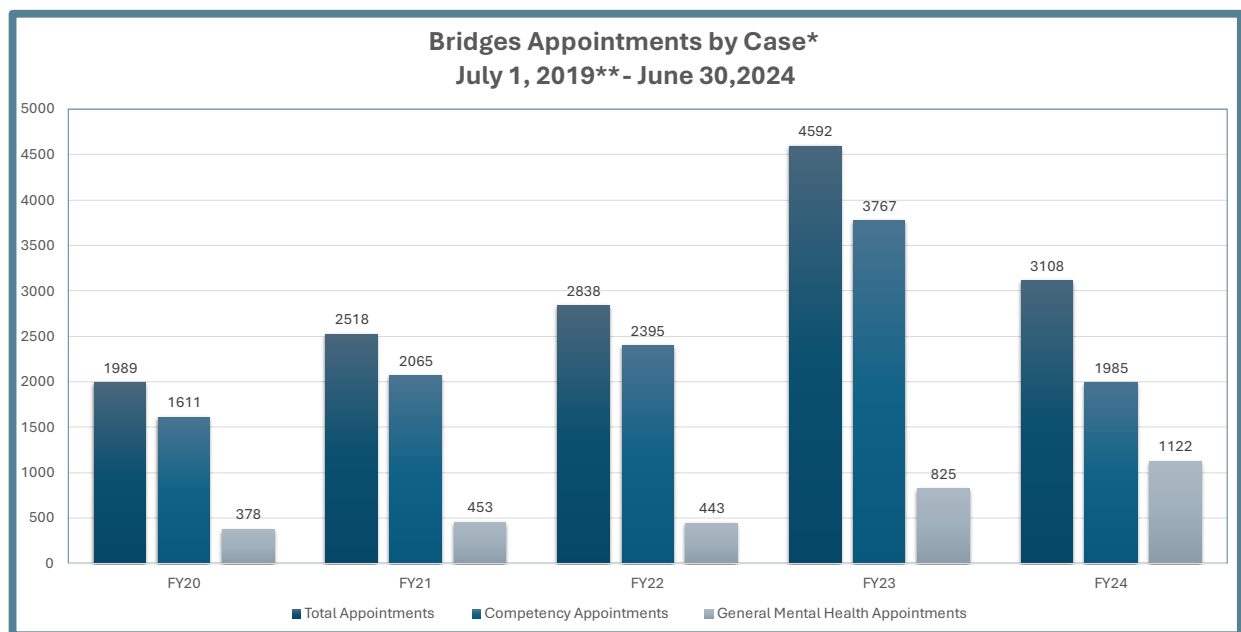
There were one-time challenges that may have contributed to the decline in program utilization in the last half of the year:

- Following the announcement of Bridges' move to a direct employ model, some contractors ceased to fill vacant liaison positions or ceased serving appointments, even with six months remaining on their contracts.
- A total of 71% of Judicial officers made appointments to Bridges, down from 91% in previous years. This decrease may also be attributed to the transition and a lack of clear understanding that although the program was moving from the State Court Administrator's Office to an Independent Office, Bridges was still fully operational. Bridges established a Judicial Advisory Council and a related

education plan to strengthen communication with courts, especially new Judicial officers.

Most significantly, to provide a higher quality of service, Bridges made a concentrated effort to reduce caseloads statewide. Each court liaison served an average of 94 participants in the year, down from an average of 110 the previous year. As illustrated by the data on the following pages, with slightly reduced caseloads, liaisons were able to provide more reports to the court and connect participants with more behavioral health and basic need referrals across the state. More out-of-custody participants were also served, which necessitates higher levels of engagement.

It is also important to note that these numbers represent 3,108 legal cases, an average of 1.8 per participant. In contrast, participants served in the previous year represented 4,592 legal cases and an average of 2.3 per participant. This represents a decrease in the number of total legal cases for which defendants are being prosecuted, and possibly points to a downward trend in the number of cases brought against a single defendant to whom a Bridges liaison is appointed.



*Based on data obtained from Judicial reports July 1, 2023- June 30, 2024

**First case appointment in April 2019

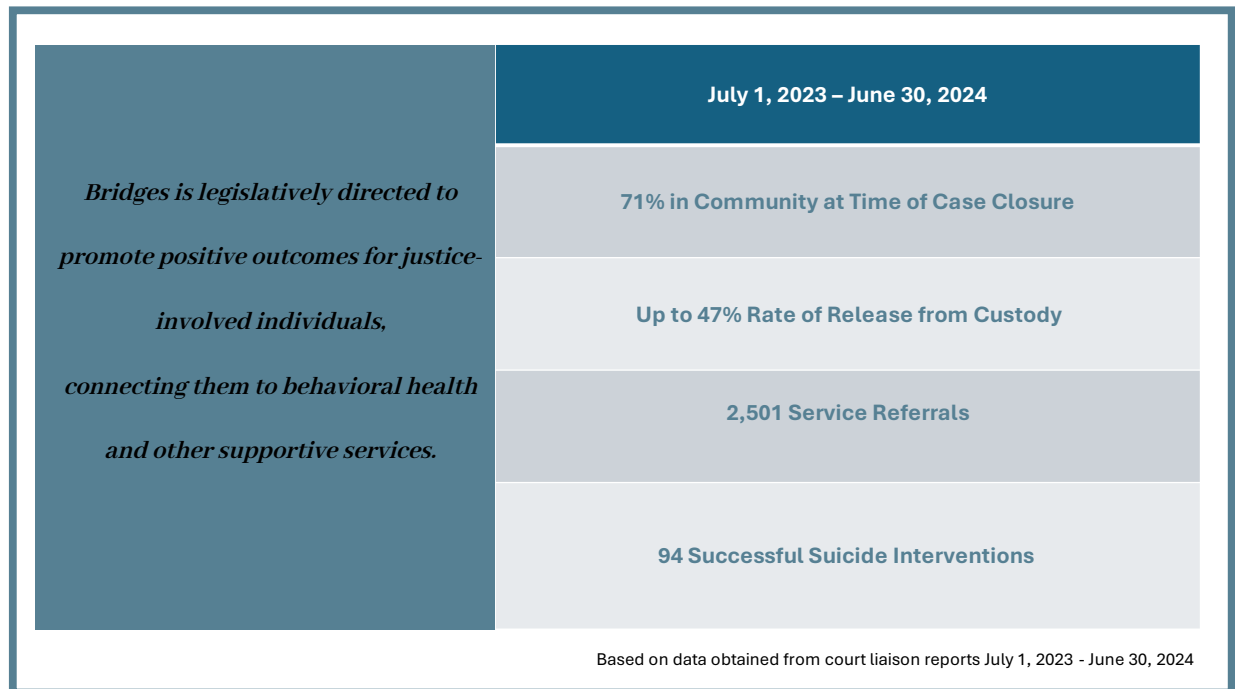
Finally, while the annual data represents new legal cases in the year, it is helpful to consider that there was a carryover of approximately 1,691 cases from FY23, which means that Bridges' team of 29 court liaisons served approximately 4,799 total legal cases in FY24.

FY24 will be the last fiscal year in which Bridges serves the state with 29 court liaisons. With a soon-to-be fully staffed team, Bridges is already on trend to serve 6,348 new legal cases and 2,700 new participants in FY25.

(See also Attachment C, *Bridges Liaisons and Participants by District*.)

Competency Cases

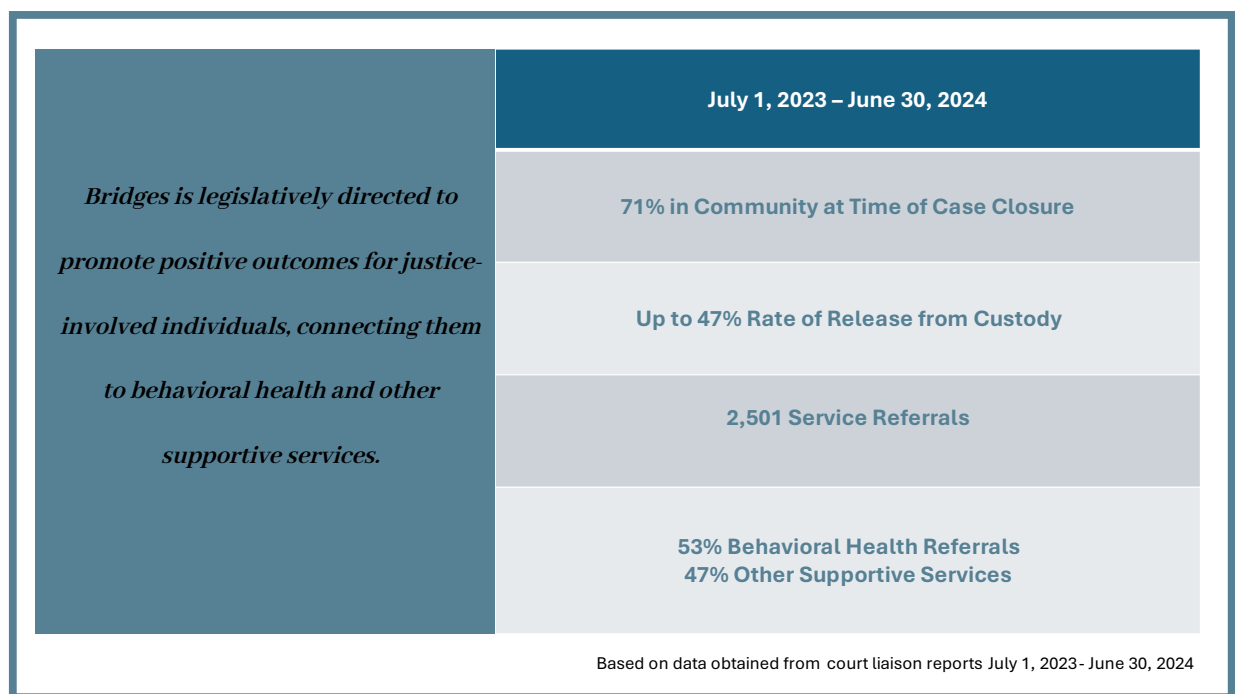
Of the 3,108 new legal cases, approximately 74% were competency-related, and the remaining 26% represent participants with significant behavioral and/or mental health challenges but for whom competency has not been raised. This data represents another significant shift where in the previous year, approximately 82% of cases were competency related. When Bridges can serve more individuals outside of competency, services act as early intervention, ideally deflecting participants from the competency system altogether.



Outcomes

In communicating with judges and attorneys, liaisons provided 17,118 reports, a 20% increase over the previous year, informing courts and attorneys of the participant's individual needs, available services, and related case planning. Among other things, these reports, along with court appearances, help inform the decision making regarding whether to release a defendant from custody, which is more likely if stability factors are addressed and supported.

Of the 1,758 participants entering the program in FY24, 55% were in custody and 45% were on bond in the community. This is another important shift reflected in the data. In previous years, the number of participants in or out of custody has been consistently 50% of each status. Not all participants who enter the program will close in the same fiscal year. For the 1,143 participants whose cases closed in FY24, 71% were in the community, and 29% remained in custody. Because of the shift in the starting data between years, it is challenging to identify a precise rate of release for those who remain in custody. However, it would range up to 47%, representing a 10% increase from the previous year. Combined, this data indicates both that fewer participants are initially held in custody, and, of those who do begin the program while in custody, a greater percentage are ultimately released.



With the support of their liaison, out-of-custody participants connected to approximately 2,501 community-based services, representing a 56% increase in referrals from the previous fiscal year. Of those referrals, 53% were to behavioral health services, and 47% were to other supportive services, such as housing, social support programs, and healthcare. Additionally, 53% of the participants served in FY24 qualified for or received Medicaid and 31% of participants required housing assistance.

While Bridges can attempt to analyze data and outcomes within its programming, it is important to note the significant shifts in data from the courts in FY24, such as initial custody status, total competency cases, ratio of legal cases per defendant, and percentage of appointments to competency or general mental health cases. Given the

court-based efforts to address the competency crisis through initiatives such as competency dockets and diversion programs, this year's shifts in data are likely reflective of larger system changes to address the disparities this population faces. A cross-systems analysis in future years would more accurately reflect collective impact on positive outcomes for Coloradans.

As illustrated in this data, the use of the program by judges and attorneys and the subsequent efforts of liaisons and participants positively impacts outcomes by moving individuals out of custody and into supported settings in the community. When liaisons support participants to engage with services, participants are more likely to attain stability, which also has the potential to positively impact community safety. It is also highly likely that stability in the community before final disposition leads to a higher probability for probation rather than incarceration at sentencing, and even dismissal in some cases. (A formal cross-agency evaluation would enable the program to formally assess these outcomes, including implications to community safety and cost savings.)

[Bridges involvement] has sometimes resulted in plea agreements that involve shorter jail sentences or community-based sentences focused on rehabilitation. Evidence-based research tells us that rehabilitative sentences result in lower levels of recidivism and in healthier and safer communities.

- *Judicial Officer*

The impact on a defendant's well-being when served in the community, rather than in custody, is often immediate and substantial. Individuals who are experiencing severe and persistent mental illness who are in custody experience rapid decompensation in their wellness. This decompensation can lead to hunger strikes, suicide attempts, and other behaviors that result in solitary confinement.¹ In addition, behaviors associated with decompensation often lead to additional charges, and solitary confinement leads to further decompensation of mental and physical health. These individuals also remain in jail longer than those without mental illness. In some states, reports show individuals with serious and persistent mental illness will spend more time waiting for competency restoration than they would spend incarcerated if convicted of the offenses for which they had been charged.²

Furthermore, suicide is the leading cause of death in correctional facilities, and multiple studies indicate as many as half of all inmate suicides are committed by the estimated 15% to 20% of inmates with serious mental illness. Nationwide, a tenth of local jails had at least one

¹ Suicide in Local Jails and State and Federal Prisons, 2000-2019 - Press Release, October 7, 2021, Bureau of Justice Statistics

² Suicide in Local Jails and State and Federal Prisons, 2000-2019 - Press Release, October 7, 2021, Bureau of Justice Statistics

suicide in 2019. Suicides accounted for 30% of deaths in local jails in 2019. Of those deaths, 75% were not convicted and awaiting adjudication of their charge. Of those who died, nearly half of suicides in jail occurred within seven days or less from the time they had been arrested.³

With these noteworthy statistics in mind, Bridges is positioned to make a tangible impact and continues to work toward mitigating this crisis for the individuals, families, communities, and systems affected. As the data shows, Bridges has had a significant impact with suicide intervention, mental health crises, and connecting participants to services in the community. Court Liaisons collaborated in 169 mental health crisis interventions, facilitated cross-agency responses that resulted in 94 successful suicide interventions (both in and out of custody), and made connections to 2,501 community-based services in the reporting year.

Anticipated Cost Benefits

Supporting participants successfully out of custody and into community-based services represents potentially significant cost avoidance across systems. The target population served by Bridges is most costly in terms of services provided in custody, in the competency evaluation and restoration process, and in terms of recidivism.

Creating alternative interventions, particularly those designed to address

long-term stability or divert individuals from these costly systems, can result in significant savings.

I want to extend my appreciation and gratitude for all that you do and all of your help ... I have a much better understanding of the restoration process ... and I owe much of this to you!

- Defense Counsel

Bridges' newly hired Data and Analysis Manager will be key in leading all aspects of our organization's program data tracking, monitoring and outcomes evaluation, to include a formal economic evaluation, planned over the next two-to-four years. This new position will enable Bridges to accurately assess the economic impact of the program by measuring cost avoidance for jails, hospitalizations, competency wait time fines, new crime arrests, new crime prosecution, and future court involvement, compared to alternative costs of community-based services.

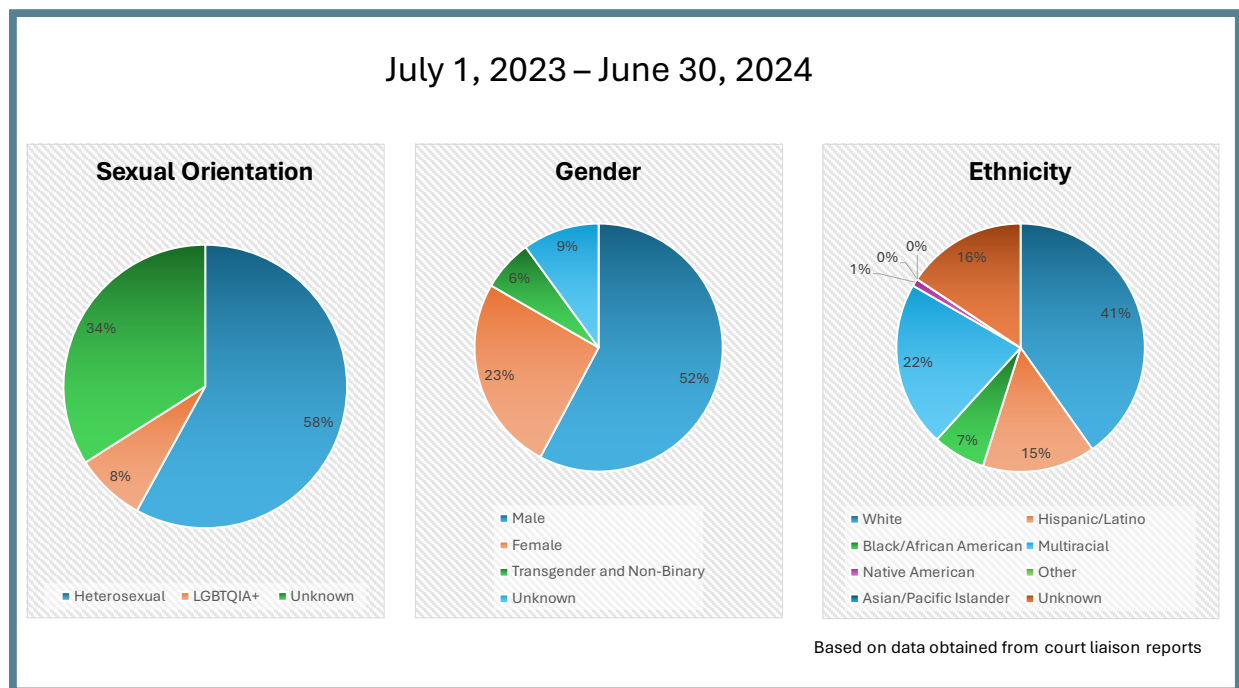
In the meantime, research regarding jail and hospital cost avoidance helps to paint a generalized picture of positive economic impact. According to the Colorado Department of Corrections, in FY22 it cost on average \$24,956 annually to jail one person in

³ Suicide in Local Jails and State and Federal Prisons, 2000-2019 - Press Release, October 7, 2021, Bureau of Justice Statistics

Colorado county jails (which breaks down to \$2,080 per month, \$480 per week, \$68 per day).⁴ In FY24, the number of individuals in the pretrial phase awaiting inpatient restoration in jail, ranged from 241-460 people and an average of 111 days per person.⁵ This does not include the additional time spent in custody prior to their order for restoration services. For each Bridges participant who is released from custody, there is a jail cost avoidance of \$68/day, compared to an average Bridges cost in FY24 of \$5/day. Using this data, each participant released from custody to Bridges services represents an average cost savings of \$6,993.

Regarding hospitalizations, a 2015 study of healthcare usage in Arapahoe County showed that, “Out of 100 frequently incarcerated individuals selected from 2015, 55 visited Colorado hospitals that year. Those 55 individuals accounted for 419 emergency department visits, 55 inpatient days, 21 other outpatient visits, and an estimated \$1.4 million in total health care costs.”⁶ While there are numerous variables to be accounted for to create an estimate of cost avoidance for hospitalizations with Bridges, these numbers point to potential cost benefits of millions of dollars.

Demographics



⁴ Colorado Department of Corrections. (2021) retrieved on 10/24/24 from <https://spl.cde.state.co.us/artemis/crserials/cr132internet/cr13220202122internet.pdf>

⁵ Colorado Department of Human Services (2023) retrieved on 10/24/24 from <https://cdhs.colorado.gov/ocfmh-data-dashboard>.

⁶ Mannerings, A., Spanier, T. and Enright, K; Healthcare Usage Report: A Collaboration Between Colorado Hospital Association and Arapahoe County Criminal Justice Planning Office, 2017.

Bridges collects demographics through court liaison collected data and depends on participants self-reporting demographic information. With the implementation of the new case management system, Bridges hopes to strengthen the collection and reporting of this information.

Of the participants self-reporting demographic data, 45% identify as people of color (see below for specific ethnicity breakdown), multiracial, or other, 41% as white, and 14% of the data reported is listed as unknown. Approximately 52% of participants are male, 23% female, 3% transgender, 3% non-binary, and 19% unknown. Participants identify as 58% heterosexual and 8% LGBTQ+, and 34% are unknown.

Demographic data regarding ethnicity and gender was not provided by Judicial for FY24 in order to support a comparative analysis. Ultimately, a robust evaluation design across provider agencies, the Judicial Department, the Office of Civil and Forensic Mental Health, jails, and law enforcement agencies is necessary. This effort would allow Bridges to identify data-driven information that highlights ways the program can better address disparities and promote equitable outcomes across these multiple systems.

The program's shape has been a work in progress, with many obstacles, requiring devotion to the goals to make it work.

You've made it work.

- Defense Counsel

PARTICIPANT STORY

Former Participant Returns to Bridges as Advisor

It's come full circle for one Bridges participant.

They not only dedicated themselves to turning their life around, but they also became the first former participant to formally lend their expertise to the office that they credit with saving their life.

It's been a journey punctuated by remarkable determination.

In and out of custody, this participant struggled with substance use "and one trauma after another" that got them ensnared in the criminal justice system. During the darkest moment of their life, they spent over 400 days incarcerated between 2021 and 2022 awaiting competency services.

"I was really kind of stuck ... and then I got to meet the two ladies from Bridges who started working with me, and it saved my life," they said.

When Bridges was appointed by the court, the seismic shift started in the participant's life.

"Bridges was my hope in the biggest despairing part of my life," they said. "They became that hope when I had lost all hope."

The participant recalls how Bridges' court liaisons refused to give up on them, facilitating connections to transportation and

Without Bridges, I wouldn't be where I'm at. I don't know how to say that loudly enough.

-Participant

benefits, working with them to help them be restored to competency and showing humanity along the way.

The liaisons worked with the participant to get them placed in a recovery program, instilling confidence that they could complete the 110-day program and rebuild their life.

And that happened - in spades.

The participant landed a job, secured their own place, returned to college on scholarship making the dean's list, and was reunited with their son, who now lives with them after 13 years of separation. They were recognized by their college in May with a substance abuse certification achievement award. They're on track to earn their associate's degree in spring 2026, with certifications in behavioral health and addiction.

After earning state certification as a peer and recovery specialist, the participant is a full-time coach for clients in recovery at a sober living home like the one they resided in.

They also work at a counseling and wellness center and stay active in their own recovery. They volunteer extensively.

After receiving life-saving treatment for a medical condition last year, they changed their diet and started working out.

"I feel healthy again," they said.

This fall, the participant joined Bridges as a volunteer to offer their insights to support and enhance Bridges' programming, reflecting Bridges' value of "nothing about us without us."

"I never want to think that there's someone out there that doesn't know there's support," they said.

"There's a way to get our dignity back. Whether we have addictions or mental health issues, we're still human beings and our lives matter.

"Without Bridges, I wouldn't be where I'm at. I don't know how to say that loud enough."

ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND NEW OFFICE UPDATES

Throughout a year of substantive and rapid growth, Bridges court liaisons remained focused on their engagement with participants, addressing barriers to services, and keeping courts and attorneys informed. Parallel to their efforts, the Bridges leadership team has been involved in the work of expanding the Office by engaging in thoughtful and effective recruiting and training strategies and building up the administrative infrastructure required to fully step into its new status as an independent office.

Legislation also passed in the 2024 season adding two new programs to the Office: a psychological assessment team and the wraparound care program to serve competency diversion efforts. The transition has provided the opportunity to lean into the values of the program and to lay important groundwork for continued and sustainable growth. Highlights of transition efforts follow:

Hiring

As FY24 came to a close, Bridges was finalizing a year of hiring efforts, ultimately bringing the Office from 29 to 77 court liaisons, as well as 12 regional managers, and 10 members of the administrative team (a total of 99 FTE). To ensure the development of a

I would like to say how much I appreciate the ongoing conversations regarding how we show up for each other, our participants and ourselves, and how we maintain a positive culture. Thank you for recognizing how important this is. I am constantly wowed by how open and welcoming everyone has been. I feel like I have found my tribe.

- Court Liaison

sustainable and highly competent workforce, Bridges partnered with human resources contractors who provided expertise and guidance in the creation of 15 unique job descriptions, a compensation strategy (see Attachment E, *Bridges Compensation Strategy*), a third-party compensation analysis for all positions (see Attachment F, *Bridges Compensation Plan*), and a comprehensive recruitment campaign.

Hiring results were highly successful, with more than 1,100 individuals applying for positions with Bridges. Additionally, Bridges' hiring efforts focus on recruitment

strategies to reduce disparities in equitable workforce representation. Currently, Bridges' workforce comprises 14% of individuals who identify as men and 86% who identify as

women. Race and ethnicity workforce representation is closely representative of the total population of Colorado, with 62% of employees self-reporting as white and 38% as people of color, specifically 16% Hispanic or Latino, 10% Black or African American, 6% Two or More Races, 3% Native American, and 3% Asian. Equitable representation is also present among leadership, which comprises 62% employees reporting as white and 38% as people of color.

New Programs Created through Legislation

Bridges will continue to grow with the passage of new legislation bringing even more service professionals to serve judicial districts throughout the state. By the end of FY26, the team will grow to almost 100 direct service providers, including court liaisons, wraparound care coordinators, and psychologists, with a capacity to serve upwards of 9,000 participants annually.

In total, districts will experience an average threefold increase over three years in the number of Bridges professionals dedicated to their district. Allocation of professional resources is determined through an analysis of geographic considerations, level of district engagement with Bridges, and number of competency cases in the district.

I appreciate our [Court Liaison] because she is an effective communicator and works hard for her clients, but also can listen and offer suggestions for scenarios discussed in our team meetings.

- Forensic Support Team Member

New programs created in FY24 by the General Assembly include:

Wraparound Care Program

As part of ongoing and collaborative efforts to reduce the competency waitlist, [House Bill 24-1355](#) established a community-based alternative to competency proceedings for individuals who are likely to be found incompetent to proceed and are instead redirected to Bridges. The legislation establishes a new Wraparound Care Program within Bridges to work with referred participants whose cases would be dismissed within six to nine months upon successful engagement with an individualized care plan. The program will be phased in three waves starting April 1, 2025, with all districts participating by July 1, 2026.

Psychological Services Assessment Team

Bridges will add a team of six psychologists and neuropsychologists to the office. This team will conduct a range of diagnostic assessments evaluating cognitive and functional abilities for participants who indicate need in this area. These assessments are not

intended to replace competency evaluations and will instead focus holistically on information to assist Bridges court liaisons in the early identification of participant need, inform appropriate levels of care and intervention, and expedite access to individualized services and benefits.

Information shared with the courts may ultimately help to increase opportunities for deflection from competency or release from custody, with the goals to increase connections to appropriate community-based services and reduce the amount of time spent in the criminal justice system. This program is scheduled to begin in late 2024.

Enhancing Service to Participants and Courts

Model of Care

The first program of its kind in the nation, Bridges has made headway on its commitment to advancing its own model of care individualized to the target population. Bridges' leadership team has made substantial progress in developing a robust training curriculum, informed by behavioral health best practices and evidence-based treatment models, aimed at enhancing both the onboarding of new liaisons and the ongoing professional development of team members. Educational focus has been on equipping staff with the skills and knowledge necessary to provide exceptional and consistent care statewide for participants.

I believe the court liaison positions are an integral part of getting patients the help they need and deserve! Thank you for all your hard work to make this possible!

- Community Service Provider

A key component of this effort has been collaboration with Metro State University to develop a solution-focused case management curriculum that will be delivered to all staff in 2025. This partnership underscores the Office's dedication to integrating academic expertise into training programs, ensuring that practices are informed by the latest research and theoretical frameworks. Bridges has also engaged in early planning and collaboration with experts in the fields of juvenile care, intellectual and developmental disabilities, and traumatic brain injuries. These subsets of Bridges' participant population require a dedicated approach, including early identification. Forming partnerships with these professionals and service organizations is essential for informing models of best practices.

In addition, Bridges has developed a comprehensive clinical supervision model that is based on empirical research as well as ethical guidelines established by professional organizations to enhance service delivery and staff support. The Office has initiated

strategic planning for a continuing education track specifically designed for Bridges staff. This initiative aims to provide the team with opportunities to deepen their expertise and stay at the forefront of evidence-based practices in the fields of behavioral health and criminal justice. Overall, Bridges' focus on creating a theoretical framework for our unique approach to care has been instrumental in driving our mission forward, ensuring that Bridges not only meets but exceeds the evolving needs of the communities it serves.

Collaboration With and Service to the Courts

As Bridges has expanded, it has been critical to program integrity and fidelity that all court liaisons are directly employed. This shift has enabled leadership to train liaisons across the state with a consistent and streamlined approach. The benefits to courts are that court liaisons are entering their districts with a strong foundation in their training, a deep understanding of the overall program model, and robust oversight and support from their regional managers. While Bridges will always strive to provide individualized support to districts and will remain flexible in meeting their unique needs, it is important that the fundamentals of the program remain consistent across the state and this change has greatly strengthened Bridges' ability to ensure that consistency.

As part of its focus on locally relevant service, Bridges created the new role of regional manager, hiring 12 qualified individuals assigned to different strategic regions across the state. Each regional manager is charged with supervising liaisons serving their districts, creating and enhancing relationships with local court customers, and increasing collaborative partnerships with community partners.

Regional managers provide hands-on training and ongoing support as liaisons carry out their work with participants. Importantly, regional managers are also responsible for interfacing with the court executives and judicial officers in their districts, focusing on getting to know the unique needs of the districts. This structural change is allowing Bridges to get to know the districts in a more meaningful way than has been possible prior to expansion. As regional managers work with presiding judicial officers on staffing liaisons in their courtrooms and competency dockets, the resulting collaboration is allowing for more streamlined organization of dockets, with participants receiving more meaningful and effective court-based responses.

I plan to express to [the judge] how much your support helped [the participant] make a successful transition. Thanks for everything you do for defendants with mental health challenges.

- Participant Family Member

Without you and so many others' help, I don't think we would have had the same outcome, so
THANK YOU!!!

-Participant Family Member

Some direct results of the collaboration between regional managers and their districts are reductions and elimination of waitlists, earlier identification of appropriate participants, and expanded usage of general mental health orders of appointment.

Regional managers have also conducted comprehensive audits of liaison caseloads resulting in appropriate cases being closed and allowing for an increase in new overall appointments.

Regional managers are also invested in developing good working relationships with the Office of Civil and Forensic Mental Health and have collaborated with Forensic Support Team navigators across the state to better support one another's roles. Overall, regional managers are working to increase Bridges' engagement with court and community partners in ways that provide high quality customer service to the courts and enhanced service provision to our participants.

Diversity of Staff Expertise

Bridges serves a broad range of participants statewide who benefit most when care is individualized to their unique needs. Bridges has intentionally hired and trained to bring multiple skills and types of expertise to support participant needs. To that end, regional managers are either licensed clinicians or carry a specialty in the areas of competency, intellectual disability, juveniles and families, benefits, guardianship and civil commitment, or housing and transitions. Across the entire team, 15% of staff are bilingual, 13% have clinical licensure, and 2% are licensed attorneys. Multiple team members also come to Bridges with lived experience.

Participant Services Fund

Bridges implemented a policy and application process for use of the participant services fund, which was not allocated until July 1, 2024. The fund has launched as of the writing of this report and is providing necessary resources to address gaps in funding for individuals transitioning from the criminal justice system to community-based services and settings. To date, Bridges has provided assistance to individuals around the state for transitional housing, transportation, mobile phones, and other basic necessities as a bridge until other public benefits can be acquired.

Quality and Continuity of Care through Education

Bridges is committed to offering the highest quality of service to participants and courts. As such, the Office has expanded ongoing educational and professional development

opportunities. This includes a comprehensive, six-month Bridges University for newly hired liaisons. The coming year will see the introduction of webinars and in-person educational opportunities for courts and attorneys and publications on best practices for various community partners.

Throughout the past fiscal year, the leadership team engaged in planning and development of organizational-wide education which aims to provide each employee with intimate knowledge of the needs of participants and the work of court liaisons. New employee education is required for all staff members to complete, regardless of their proximity to

Our Bridges liaison program has a fantastic point person, and she is killing it in terms of mental health and recovery services pre-disposition.

-District Attorney

direct service. Onboarding consists of four weeks of training, which is designed to give staff a working knowledge of the court liaison role and the expectations to that role. Leadership staff engage in train-the-trainer opportunities to strengthen the knowledge base statewide and promote consistency in service delivery.

Cross-Agency Collaborations

Bridges values are embodied through cross-agency partnership efforts. Team members have engaged in discussion and information sharing with community resources such as El Grupo Vida, Wounded Healer Project, Mad Moms and National Alliance on Mental Illness to better understand resources available around the state to meet the unique needs of participants. Additionally, Bridges engages with existing and prospective providers of the Fines Committee, such as Valor and Ava Health, who are seeking to learn more about the gaps and needs that exist throughout the state for people with complex behavioral health needs. These partnerships aid in systemic cooperation and collaboration and directly aid participants to access the support and services necessary to meet behavioral health and other needs.

Medicaid Enrollment and Benefit Access Efficiencies Pilot

The disruption regarding Medicaid benefits that many participants experience when they enter the jail setting is often a significant barrier to getting care resumed upon release from custody. As a remedial effort to increase Medicaid enrollment efficiencies and access to benefits, Bridges is actively partnering with a local regional accountability entity (RAE) in a pilot judicial district to co-lead a collaborative effort with other community partners. The goal of the pilot is to engage in formal and close partnerships to ensure Medicaid benefit enrollment history is known early on, that participant eligibility or re-eligibility is determined prior to release from jail, and that there is a solution to activate participants full Medicaid benefits promptly upon release from jail.

[The liaison] went “above and beyond” to make the difference. I am appreciative.

- *Participant*

Ensuring that full Medicaid benefits are active upon release is crucial for participants to access community services such as behavioral health medication, therapy, and physical health care.

Bridges is hopeful that this pilot is a collaborative model that may be replicated around the state to increase systemic efficiencies and cross-agency collaborations for all Coloradans.

National Consultation

Bridges has been recognized by National Center for State Courts, the Council on State Governments, and the Department of Justice as a promising practice and has subsequently been sought after in the past year for presentations or consultations at the national level with State of Wisconsin, National Arc, State of Oregon, State of Illinois, State of Idaho, CU Psychiatry, State of New Mexico, Center for Children and Family Futures, State of Mississippi, State of Arizona, and the Crime and Justice Institute.

Commission and Advisory Councils

Bridges is first and foremost a collaborative program design, informed by its two primary client groups: participants and Judicial Officers. As an independent office, Bridges has been able to elevate the voice of its clients and community partners in the following ways:

- **Bridges Commission** - the Commission was established by SB23-229 and meets quarterly. The 11-member Commission, led by Chair Hasan Latif of the Second Chance Center and Vice Chair Julie Reiskin of the Colorado Cross Disabilities Coalition, includes two individuals with lived experience, representatives from five state agencies, representatives from three client advocacy/service organizations, and one elected sheriff. The Commission comprises 27% people of color and 73% people who are white; 55% men and 45% women; one individual with a physical disability, and one member of the LGBTQ community. Commissioners live or work in Eagle, Larimer, and Pueblo Counties and the Denver metro area. The work of the Commission in the first year has been focused on establishing Commission bylaws, policies, and contributions to budget and strategic planning processes.
- **Lived Experience Advisory Council** - In the past year, the Council expanded to an 11-member council, comprising seven individuals with lived experience and four family members whose adult children are or were involved in the justice and competency systems. These council members bring diverse perspectives, needs and experiences to Bridges and our stakeholders through monthly meetings, panel presentations, and the development of educational materials. The wisdom and advice shared by the council have contributed directly to Bridges' strategic plan, ongoing program development, and

staff recruitment efforts. Members have participated in panel presentations, served on interview panels for new employees, and consulted on development of Bridges' strategic plan.

- **Judicial Advisory Council** - Bridges was initially guided by a steering committee that included participation by multiple judges statewide. To strengthen and maintain this partnership with the Courts, a Judicial Advisory Council is being created to ensure the voice of the bench is at the forefront of our development. The Judicial Advisory Council is finalizing its full slate of members and will convene quarterly with additional workgroup sessions scheduled as needed. The council has confirmed members from both rural and metro areas, as well as a Justice from the Colorado Supreme Court.
- **Court Liaison Advisory Council** - Bridges values the wisdom and expertise of those directly delivering services. In alignment with the values of the Office, the liaison advisory council advises Bridges' leadership and brings the voices of court liaisons and participants to the forefront. The Court Liaison Advisory Council comprises representatives from every region in the state. Bridges' leadership has taken a step back and turned over the leadership of the Court Liaison Advisory Council to our staff. In doing so, this group has evolved to not only provide the program what is mentioned above, but it also provides leadership development opportunity to its members.

Operational Infrastructure

The Bridges leadership team spent the past fiscal year implementing the operational infrastructure necessary to support its growth and functioning as an independent office, including:

Case Management System

Bridges executed a third-party contract to implement a comprehensive case management system called Data Information Management System (DIMS). During FY24, Bridges collaborated with the vendor to create comprehensive intake, active case management and closure (discharge) sections within DIMS to build a robust and client-centered case management system. The database was fully implemented in all 22 Judicial Districts on September 1, 2024. In addition to the case management components, DIMS has easily accessible report capabilities and will enhance both the continuity of services to participants and reports to courts, attorneys and other stakeholders.

I have been seeing firsthand how much differently people do with the help of an advocate ... You make a huge difference in our community.

- Community Service Provider

Learning Management System

Additionally, Briges has built a learning management system (LMS) with a preloaded library of over 5,000 trainings addressing topics from anti-harassment training to 5-minute meditations and wellness. Through the LMS, hybrid trainings, and the Bridges University, each employee has a designated professional development track based on job class. These tracks contain standard trainings which are an expectation of every staff and additional trainings required for each job classification. This internal investment not only provides education and training, but also enables staff to grow while minimizing fiscal resources invested in external trainings.

The Arc Pikes Peak Region
recognized a Bridges court liaison
as the recipient of their 2024
annual award for outstanding work
in the community.

Communications

During the year, Bridges' communications efforts focused on priorities to enhance the intranet and internet websites, stand up a new employee newsletter, provide research-backed presentation tips to staff, and create a style guide that aligns with Bridges mission, vision, and values. The office also fielded media inquiries and facilitated interviews that resulted in positive coverage of Bridges programming. With this foundation in place, the office will prioritize developing communication templates for staff to use, storytelling with a particular focus on participants and their success stories, and a website overhaul that will be more robust and comprehensive in scope to better serve Bridges audiences.

Information Technology

The Office is contracted with a third-party organization to provide managed IT services. Through the support of this partner, the Office has purchased hardware for new hires over the next year; completed transition of data from the State Court Administrator's Office (SCAO); implemented software and configuration solutions to meet the business needs of the organization; and established the bridgesofcolorado.gov domain.

Payroll, Finance, and Budget

Bridges continues to be supported by SCAO for fiscal processes, including payroll, accounts payable, reimbursements, and budgeting. This support will continue until the transition to Administrative Support for Independent Agencies (ASIA) for similar services.

Direct Employment

All Bridges positions were brought in-house, which included 24 court liaisons previously provided through nine contracts with community partners.

Onboarding and Employee Benefits

The Office took on all onboarding and benefits processes internally and is no longer relying on support from SCAO for onboarding tasks like I9's, benefits and payroll presentations, and processing of FMLA and other leave events.

Office Space

Bridges moved into temporary office space in July 2024 and is working with SCAO regarding possible tenancy at Ralph Carr Judicial Center.

I cannot tell you enough how much we appreciate your continued advocacy.

You are truly a shining light in this system.

- Family of Participant

SUMMARY

Bridges is moving forward in dynamic and impactful ways and anticipates increasingly more success with expanded programming supported by HB 24-1355, HB 24-1034, and specific Long Bill appropriations. The program was born out of innovation, creativity and urgent need and its continued development seeks to maintain that original spirit and focus. Our mission, vision and values give us a solid structure from which to build and continually guide us as we make decisions, navigate complicated systems, and strive to grow in sustainable ways.

With our guiding vision that “all individuals within the criminal justice system are treated fairly and humanely, regardless of their mental health and/or behavioral health challenges,” we have established a culture of advocating for our participants with integrity and humanity.

We look to our mission “to promote positive outcomes for Coloradans living with mental and/or behavioral health challenges who encounter criminal justice involvement by fostering collaboration between both systems” to remind us of the importance of being leaders in the areas of collaboration and alliance building. Bridges strives to be a model of cross-system cooperation and to foster goodwill and respect among partners,

Our values drive everything we do. We are person-centered, solution-focused, and collaborative. These values distill our vision and mission into tangible principles which are straightforward yet hardly simple. By approaching our work being person-centered, we remember to put people first: our participants, our court-related and other partners, and each other. We return to our solution-focused intention to keep us moving through difficult situations with an eye toward problem solving. We start and end with collaboration, seeking to engage our participants precisely where they are and to ultimately help them achieve greater agency for themselves by working in collaboration with them. We endeavor to improve and streamline collaboration with existing and new partners across the criminal justice and behavioral health spectrum and recognize with humility that we cannot achieve any of our objectives without effective collaboration.

As evidenced in the data and narrative information outlined in this report, Bridges has a demonstrated record of improving outcomes for participants and for keeping courts and attorneys informed. We achieve this through successfully facilitating collaboration between the two complex systems of criminal justice and behavioral health. Bridges looks to the future with determination and enthusiasm and plans to use further evaluations and the development of resources to continue to improve the services we provide.

Bridges of Colorado

Connecting Colorado's Criminal Justice and Mental Health Systems

Vision

All individuals within the criminal justice system are treated fairly and humanely, regardless of their mental health and/or behavioral health challenges.

Mission

To promote positive outcomes for Coloradans living with mental and/or behavioral health challenges who encounter criminal justice involvement by fostering collaboration between both systems.

Values

We approach our work grounded in the following three values:

Person Centered. Solution Focused. Collaborative.

How We Live Our Vision, Mission, and Values

We connect to resources. We amplify voices. We shed light on situations.

We inform decision making. We offer our support. We speak up.

We provide education. We embrace equity.

What *Person Centered* Looks Like in Bridges

- Caring for the value, worth, and dignity of the participant
- Recognizing participants as experts in their own lives
- Meeting the participant “where they’re at”
- Building trust and rapport
- Addressing the whole needs of the participant
- Providing Service That Is:
 - Individualized
 - Culturally Responsive
 - Trauma Informed
 - Strengths Based
 - Empowering
 - Harm Reducing
 - Stigma Reducing
 - Non-Judgmental
 - Empathetic and Compassionate
 - Transparent
 - Educational

What *Solution Focused* Looks Like in Bridges

- Identifying effective solutions for courts, participants, and providers
- Focusing on services that support the health and well-being of participants
- Advocating for the highest quality, most appropriate resources
- Addressing the social determinants of health and other long-term solutions
- Finding individual and community solutions that increase stability and reduce barriers
- Providing service that is:
 - Resourceful
 - Creative and Flexible
 - Individualized
 - Transparent
 - Neutral and Unbiased

What *Collaborative* Looks Like in Bridges

- Navigating complex systems involvement with participants
- Acting as boundary spanners across multiple systems and organizations
- Exhibiting fluency across criminal justice and behavioral health systems
- Supporting systems accountability through partnership, communication, and transparency
- Facilitating integrated and wrap around care
- Providing service that is:
 - Responsive to multiple systems, organizations, and individuals
 - Transparent
 - Agile
 - Educational
 - Open-Minded

LOGIC MODEL



Bridges of Colorado Liaisons & Participants by Districts (as of 6/30/24)

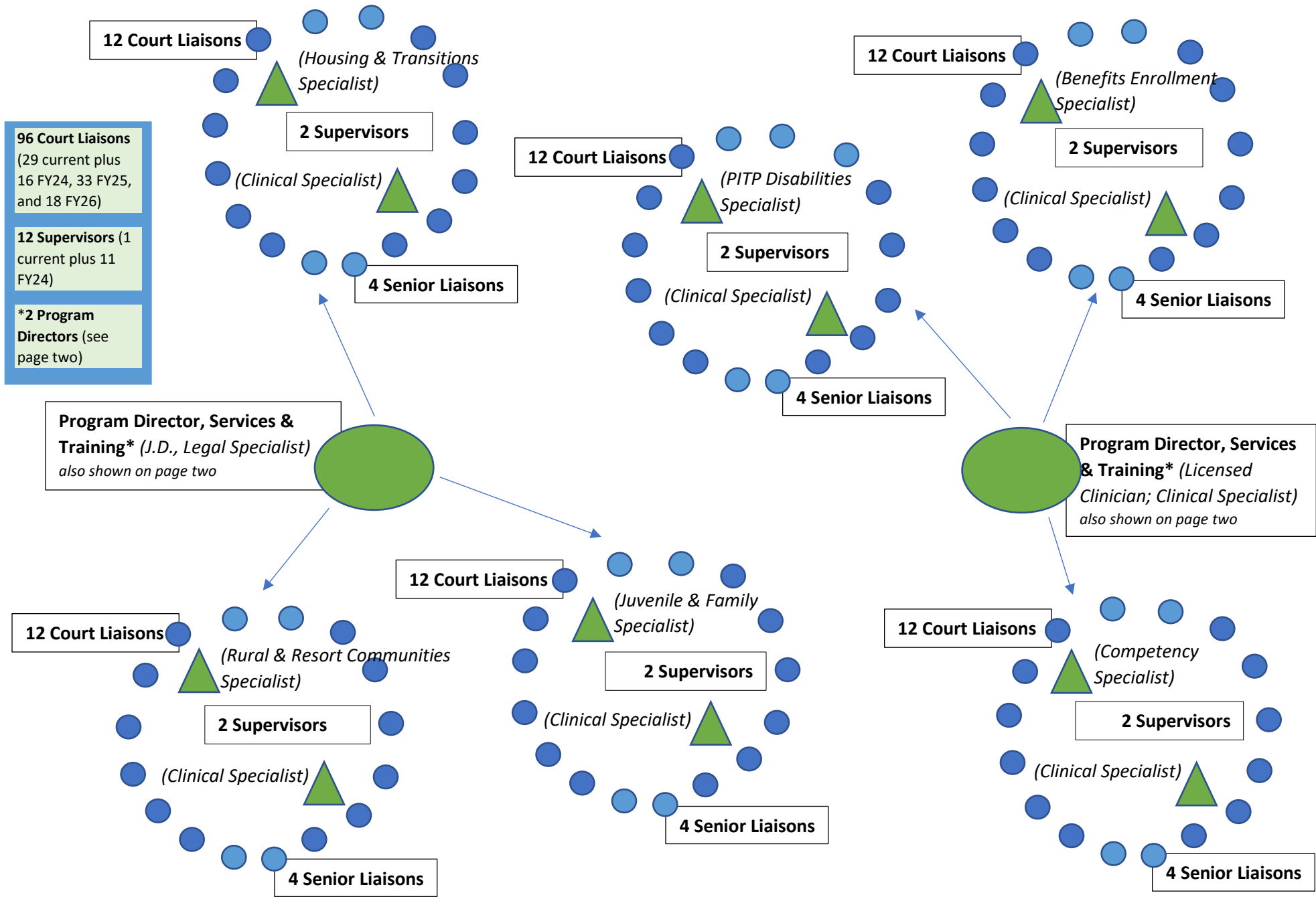
Judicial District	Counties Served	Employing Agency	# of Liaisons	# Current Participants*
1st & 5th (Clear Creek)	Gilpin, Jefferson, Clear Creek (5th JD)	Behavioral Treatment Services	2	14+5= 19
2nd	Denver	WellPower	2	120
3rd	Herfano, Las Animas	Health Solutions/Judicial Department	1	18
4th & 11th (Park)	El Paso, Teller, Park (11th JD)	Behavioral Treatment Services	2	65+0= 65
5th	Eagle, Summit	Judicial Department	1	48
6th & 22nd	Archuleta, La Plata, San Juan, Dolores, Montezuma	Judicial Department	1	13+33= 46
7th	Delta, Gunnison, Hinsdale, Montrose, Ouray, San Miguel)	Judicial Department	1	27
8th	Larimer	Larimer County Criminal Justice Services	1	39
9th	Garfield, Pitkin, Rio Blanco	Judicial Department	1	46
10th	Pubelo	Judicial Department	1	51
11th	Chaffee, Custer, Fremont, Lake (5th JD)	Solvista Health	1	44**
12th	Alamosa, Conejos, Costilla, Mineral, Rio Grande, Saguache	San Luis Valley Behavioral Health Group	1	29
13th	Kit Carson, Logan, Morgan, Phillips, Sedgwick, Washington, Yuma	Centennial Mental Health Center	1	64
14th	Grand, Moffat, Routt, Jackson	Judicial Department	1	32
15th & 16th	Baca, Cheyenne, Kiowa, Prowers, Bent, Crowley, Otero	Judicial Department	1	8+36= 44***
17th	Adams, Broomfield	Behavioral Treatment Services	1	5
18th	Arapahoe, Douglas, Elbert, Lincoln	All Health Network	2	83
19th	Weld	North Range Behavioral Health	2	87
20th	Boulder	Boulder County Criminal Justice Services	3	56
21st	Mesa	Judicial Department	1	60
Totals			27	983

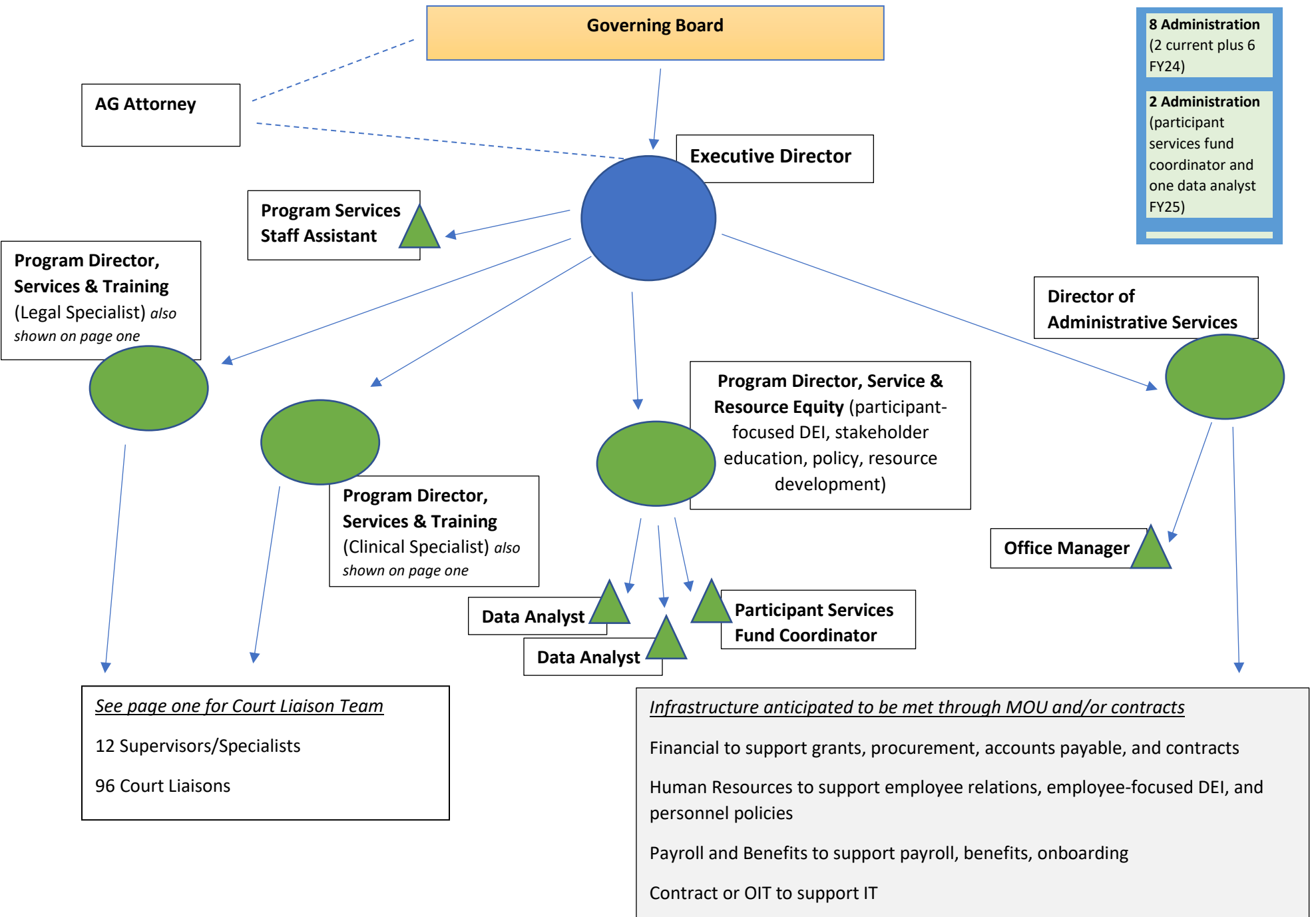
*Data based on available Liaison reports

**Last Reported May 2024

***Last Reported February 2024

Bridges Program Recommended Organizational Structure







Bridges of Colorado

Connecting Colorado's Criminal Justice and Mental Health Systems

Our Total Rewards Philosophy

"I just wanted to tell you about some amazing work that [Court Liaison] did on a case for a young man with considerable medical, cognitive and psychological issues. It is nothing short of miraculous and life changing. [Court Liaison] only got on this case a couple weeks ago. I asked for her to be appointed knowing this client would just go on her waiting list but because of the acuity of his situation, she moved him off of her waiting list. She then somehow succeeded in less than two weeks in getting this client placed from the jail at an acute in-patient health care facility—something about ten other professionals (including myself) had not been able to do in the past several months as this client remained in jail w/o the level of skilled nursing he needs. [Court Liaison] cut through loads of red tape so creatively, gracefully and diplomatically. She figured out long term Medicaid, momentum funding, guardianship, placement, transportation, bonds and then made a few (very neutral) nudges towards dismissal. [Court Liaison's] work on this case (and many others) is outstanding. Please give her a raise."

~local district public defender, September 2023

Bridges of Colorado was established as a judicial program, 'The Bridges Program,' to facilitate collaboration between the judicial system and mental health system. Through critical guidance to attorneys and judges, and representation to an underserved population, the Bridges Program has resulted in bringing services and support to thousands of individuals a year and a **35% release rate** of those who were in custody.

This impact has been the catalyst for growth and a demonstration of delivering on our values. We want to share these with you.

We Deliver high-quality and effective care to participants, including engaging in community-based advocacy and problem solving for that care.

We Provide responsive and neutral delivery of both *high levels of expertise and feasible and impactful problem solving to judges and attorneys.*

We Serve the entire state of Colorado.

We Provide subject matter expertise across two complex fields (behavioral health and criminal justice), serving and collaborating with professionals in those fields who are required to have advanced education, licensure, and continuing education.

We Translate across the two fields so that professionals in both fields are able to successfully collaborate and problem solve.



We Succeed in collaborating and problem-solving with community partners and providers that have significantly differing mandates.

We Mitigate risk across the two fields and related organizations.

Looking forward, our focus is on the...

Establishment of Bridges as a statewide neutral authority on the **needs of and best practices for the target population across the two fields.**

Recognition of Bridges' **systemic change role at a local, regional, and statewide level** through providing judge, attorney, and community partner education; **promoting and advocating for positive outcomes for the target population;** and facilitating/participating in the development of **community-based resources and systemic solutions.**

Recognition of Bridges' role as a nationwide promising practice (named as such by National Center for State Courts) and **first program of its kind in the nation,** underscoring both the necessity to develop, implement, and **evolve a unique program model and its national leadership role in development of similar models.**

To be named an “Employer of Choice” in Colorado through **equitable hiring, management,** and retention practices, promoting professional development and **offering competitive pay and benefits;** the result being a **sustainable, highly trained, and competent workforce.**

Total Rewards Philosophy

We understand the value of our team members and the practical realities of providing mental health and criminal justice system related services. **Our focus is not only on the well-being and success of our clients, but also that of our team.** As a historically underpaid industry, we recognize the need for sustainable, competitive pay and benefits. Our ‘time off’ plan was created to protect the mental and physical well-being of our team members and ensure work life balance. We intend to actively address this need while providing equitable compensation to all of our team members. **We want to develop Experts in their field and give them room to grow.**

Bridges of Colorado’s Total Rewards Philosophy is driven by...

Our Competitive Pay is based on third-party compensation analysis for governmental/non-profit organizations. We are competitive with the Denver market and State of Colorado Judicial and Behavioral Health positions. Our analysis of the market related to the uniqueness of the Office and roles of the employees, especially with a necessity to carry expertise in two complex fields, work with participants with high mental health acuity, serve as court-appointed experts, mitigate risk in both settings, engage high levels of creative problem-solving, and develop, implement, and evolve a nationally unique program model.

Our Value of Equity through intentionally meeting living wage guidelines and standards and by addressing the historically disparate compensation of “helping” professionals. We demonstrate



our value of equity through alignment with the Colorado Equal Pay for Equal Work Act and our unique structure that values equity across the organization.

Our Comprehensive Benefits meet or exceed standards within the behavioral health field. In addition to the competitive Judicial Branch offerings below, Bridges of Colorado will soon be offering many unique benefits focused on improving the lives of our employees and their families.

- Health & Dental Insurance
- Basic Life & AD&D, and Short-term Disability Insurance Paid by the State
- Long-term Disability and Optional Life Insurance
- Flexible Spending & Health Savings Accounts
- Several Retirement (and supplemental) Offerings
- Colorado State Employees' Credit Union and Employee Discount Program
- Generous Paid Time Off, Eleven Paid Holidays and Extended Sick Leave
- Worker's Compensation
- Colorado State Employee's Assistance Plan

For full details visit: <http://www.colorado.gov/dpa/dhr/benefits>.

Our Career Development focus. When you succeed and grow, we succeed and grow, and our clients reap the benefit. We provide an allowance for professional development for each our team members, offer formal and informal professional development programs and no-cost clinical supervision to meet educational and licensure requirements.



Bridges of Colorado

2023 Compensation Study

Study Methodology Report

Prepared: October 2023

Prepared by

Jennifer Olson

Compensation Consulting Services

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Introduction

Bridges of Colorado asked Employers Council consultant, Jennifer Olson, to develop a compensation philosophy, conduct a salary survey market analysis of all current and newly developed jobs in their organization, develop 2023 salary ranges based on the market data collected, and compare current salary ranges with the new pay structure. This report presents the methodology we follow when designing and reviewing compensation systems. Highlights of this process are included below.

Review Strategy and Philosophy

Bridges of Colorado is newly separated from the state Judicial District and was in need of a defined compensation philosophy and compensation structure for their independent organization. Previously, pay rates were based upon similar job pay ranges within the Judicial compensation structure. Jennifer Olson, Employer's Council Consultant, met with Jennifer Turner, Executive Director, Senator Linda Newell, Business Consultant and Jori Dovey, Operations Specialist, to discuss the need to develop an innovative compensation philosophy aligned with their vision as a new organization that is the first of its kind and nationally recognized. Jennifer Turner expressed the need for benchmarking each unique position through a holistic lens and creating a pay structure that would set them apart as a well-compensating, Behavioral Health Employer of Choice. Linda Newell would manage the development of job descriptions that spoke to the acuity and expertise required of each job, which would be instrumental in achieving an accurate job match and salary benchmark.

Compare Positions to Salary Surveys

We compared the functions, qualifications, and expertise of the jobs at Bridges of Colorado to those in the salary surveys. We reviewed the job descriptions of the positions to identify matches to the job descriptions of positions in salary surveys within several industries. We do not match jobs by title, but by the duties of the role. This includes factors such as the degree of knowledge/skill, job family progression, scope of decision-making authority, and autonomy. While exact matches may not always occur, we took care to ensure that a significant degree of comparability existed before using the survey data. We strive for a 70 to 80 percent correlation between the incumbent's job responsibilities and the duties listed in the surveys. Where jobs perform multiple functions, job matches were weighted according to the time spent performing each function of the job. Where survey descriptions represented the overall function of a position, but did not represent the appropriate level or scope, we applied a differential (a premium or discount) to the data to represent the skill level or responsibility of the position more accurately. We solicited input and feedback via email and virtual meetings from Jennifer Turner, Linda Newell and Jori Dovey regarding the survey job matches to ensure accuracy and reflect appropriate survey data. Several salary survey studies were drafted to ensure a 70 to 80 percent match.

❑ Identify Appropriate Salary Surveys and Data Lines

Employers Council consultants use well-established salary surveys as the sources for market data. The specific surveys and the data lines used in this analysis are as follows:

- HR Market Analysis (Payfactors) 2023 – Denver Metro, Legal Consulting, 100 – 200 Employees data line
- Economic Research Institute (ERI) 2023 – Denver, Legal Services, 115 Employees data line
- Peer Data - 2023 – Denver Metro, Legal Consulting, 100 – 200 Employees data line
- Employers Council – Public Employers Survey 2022 – All Colorado, Denver/Boulder, Total Responses data lines
- Employers Council – Benchmark Survey 2022 - All Colorado, Denver/Boulder, Total Responses data lines

After we obtained a final job match, with approval from leadership, we collected the salary information. We made efforts to use data with 30 incumbents or more whenever possible to have a more statistically accurate average. Employers Council, Peer, Payfactors and Economic Research Institute (ERI) collect data directly from organizations, through surveys they conduct or through purchasing third-party surveys with verifiable and reliable data. Survey data is reviewed by a PhD Statistician for accuracy and significance before its release. Payfactors and ERI salary data are updated quarterly.

❑ Adjust Salary Survey Data

Since the effective dates of the salary survey data varied by survey, Employers Council aged the data and brought it forward to a common date of October 1, 2023. We used an adjustment factor that represents the annual percent of salary movement for state and local government sector workers. The U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, compiles and publishes the Employment Cost Index (ECI) each quarter. The ECI reflects the percentage change in employer costs for employee compensation year over year. The ECI rate as of June 2023 was 4.7 percent for state and local government workers. We prorated this factor based on the period from each survey's information collection date to October 1, 2023.

❑ Update Salary Grades and Range Structure

Each job's salary range was based on the salary data collected and each job's progression within the organization. We used the aggregate market 50th percentile of the survey data to create the range midpoint. Minimum and maximum values were determined based on the grade midpoint using a spread of 15 percent from minimum to midpoint and 20 percent from midpoint to maximum.

As market data focuses on payment for the job, the salary range allows an organization to pay the incumbent according to organizational philosophy and strategy. This can include specific goal accomplishment, performance, length of service or any other criteria that is deemed important. The variable spread of 15 and 20 percent was used to allow for ‘growth-in-place’ movement as is aligned with Bridges of Colorado’s compensation philosophy. This promotes retention and allows employees with valuable expertise to stay within the job range for a longer period before ‘maxing out.’ To remain equitable, the spread of the range was consistent throughout the entire structure.

To be consistent, employees should be paid no lower than the minimum of the salary range. When hiring, however, employers may have to pay higher than the minimum in order to attract the best candidate. Many employers choose not to exceed the midpoint as a hiring rate. Employees should not be paid higher than the range maximum. If a pay rate approaches and exceeds the maximum, the organization can still provide an increase; it is recommended it be given as a lump-sum bonus rather than added to the base. These practices preserve the integrity of the structure.

Review Implementation

We compared Bridges of Colorado’s current salary ranges used to the updated salary ranges. It was determined that the salary range minimums were defensible and justifiable. To have a competitive, market-driven compensation system and avoid salary compression, upward adjustment of the range structure is necessary. “Salary compression” exists when an employee’s base salary is close to, or more than, a longer-service employee or supervisor within the same job family. Some causes include market pressures to pay more to hire qualified, talented employees, limited pay increase budgets, extended overtime, too much range overlap, or implementation of a new structure to play “catch-up” with labor market movement. When a large number of incumbents fall below the new minimum, the compression problem escalates. Rarely can organizations achieve external (market), as well as internal and individual equity (compression) compensation goals. They are inherently in conflict.

Final Note

Compensation is a fluid and dynamic part of human resources. We suggest that a review of the compensation plan continue to be completed periodically in order to meet the objectives of the program. An annual market review and comprehensive analysis of the compensation structure every three to five years is recommended to stay competitive within the market. Regular market studies can provide valuable information regarding high-turnover positions, and new or key roles. While salary data is a tool for helping set pay practices, operational excellence is usually driven by many variables. Balancing a variety of factors, including performance and organizational goals, along with market analysis are part of the salary decision process.

We appreciate the opportunity to support your efforts in maintaining a competitive salary structure. Please let us know if you have any questions or concerns about this project.

Bridges of Colorado
Proposed 2023 Pay Range Structure

Pay Market	Effective Date
Denver Government Legal Services	9/1/2023

Job Title	Min	Mid	Max
Liaison in Training	\$25.00/Hour	\$25.00/Hour	\$25.00/Hour
Court Liaison	\$72,261.00	\$83,100.00	\$97,552.00
Court Liaison (Coverage)	\$72,261.00	\$83,100.00	\$97,552.00
Senior Court Liaison	\$79,391.00	\$91,300.00	\$107,178.00
Court Liaison Supervisor (Regional Manager)	\$89,391.00	\$102,800.00	\$102,800.00
Office Manager (PM I)	\$72,609.00	\$83,500.00	\$98,022.00
Communications Manager (PM II)	\$80,435.00	\$92,500.00	\$108,587.00
Participant Services Fund Manager (PM II)	\$79,130.00	\$91,000.00	\$106,826.00
People & Culture Program Manager (PM III)	\$92,609.00	\$106,500.00	\$125,022.00
Data Analysis Manager (PM III)			
Services and Resources Equity Director	\$133,304.00	\$153,300.00	\$179,961.00
Legal Director	\$133,478.00	\$153,500.00	\$180,196.00
Clinical Director	\$133,913.00	\$154,000.00	\$180,783.00
Operations Director			
Executive Director	\$187,739.00	\$215,900.00	\$253,448.00