

# A Word From the Executive Director



Dear Friends and Supporters of Third Way Center,

Happy May!

May brings more than just flowers; It brings ***Mental Health Awareness, National Foster Care Month, Teacher Appreciation Week, Mother's Day, Cinco De Mayo, Memorial Day, Graduation, and more.*** So much is going on, and it is hard to keep up.

**"We should make it clear that getting help isn't a sign of weakness—it's a sign of strength." Michelle Obama**

Third Way Center is fortunate. It's not always easy to find light in all the uncertainty. However, we get to work with the most interesting children. There is never a dull moment, and no two days are the same. We serve at least 85 kids daily, and so many more are in need. These are the most vulnerable children and families with the most complex mental health needs, who are also the most at risk of hurting themselves or others. Many have no adults to protect and/or take care of them, and/or they need a lot of assistance for reunification with family, foster care, or emancipation, to be successful. These youth need the most, and they cost the most, but the outcome, if successful, is priceless.

It's all about money. It always is. The Federal government has targeted our entire sector. Medicaid is at risk, or at least changing how it is distributed. Third Way Center funding is dependent on Medicaid. The Child Welfare Medicaid money has been protected from managed care capitation through a 'carve out' until recently. Colorado is desperately trying to create a new system by moving Child Welfare funding to the Regional Accountability Entities (RAEs), a managed care system. The RAEs are insurance companies. The purpose is to save money. There was a lawsuit that complicated things, a class action suit where three children were detained in a detention facility because there were no placement options.

In April, it became apparent that 'the plan' our state developed to begin on July 1st, 2025, was not fully thought out. The Joint Budget Committee (JBC) introduced another legislative bill (SB 25-294) that keeps the child welfare 'carveout' intact

until HCPF (Health Care Policy and Finance) presents a better plan in December 2025. This pushes implementation to July 1, 2026. This bill is a temporary victory because the Joint Budget Committee actively listened to the issues presented by the Colorado treatment providers and held our state entities accountable for a plan that served the most vulnerable and their families. However, we still have a lot of work to do. It is still a highly complex system that doesn't seem to want much feedback.

This year, Mental Health America (MHA) has chosen the theme "Turn Awareness into Action," underscoring the need to recognize mental health issues and help people move beyond those challenges and take action. Third Way Center has always believed that *the proof is in the pudding* and that our job is empowering people to make choices about their mental health. Seeing beyond the behaviors helps recognize 'why' someone struggles, but it is still that person's responsibility to make the changes. When appropriate, residential treatment gives the individual the time and space to make difficult decisions. If they are with us, they are at a crossroads and need the support of qualified, caring, dedicated professionals to challenge, support, and offer opportunities to make choices/changes that can help kids and families live healthier lives. In many cases, it even **saves** lives. We are dealing with *people* - no two people are the same, and people do not fit into boxes; they need to be seen and heard in a safe place to deal with the hurt and shame of how they feel about themselves and the world.

In honor of *Teacher Appreciation Week (5/5 through 5/9)*, we want to recognize our creative, innovative, and determined school staff. They make learning fun and consider our students' individual needs, which is quite the task! Third Way Center is lucky to have staff who weather the storm daily and create a place for our kids to learn and work towards graduation or returning to public school. It's a place where our residents can feel successful. Thank you, JFA, for all you do!

It is important to remember, as Albert Einstein said, "In the middle of difficulty lies opportunity."

With gratitude and appreciation,

Renee