Desk Guide

4 Steps to Implementing Colorado Pathways to Success

CPR center for policy research

PATHWAYS TO SUCCESS

Key Considerations When Implementing Pathways

- Pathways shifts the traditional service model: rather than positioning case managers as the primary decision-makers, it puts youth in charge of setting and pursuing their own goals, while staff offer support, resources, and guidance. This reflects a core assumption of the model — that youth are capable of identifying their own needs and leading decisions about their support. This core assumption should be central in guiding implementation decision-making.
- Pathways was created with youth input, and incorporating youth voice at every stage of implementation — planning, implementation, and sustainment — is critical to ensuring the model is being practiced to fidelity.
- At its core, Pathways is an intensive, novel case management model built around a unique approach to engaging youth: "Engaging Youth in a Coach-like Way" (EYCLW). Case managers, called Navigators, must be trained in EYCLW and given ongoing support to practice these skills, especially when other providers may not use the same approach.

1

Explore the Pathways Model

Assess whether and how Pathways fits your organization's needs, capacity, and context before committing to implementation.

Does Pathways align with your organization's goals and culture?

- Organizational Culture: Pathways requires a culture that gives youth autonomy and authority as experts in their own lives.
- Youth in Decision-Making Positions: Pathways was developed with youth as key stakeholders and decision-makers.

What internal organizational policies need to be addressed to implement Pathways?

- Staffing and Training: Staff need dedicated time, skills, supervision, and training to deliver Pathways with fidelity — including smaller caseloads and intensive training in EYCLW.
- Fidelity Monitoring: Pathways implementation requires data collection and CQI processes that support fidelity monitoring, program improvement, and learning across implementation sites.

What external contexts (e.g., partnerships or funding) need to be addressed to implement Pathways?

- Partnerships and Collaboration: Pathways relies on strong partnerships to connect youth to housing, education, employment, well-being support, permanent connections, and other community resources.
- Funding and Resources: Pathways implementation requires flexible resources to support youth-defined goals, relationship-building, housing stability, and responsive service delivery.

2

Plan for Pathways Implementation

Build agency buy-in, identify resources, plan training, and develop the partnerships needed to support service delivery.

What partnerships need to be developed to support Pathways? What should those relationships look like?

- Explicitly map current relationships to identify gaps and opportunities for collaboration..
- Use Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) or other formal agreements to formalize roles and expectations.
- Maintain regular communication and check-ins to keep partnerships active and to address any issues affecting service delivery.
- Educate partners on the culture underlying Pathways to effectively refer and coordinate services.

How will you address the staffing and training needs required to implement Pathways?

- Navigators need smaller caseloads — roughly 12 active cases at a time — to deliver this intensive model with fidelity.

> **Some sites have found it useful to designate a subset of staff to deliver the full Pathways intervention, while training the rest of the team in EYCLW to provide lighter-touch services — preserving fidelity without requiring every worker's caseload to shrink.**

- Practicing EYCLW requires both a philosophical shift and a set of practical skills that take time and ongoing support to develop. Organizations should be intentional about how they train staff and should build in regular opportunities for skills practice.

How will you promote organizational, leadership, and supervisor buy-in within your own organization?

- Supervisor buy-in is essential. They reinforce EYCLW skills through regular supervision and help Navigators navigate pushback from staff and partners less immersed in Pathways' philosophy.
- Organizational decision makers and administrators need to support Pathways values and be prepared to advocate for youth-led practice, flexible progress, and Navigator support to remove conflicts that may arise between organizational policies and Pathways practice.

How does your organization's size, setting, and resource landscape shape the support you can provide?

- Supervisor buy-in is essential. They reinforce EYCLW skills through regular supervision and help Navigators navigate pushback from staff and partners less immersed in Pathways' philosophy.
- Resources available in your community can shape what Navigators are able to offer. Assess your local resource landscape and plan for how to work within those constraints.

3

Implement Pathways

Launch Pathways and deliver Pathways services while continuing to monitor fidelity, problem-solve implementation challenges, and refine processes based on routine performance monitoring through continuous quality improvement (CQI).

How will you monitor program fidelity? How will you address fidelity shortcomings when they come up?

- One option of fidelity monitoring is Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI), which uses real-time data and regular reporting to monitor key service and outcome metrics, allowing leadership and sites to assess effectiveness, identify gaps, and make timely adjustments.
- Organizations need to develop a list of measures to record, report, and monitor fidelity. For a discussion of data measures and their indicators, see the "Measuring Program Performance and Fidelity" section of the Pathways Intervention Manual.
- Organizations need to plan how they will address problems as they arise. One option is to host regular technical assistance meetings to discuss fidelity measures and problem-solve if there are clear departures from implementation of the model.

4

Sustain Pathways

Continue Pathways beyond initial implementation. This requires attention and commitment by leadership to funding, systems integration, and policy alignment in the long term.

How will you align policy and procedure to promote Pathways practices?

- Sustained delivery depends on organizational policies that support, rather than conflict with, Pathways' youth-led approach — including flexible documentation requirements, approval processes that allow timely use of flex funds, and outcome measures that reflect youth-defined progress.

How will you fund the model over the long term?

- Organizations should identify a mix of internal funding, grants, and partnerships to sustain Pathways over time, rather than relying on a single funding source. This might include braiding multiple funding sources, building Pathways costs into existing program budgets, or partnering with other agencies to share the cost of shared roles like coaching and data support.

How will you integrate Pathways into existing systems?

- Embedding Pathways into existing referral pathways, policies, and service arrays helps ensure the model outlasts any single grant cycle or champion. This includes formalizing Pathways as a standard referral option for eligible youth, aligning documentation and data systems with existing organizational infrastructure, and building Navigator and supervisor roles into ongoing staffing plans.

This resource is intended to support organizations and agencies considering or actively implementing the Colorado Pathways to Success Model. It contains questions and key insights to guide implementation. This resource is a companion to the ***Pathways to Success Implementation Manual***, which provides more details for agencies implementing Pathways. For more information on the Pathways model intervention, see our ***Pathways to Success Intervention Manual***.