

COMMUNITY HEALTH ASSESSMENT FOR SOUTH PARK AMBULANCE DISTRICT

SUPPORTING COMMUNITY INTEGRATED HEALTH CARE SERVICES
LICENSING IN PARK COUNTY, COLORADO



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This community needs assessment has been prepared to support the South Park Ambulance District's (SPAD) application for licensing as a Community Integrated Health Care Services (CIHCS) provider in Park County, Colorado. Drawing on the 2023 Park County Community Health Assessment, input from local stakeholders, and data from both the Park County Coroner's Office and SPAD's internal electronic health records, this document identifies the most pressing health challenges facing the district and demonstrates how SPAD's programs are uniquely positioned to address these needs through the CIHCS model.

KEY FINDINGS:

- **Access to Health Care:** Park County's rural, frontier, and mountainous geography creates significant barriers to accessing timely and adequate health care, especially for residents in isolated areas.
- **Mental Health:** High rates of suicide and limited access to mental health services are persistent concerns, with mental health identified as a top priority for public health improvement.
- **Transportation:** Many residents face challenges traveling to health care facilities, further restricting access to necessary services.
- **Chronic Disease and Preventive Care:** Chronic illnesses such as cancer and heart disease are leading causes of premature death, underscoring the need for in-home preventive and follow-up care.
- **Fall Risk Assessment and Prevention:** Falls are the second most common traumatic injury SPAD responds to, accounting for the third most common cause of traumatic death in Park County.
- **Palliative and End-of-Life Care:** Currently, no regular hospice services exist within the South Park Ambulance District. Palliative and end-of-life care is managed through primary care with help from the Park County Coroner's Office.
- **Community Strengths:** Park County benefits from engaged organizations and residents, as well as a readiness to collaborate on innovative health solutions.

SPAD'S ROLE AND ALIGNMENT WITH CIHCS

SPAD has developed and will implement several programs consistent with the CIHCS model, including:

- A **Community Paramedic Program** that delivers in-home, non-emergent care and care coordination to underserved residents. SPAD's Community Paramedics will further offer support to current crisis response resources in Park County.
- A **Fall Risk Reduction, Assessment, and Treatment (FRRAT) Program** that provides evidence-based assessments and treatments to reduce falls at home. SPAD Community Paramedics will take patient referrals, conduct a screening, and enroll eligible patients into the program.
- **Telehealth and Mobile Integrated Healthcare (MIH) initiatives** that expand access to care and support remote service delivery. SPAD Community Paramedics will meet patients where they are, bringing medical providers to meet with patients "face-to-face," via tablet-based telemedicine. Community Paramedics provide assessments and treatments based on the telehealth provider's orders.
- The **South Park Advanced Resource Care (SPARC) Program** combines telehealth, MIH, and basic diagnostics bringing urgent care type services directly to patients' homes, reducing unnecessary ambulance trips and emergency room visits.
- **Palliative and End-of-Life supportive care** aimed at supporting families and patients with serious and/or terminal illness. SPAD Community Paramedics will support patients receiving palliative and/or end-of-life care by providing care coordination, pain and symptom management, as well as patient and family education.

CONCLUSION

The evidence presented in this assessment demonstrates a clear and urgent need for expanded community-based health care services in Park County. SPAD's existing initiatives already embody the core principles and objectives of the CIHCS program. Licensing will allow SPAD to formalize and expand these services, ensuring regulatory compliance, sustainable funding, and improved integration with statewide health initiatives. Ultimately, CIHCS licensing for SPAD will enhance access to care, improve health outcomes, and foster a more resilient and healthy community for all Park County residents.

SOUTH PARK AMBULANCE DISTRICT PROFILE

Located entirely within Park County, Colorado, South Park Ambulance District covers approximately 1,500 square miles^[1] and contains the census tracts of Fairplay, Alma, Jefferson, Como, and Hartsel. SPAD's district boundaries follow the county's border to the west (the Continental Divide, Lake County and Summit County boundaries, including Hoosier Pass along CO Hwy 9), Kenosha Pass along US Hwy 285/ Platte Canyon Fire Protection District to the north, Trout Creek Pass along US Hwy 285 (Chaffee County boundary) and Guffy/ Southern Park County Fire Protection District to the south, and Wilkerson Pass along US Hwy 24/ Lake George Fire Protection District to the east. SPAD's district has an average elevation of 9,000 feet above sea level with many mountain peaks reaching 13,000-14,000 feet.

South Park Ambulance District is sparsely populated with almost all areas considered to be rural or frontier lands. SPAD serves a full-time resident population of approximately 4,793 as of the 2010 census ^[2]. During the peak tourist months, generally found in the summer, it is estimated that the population within SPAD's service area increases to nearly 50,000 people ^[1]. The district's full-time population has demographics that mirror that of the rest of the county. The population is mostly white at 93% with a median age of 49 ^[2].

Citations:

1. <https://southparkambulance.com/about/district-facts/>
2. <https://www.parkcountyco.gov/277/Population-Estimates>

PARK COUNTY, COLORADO COMMUNITY HEALTH ASSESSMENT 2023: SUMMARY

The Park County Community Health Assessment (CHA) is conducted every five years as mandated by Colorado's Public Health Act of 2008. This act requires all local public health agencies to systematically assess the health of their communities and develop a Public Health Improvement Plan (PHIP) based on their findings. The 2023 CHA was developed using the Colorado Health Assessment and Planning System (CHAPS) framework, which provides a structured approach for data collection, community engagement, needs assessment, and priority setting. The assessment incorporates both quantitative data from local and state databases and qualitative insights from key informant interviews with local leaders and community members.

The primary purpose of the CHA is to:

- Evaluate the health status of Park County residents across a range of indicators, including social determinants of health, environmental quality, disease prevalence, and access to care.
- Identify strengths, weaknesses, and gaps in the community's health and healthcare systems.
- Engage community stakeholders in setting priorities and guiding the development of the Public Health Improvement Plan.
- Provide a foundation for mobilizing resources and collaborative efforts to address identified health challenges over the next five years.

KEY FINDINGS

- **Healthy Behaviors:** Most Park County residents demonstrate healthy behaviors, such as low rates of excessive drinking, high community involvement, and widespread health insurance coverage.
- **Rural Health Challenges:** Consistent with rural communities, Park County faces significant barriers related to access to healthcare and mental health services. The county's mountainous geography further limits the reach of health services.
- **Leading Causes of Premature Death:** Cancer, heart disease, and suicide are among the top contributors to Years of Potential Life Lost (YPLL), highlighting premature mortality as a pressing issue. Suicide remains a persistent public health concern, as evidenced by recent coroner reports and echoed by community informants.

- **Community Strengths:** The county benefits from engaged community organizations and residents, as well as identified funding opportunities to support health initiatives.
- **Data-Driven Approach:** The assessment used both primary (key informant interviews) and secondary (public health databases) data sources, ensuring a comprehensive and evidence-based understanding of local health needs.

FINAL PRIORITIES FOR 2023–2027

Following extensive data analysis and community input, the Prioritization Committee identified three top priorities for Park County's Public Health Improvement Plan:

1. **Mental Health:** Addressing mental health needs, with a focus on suicide prevention and expanding access to mental health services.
2. **Access to Health Care:** Improving the availability and reach of healthcare services, especially given the county's rural and mountainous terrain.
3. **Transportation:** Enhancing transportation options to facilitate access to health services and support overall community well-being.

These priorities reflect both the quantitative data and the lived experiences of Park County residents, as well as the capacity and readiness of local organizations to address these challenges collaboratively over the next five years.

SUMMARY:

The Park County Community Health Assessment 2023 provides a comprehensive evaluation of the county's health landscape, identifies critical gaps and strengths, and sets forth clear, actionable priorities—mental health, healthcare access, and transportation—to guide public health improvement efforts through 2027.

FINDINGS SUPPORTING THE USE OF COMMUNITY INTEGRATED HEALTH CARE SERVICES IN PARK COUNTY

The Park County Community Health Assessment (2023) identifies several findings that align with the purposes of using the Community Integrated Health Care Services (CIHCS) program:

ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

- Limited access to health care is one of the leading health concerns in Park County, consistent with challenges faced by many rural communities. The mountainous terrain and geographic isolation restrict the reach of health services, making it difficult for residents to obtain timely and adequate care.
- The assessment identifies access to care as a top priority for improvement over the next five years, indicating a clear need for innovative service delivery models like CIHCS that can bring care directly to residents in their homes or communities.

MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS

- Lack of mental health services is another major concern. Suicide rates are notably high, and mental health was prioritized as a key issue by both the statistical data and community feedback. The CIHCS program can help address these gaps by providing follow-up, preventive, and supportive care in the community, especially for those who might otherwise fall through the cracks.

TRANSPORTATION BARRIERS

- Transportation was identified as a third priority issue. Many residents face significant challenges traveling to access health care, given the county's rural and mountainous geography. The CIHCS program, by delivering services in the community and at home, directly addresses these transportation barriers.

CHRONIC DISEASE AND PREVENTIVE CARE

- Chronic diseases such as cancer and heart disease are leading causes of premature death in Park County. The report notes the importance of preventive care and follow-up services, both of which are core functions of CIHCS programs. By supporting medication management, health education, and chronic disease monitoring, CIHCS can help reduce the burden of chronic illness.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND CAPACITY

- The assessment found that community organizations are engaged and there is capacity to address these concerns collaboratively. The CIHCS program is designed to work with local partners, making it well-suited to leverage this community strength.

These findings demonstrate that the purposes of the Community Integrated Health Care Services program—improving access, addressing mental health, overcoming transportation barriers, and supporting chronic disease management—are directly responsive to the most pressing health needs identified in Park County.

Resources:

- [Community-Health-Assessment-2023_FINAL_20230112.pdf](https://ppl-ai-file-upload.s3.amazonaws.com/web/direct-files/attachments/69235947/d2d085c3-68a8-4816-996bc0ad2b078b6e/Community-Health-Assessment-2023_FINAL_20230112.pdf)
- [Community Integrated Health Care Services | Colorado Department ...](https://cdphe.colorado.gov/community-integrated-health-care-services-and-community-assistance-referral-and-education-services)
- [\[PDF\] Community Health Improvement Plan](https://mthf.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Park-County-CHIP.pdf)
- [Community paramedicine delivers short-term care at home](https://cdphe.colorado.gov/press-release/community-paramedicine-delivers-short-term-care-at-home)
- [\[PDF\] Park County - Community Health Improvement Plan](https://www.parkcounty.org/dynamic/files/pages/1671733565_ParkCountyCHIP_2022_FINAL.PDF)

- Community Integrated Health Strategies <https://www.nrpa.org/our-work/partnerships/initiatives/healthy-aging-in-parks/community-integrated-health-strategies/>
- Community Health Assessment | Park County, CO <https://www.parkcountyco.gov/517/Community-Health-Assessment>
- Community Health Assessments - Montana Healthcare Foundation <https://mthf.org/resource/community-health-assessments/>
- Community Integrated Health Services <https://cihealthservices.com>
- [PDF] State of Colorado Requirements for Local Public Health ... <https://ouraycountyco.gov/DocumentCenter/View/19221/C-1---WCPHP-PH-Improvement-Plan-and-Eval-Plan-2023>
- Information for Uninsured Individuals | Park County, CO <https://www.parkcountyco.gov/379/UninsuredInsured-Information>

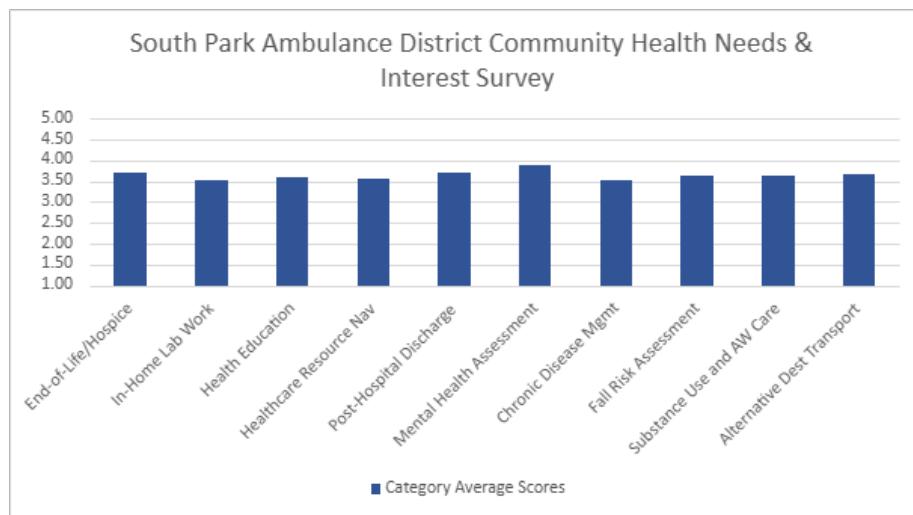
SOUTH PARK AMBULANCE DISTRICT COMMUNITY HEALTH NEEDS AND INTEREST SURVEY FINDINGS

SPAD conducted a survey to determine interest in a Community Paramedic Program and to determine the most pressing community needs according to in-district residents. The survey was distributed in both paper and electronic format, accessible via hyperlink and QR code. It was open for 132 days and 53 responses were received during that time frame. The survey totaled 63 questions with 49 of those questions pertaining to specific services found common in Community Paramedic programs throughout the United States; the remaining questions were used for collecting demographic data. The 49 questions pertaining to specific services were graded on a scale of 1 to 5 with an answer of 1 being not an important service and 5 being a very important service. Data was compiled into a spreadsheet, and scores were averaged by individual questions and categories of questions. All 10 categories received an average score above 3.5 meaning that all categories are considered important or higher to district residents.

KEY FINDINGS:

- **Support for the Creation of a Community Paramedic Program:** 85% of respondents support the creation of a Community Paramedic Program with 6% unsure and 9% not in support.
- **Mental Health Assessment and Treatment:** The category of services with the highest average score supports the findings of the Park County CHA. Park County has addressed this issue by contracting with Paragon Behavioral Health Connections to provide crisis and behavioral health services.
- **End-of-Life/Hospice Care:** This was the category of services with the second highest average score, demonstrating an important issue for district residents.
- **Post-Hospital Discharge Follow-up:** This category received the third highest average score. This is an area of future focus as there are many logistical challenges associated with post-hospital follow-up.

- **Alternative Destination Transportation:** Transportation issues are the fourth highest scoring category. Transportation issues were also identified as a top priority in the Park County CHA. Transportation solutions will become a part of several of SPAD's programs.
- **Fall Risk Assessment:** This category was identified as the fifth most important category and when combined with trauma and death data, becomes an important issue for SPAD residents.
- **Substance Use and Alcohol Withdrawal Care, Health Education, Healthcare Resource Navigation, In-Home Lab Work, and Chronic Disease Management:** These were the five lowest scoring categories, sixth through tenth respectively. Many of SPAD's anticipated community paramedic programs will address these categories as part of their development.



SUMMARY OF THE COMMUNITY INTEGRATED HEALTH CARE SERVICES PROGRAM (CDPHE)

Overview

The Community Integrated Health Care Services (CIHCS) program, overseen by the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE), is designed to bridge gaps in out-of-hospital medical care—particularly for individuals who need short-term, in-home health services that do not qualify for traditional home health care or emergency medical services^{[1][2]}. The program is regulated under specific state statutes and rules, and agencies must be licensed to provide these services.

Key Features

- **CIHCS Agencies:** These can be sole proprietorships, partnerships, corporations, nonprofits, special districts, government units, or licensed health care facilities. They manage and deliver CIHCS either directly or through contracts^{[1][3]}.
- **CIHCS Providers:** Providers include community paramedics and other qualified health professionals licensed or certified in Colorado, working within their scope of practice and under the supervision of a medical director affiliated with a CIHCS agency^[1].

- **Community Paramedics:** Paramedics with specialized training and endorsement in community paramedicine offer services beyond traditional emergency care. Their roles include patient assessments, medical interventions, care coordination, resource navigation, patient education, medication management, and collection of diagnostic data^{[1][2]}.

Services Provided

- Short-term, in-home medical care (such as post-hospital discharge follow-up)
- Medical interventions and patient monitoring
- Care coordination and navigation of community resources
- Patient education and medication management
- Collection of laboratory and diagnostic data^{[1][2]}

Purpose and Impact

The CIHCS program aims to serve patients who fall between existing health care services—those who do not require long-term home health care but need more than emergency medical response. For example, the program has helped reduce unnecessary emergency room visits by providing medication management and follow-up care at home^[2]. It also addresses rural health care gaps where access to primary care is limited.

Regulation and Oversight

- The CDPHE regulates CIHCS agencies, including licensing, oversight, and ensuring compliance with state rules.
- Providers must meet training and certification requirements, including passing a national exam for community paramedics^{[1][2]}.
- Agencies must conduct community needs assessments as part of the application process^[2].

Recent Legislative Updates

- The regulation of CIHCS agencies was extended to 2034 following recommendations from a 2024 sunset review.
- The legislation clarified licensing standards, updated terminology, and expanded the definition of services to include mobile integrated health care and care provided by practitioners beyond community paramedics^[3].

Distinction from Other Programs

The CIHCS program is distinct from traditional home health care and emergency medical services. It is also different from the Community Assistance Referral and Education Services (CARES) program, which focuses only on community outreach, health education, and reducing non-emergent 911 calls^[4]. CIHCS agencies perform all the duties of a CARES program in addition to many other duties aimed at providing advanced non-emergency care^[1].

In summary, the Community Integrated Health Care Services program provides regulated, short-term, out-of-hospital medical care through community paramedics and other qualified providers, filling critical gaps in the health care system—especially for those who need transitional or follow-up care at home^{[1][2]}.

Citations:

1. <https://cdphe.colorado.gov/community-integrated-health-care-services-and-community-assistance-referral-and-education-services>
2. <https://cdphe.colorado.gov/press-release/community-paramedicine-delivers-short-term-care-at-home>
3. <https://leg.colorado.gov/bills/sb25-192>
4. <https://cdphe.colorado.gov/community-assistance-cares-program-information>

SPAD PROGRAMS CONSISTENT WITH CIHCS PURPOSES

The South Park Ambulance District (SPAD) will be initiating several programs and services that closely align with the purposes of the Community Integrated Health Care Services (CIHCS) program, when SPAD becomes a formally licensed CIHCS agency. These initiatives focus on bridging gaps in out-of-hospital care, improving access for underserved populations, and integrating behavioral and primary health care.

Key SPAD Programs and Services:

- **Community Paramedic Program**
 - SPAD will operate a Community Paramedic program staffed by advanced practice paramedics with additional education and training to obtain community paramedic endorsement from the state. Community Paramedics are trained in the biopsychosocial model of care, enabling them to address social determinants of health and coordinate appropriate resources. The program's goal is to deliver health care to underserved and geographically isolated residents, consistent with CIHCS objectives to provide in-home, non-emergent care and care coordination^{[1][2]}.
- **Fall Risk Reduction, Assessment, and Treatment (FRRAT) Program**
 - SPAD Community Paramedics will take referrals using multiple sources and conduct an initial screening of referred residents. After the initial referral screening and subsequent enrollment in the program, CPs will conduct evidence-based fall risk assessments and provide evidence-based treatments and remedies to reduce fall risks at home. SPAD CPs will then follow-up at regular intervals to ensure effectiveness of the program —core elements of CIHCS^[2].
- **Telehealth and Mobile Integrated Healthcare (MIH) Initiatives**
 - SPAD is equipping Community Paramedics with telehealth capabilities and training them to conduct advanced assessments, and provide advanced care, many times without the need for hospital intervention. This supports remote care delivery and expands access to medical and behavioral health services in rural areas, aligning with CIHCS goals to use technology for care integration and outreach^[1].

- **South Park Advanced Resource Care (SPARC) Program**
 - The SPARC Program aims to bring urgent care type services, in the form of telehealth, MIH, and basic diagnostic services, directly to patients' homes, overseen by a board-certified emergency physician. Services include lab testing (basic metabolic panel (BMP), complete blood count (CBC), hemoglobin A1C, pregnancy, and urinalysis) wound care (simple and complex closures of simple wounds), administration of antibiotics, and various other treatments, reducing unnecessary ambulance trips and emergency room visits—key CIHCS aims^[2].
- **Palliative and End-of-Life supportive care**
 - Community Paramedics will offer support and services in a patient/family's most difficult time of need, when dealing with serious and/or terminal illness. SPAD CPs will support patients receiving palliative and/or end-of-life care by providing care coordination, pain and symptom management, as well as patient and family education.
- **Regional Collaboration and Access Improvement**
 - Through partnerships with regional health and mental health organizations, SPAD will improve access to behavioral health and in-home care for marginalized and geographically isolated populations in Park County. These collaborations foster integrated care and resource navigation, which are foundational to the CIHCS model^{[2][1]}.

Conclusion

SPAD's programs—especially its Community Paramedic, FRRAT, SPARC, Palliative/End-of-Life care, and MIH initiatives—embody the core purposes of CIHCS by expanding access to in-home, non-emergency medical and behavioral health care, using mobile and telehealth technology, and coordinating care for vulnerable populations in a rural, mountainous region^{[2][1]}.

Citations:

1. <https://www.parkcountyco.gov/AgendaCenter/ViewFile/Item/12300?fileID=6056>
2. <https://southparkambulance.com>

CIHCS IN MOUNTAIN COMMUNITIES

Yes, there are CIHCS (Community Integrated Health Care Services) programs operating in Colorado's mountain communities:

- **Eagle County:** Eagle County Paramedic Services was the first agency in Colorado to earn the CIHCS designation. Their community paramedicine program provides short-term, in-home care for residents who fall between emergency medical services and traditional home health care. This program has been particularly impactful in rural, mountainous areas, reducing unnecessary emergency room visits and filling critical care gaps for isolated populations^[1].
- **Clear Creek County:** The Clear Creek Health Assistance Team (CCHAT), overseen by Clear Creek EMS, functions as a Community Integrated Health Care Service Team. CCHAT supports vulnerable

populations—including those with mental or behavioral health crises, disabilities, or homelessness—by providing coordinated health and social services in this mountain county^[2].

These examples confirm that CIHCS programs are active and making a difference in Colorado's mountain communities, addressing the unique challenges of rural and geographically isolated populations.

1. <https://cdphe.colorado.gov/press-release/community-paramedicine-delivers-short-term-care-at-home>
2. <https://www.clearcreekcounty.us/1398/Mental-HealthSubstance-Abuse>

EFFECTIVENESS OF CIHCS LICENSING IN EAGLE AND CLEAR CREEK COUNTIES

Eagle County

- **Reduced Emergency Room and Ambulance Use:** The CIHCS-certified community paramedic program has dramatically decreased unnecessary ambulance transports and emergency room visits. For example, a patient who was previously transported to the ER five to six times a month for medication management now receives weekly home visits from community paramedics, eliminating the need for frequent emergency care^{[1][2]}.
- **Expanded Services and Outreach:** The program offers over 30 individualized services, including post-hospital follow-ups, well-baby checks, in-home alcohol detox, and co-response for mental health crises. This broad service menu fills critical gaps for residents who do not qualify for traditional home health care or require care beyond what EMS typically provides^{[1][2][3]}.
- **Cost Savings:** The program saves the health care system substantial costs—estimated at about \$5,200 per patient—by preventing high-cost emergency interventions. In 2020 and 2021, the program's anticipated hospitalization cost savings exceeded \$550,000, with a program cost of just \$25,844^{[2][3]}.
- **High Patient Satisfaction and Healthier Community:** The program reports 90%+ customer satisfaction and zero adverse incidents since inception. Providers note improved health outcomes, better medication adherence, and stronger patient-provider relationships^{[2][3]}.
- **Health Equity and Access:** Services are provided regardless of ability to pay, and the program ensures that vulnerable populations—including newborns, elderly, and those with behavioral health needs—receive timely, in-home care^{[2][3]}.

Clear Creek County

- **Integrated Crisis Response:** The Community Crisis and Health Assistance Team (CCHAT), operating under CIHCS licensure, integrates EMS, mental health professionals, and social services to support vulnerable populations—such as those experiencing mental health crises, disabilities, or homelessness^{[4][5]}.
- **Alternative and Co-Response Models:** CCHAT deploys specialized teams to 911 calls that do not require traditional EMS, fire, or law enforcement response. This approach de-escalates crises, provides resource navigation, and reduces repeat emergency calls^{[4][5]}.

- **Care Coordination and Resource Navigation:** The CIHCS team offers basic health assessments, medication management, and patient education, connecting individuals to long-term resources and reducing reliance on emergency services for unmet social or medical needs^{[4][5]}.
- **Early Positive Outcomes:** In its first weeks, CCHAT responded to 14 calls, each averaging two hours, with follow-up support. The team's involvement has already demonstrated the need for such services and is expected to improve outcomes for individuals in crisis while reducing the burden on law enforcement and EMS^[5].

Conclusion

CIHCS certification in Eagle and Clear Creek Counties has proven highly effective by improving access to care, reducing unnecessary emergency interventions, saving health system costs, and providing holistic, patient-centered services—especially for vulnerable and rural populations^{[1][2][4][5][3]}.

Citations:

1. <https://cdphe.colorado.gov/press-release/community-paramedicine-delivers-short-term-care-at-home>
2. <https://www.vaildaily.com/news/eagle-county-community-paramedic-program-marks-10-years-of-service-celebrates-ever-expanding-reach/>
3. http://leg.colorado.gov/sites/default/files/images/2.1_eagle_county_paramedic_services_presentation.pdf
4. <https://www.clearcreekcounty.us/1479/Community-Crisis-and-Health-Assistance-T>
5. <https://www.cbsnews.com/colorado/news/clear-creek-county-cchat-team-new-responses-911-calls-christian-glass/>

EVIDENCE THAT CIHCS LICENSING WOULD BENEFIT PARK COUNTY

Evidence suggests that Community Integrated Health Care Services (CIHCS) licensing would benefit Park County based on outcomes observed in similar rural and mountain communities and the current health care landscape in Park County:

- **Addressing Service Gaps:** CIHCS agencies are designed to provide out-of-hospital medical services, including in-home care, follow-up after hospital discharge, and services for individuals who do not qualify for traditional home health or require more than emergency response^[1]. Park County faces geographic isolation and lacks local emergency rooms or urgent care centers, making these services especially relevant.
- **Improved Care Coordination:** The Colorado Community Health Alliance (CCHA) already coordinates physical and behavioral health benefits for Park County as part of Health First Colorado (Medicaid), aiming to improve access, integrate care, and connect members with community resources^[2]. CIHCS certification would complement and enhance these efforts by enabling local agencies (such as ambulance districts or special districts) to deliver more comprehensive, proactive, and coordinated in-home care, especially for high-risk and underserved populations.

- **Reduction in Emergency System Strain:** In other mountain counties, CIHCS programs have reduced unnecessary 911 calls, ambulance transports, and emergency department visits by providing timely, non-emergent care and patient education in the home. This reduces health system costs and improves patient outcomes—a need that is acute in Park County due to limited local health infrastructure.
- **Integration with Existing Programs:** Park County residents already benefit from programs like Health First Colorado and CHP+, which provide coverage for medical, dental, and behavioral health needs^{[3][4]}. CIHCS licensing would allow local agencies to fill gaps between these programs and emergency services, ensuring that vulnerable residents receive the right care at the right time, in the right setting.
- **Eligibility for Broader Collaboration and Funding:** CIHCS licensing would make Park County agencies eligible for state-level collaboration, technical assistance, and potentially additional funding streams aimed at integrated community health.

In summary:

Experience from other rural and mountain counties demonstrates that CIHCS licensing leads to better care access, reduced emergency system burden, and improved health outcomes. Given Park County's rural context, geographic challenges, and current service gaps, there is strong evidence that CIHCS licensing would provide measurable benefits to its residents^{[1][2]}.

Citations:

1. <https://cdphe.colorado.gov/community-integrated-health-care-services-and-community-assistance-referral-and-education-services>
2. <https://www.cchacares.com/about-ccha/ccha-health-first-colorado/>
3. <https://www.parkcountyco.gov/374/Health-First-Colorado-and-CHP>
4. <https://www.healthfirstcolorado.com/benefits-services/>

CONCLUSION

In summary, the findings of this community health assessment make a compelling case for licensing the South Park Ambulance District as a Community Integrated Health Care Services provider. Park County's top health priorities—improving access to care, expanding mental health services, and overcoming transportation barriers—are precisely the challenges that the CIHCS model is designed to address. SPAD's anticipated programs, including its community paramedic, MIH, FRRAT, SPARC, and Palliative/End-of-Life care initiatives, will embody the core principles of CIHCS by delivering high-quality, non-emergent care directly to residents in their homes and communities.

CIHCS licensing will enable SPAD to expand and formalize these services, ensuring regulatory compliance, sustainable funding, and integration with statewide health initiatives. Most importantly, it will allow Park County to better serve its most vulnerable populations, reduce unnecessary emergency room visits, and foster a healthier, more resilient community. The evidence presented herein demonstrates that SPAD is both ready and uniquely positioned to fulfill the mission of CIHCS, delivering innovative, patient-centered care that meets the evolving needs of Park County residents.