

## History

Community and professional interest in mental health had been growing in the San Juan Basin between 1950 and 1960. As a result, a steering committee for mental health services was developed early in 1959. The committee formally established Southwest Colorado Mental Health Center, Inc., a non-profit corporation, on April 25, 1960.

The service area at the time of incorporation included the five counties currently served with the addition of San Miguel County and a population fewer than 80,000. Services to San Miguel County were transferred to Midwestern Mental Health Center in 1970 as consumers in this county found it easier to travel to Montrose than Cortez.

On July 1, 1972, the Center was authorized to begin a federally funded Drug Abuse program. In January of 1974, the Center began to provide services one day a week in Pagosa Springs at the Mary Fisher Medical Center. On August 7, 1979, the National Institute of Mental Health approved a grant for Southwest Colorado Mental Health Center to become a Comprehensive Community Mental Health Center.

In early 1980, a full time office was established in Pagosa Springs.

July 1995 saw the union of Southwest Colorado Mental Health Center with Colorado West Regional Mental Health Center and Midwestern Colorado Mental Health Center. This created West Slope CASA, LLC. The purpose of this unique partnership was to establish a Managed Service Organization (MSO) to manage the delivery of substance abuse treatment services on the West Slope and to deliver mental health, managed care services for the Medicaid population on the West Slope.

In May 2003, the Center went "live" with a fully electronic enterprise system (from front desk to billing and including an electronic clinical record) through Qualifacts, Inc. Also in May 2003 the Center was instrumental in instituting a Crisis Intervention Team for Durango and La Plata County that provided training to law enforcement officers in working with the mentally ill. We have continued and expanded that training to law enforcement throughout the 5 counties of southwest Colorado and have been tremendously successful diverting community crises from entering the criminal justice system. The CIT was the third Colorado CIT and the first rural CIT in the entire nation.

In June of 2004 the members of West Slope Casa joined with five other mental health centers (Pikes Peak, West Central, Southeast, Spanish Peaks and San Luis Valley) to form Colorado Health Partnerships, LLC, the largest Medicaid, managed care, mental health provider in the State. In November of that year, the Center expanded hours of service at all sites and initiated services a half day a week in Dove Creek at the Health Center.

In February 2005, Southwest Colorado Mental Health Center received the United Way Outstanding Partner Agency Award. This was followed in March by receipt of the Operations Healthy Communities Non-Profit Success Award.

The Crossroads facility opened in October 2006. This facility houses three units: Detox Unit, a Triage/Assessment Unit, and an Acute Treatment Unit (the first to be licensed in the State) providing a local alternative to inpatient psychiatric hospitalization.

The following month, at the November 2006 Board meeting, the Board of Directors acknowledging that the time had come to stop separating physical health care, mental health, substance abuse and wellness passed a resolution that the Board, *"...supports in principle the creation of an enhanced health system that integrates preventive, behavioral health, and primary care services."*

Over the next three years, this led to a series of integrated implementations in other organizations' primary care clinics including the Dove Creek Clinic, Cortez Primary Care Clinic (SW Memorial Hospital), Durango High School Based Health Center and Pediatric Partners private practice in Durango. While these efforts at integration were successful, they were also limited in their vision of a fully integrated model. Consequently the Board of Directors at the February 2009 meeting reaffirmed its commitment to transform the Center and authorized the CEO, *"...to proceed with plans to establish a fully integrated, primary care practice in Montezuma County."*

This commitment resulted in the purchase of land in Cortez with a planned completion of the fully integrated clinic in the summer of 2011. It has also led to a change in the name under which the Center provides integrated care. As of April 2010 that name became **Axis Health System**. As Axis Health System, we are transforming our services across our entire region to services that bring primary healthcare, mental healthcare, wellness, substance use services, and healthy lifestyle change together in one, integrated setting - Making a meaningful difference by providing treatment that revolves around the needs of the whole person.