



National Mental Health Innovation Center
UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO ANSCHUTZ MEDICAL CAMPUS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CO Behavioral Healthcare Council's Day at the Capitol Features Virtual Reality National Mental Health Innovation Center to speak to lawmakers, demonstrate VR

DENVER (Jan. 13, 2018) – The [National Mental Health Innovation Center](#) (NMHIC) will join the [Colorado Behavioral Healthcare Council](#) (CBHC) and its 28 member organizations will be at the State Capitol building on January 17 for the Council's annual Lobby Day at the Capitol. This signature day for CBHC highlights the importance of the Colorado's community behavioral health system, as CNHC members meet with legislators from across the state to discuss crucial needs, such as funding for the opioid epidemic or increasing access to mental healthcare for Colorado residents.

New to the day, however, will be the opportunity to learn about how virtual reality has now come to the forefront of the mental health field. For the first time, CBHC will partner with the National Mental Health Innovation Center which specializes in this up and coming technology.

"The partnership that has grown between CBHC and NMHIC is exciting and gives us the opportunity to showcase new innovations in the delivery of mental health treatment," says Doyle Forrestal, CEO of CBHC. "In the very near future, community mental health centers will be able to utilize virtual reality to work with patients who suffer from anxiety, depression, and a full range of behavioral health issues."

"VR presents tremendous opportunity for mental health care," says Matt Vogl, executive director, NMHIC. "In treating anxieties, for example, VR allows exposure therapy that feels very real, done in a clinical setting. A therapist can guide a patient through her fear of flying or crowds – something that can't be practically done outside the virtual setting."

A person wearing virtual reality goggles sees a 3-D world with himself in that world. Almost immediately, the brain treats that as real, reacting as if the physical self is in the virtual world. With NMHIC's sophisticated VR set up, portable infrared room sensors add to the experience, communicating a user's position and actions in the virtual world.

"VR is innovation that can address longstanding issues in mental health," Vogl says. "Imagine a rural Coloradan with VR goggles at home, being guided by a therapist who is hundreds of miles away. That could smash the barrier to care that is all too common."

Legislators, their aides, and CBHC members will all have the opportunity to test these types of VR scenarios right at the Capitol. Two VR stations will be set up in the Old Supreme Court Chambers starting at 9:00 a.m., and a third station at the Scottish Rite Masonic Center, 1370 Grant Street, beginning at 8:00 a.m.

ABOUT THE NATIONAL MENTAL HEALTH INNOVATION CENTER

The National Mental Health Innovation Center was established in 2016 with a mission to find, develop and put in to practice big new ideas to prevent, treat and change the way people think about mental illness. As part of the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus, NMHIC has a unique role in

connecting academic research, patient treatment and industry innovation to accelerate mental health solutions that have significant impact for patients and entire communities.

mentalhealthinnovation.org

ABOUT CBHC

The Colorado Behavioral Healthcare Council (CBHC) envisions a state where all people have the opportunity to lead healthy, purposeful lives. Our 28 member organizations represent a statewide network of integrated care providers and care management organizations, including all of Colorado's 17 Community Mental Health Centers, 5 Behavioral Health Organizations, and 4 Managed Services Organizations, as well as 2 specialty health clinics. Together, we strengthen Colorado communities by ensuring innovative care supporting the health, wellbeing, and safety of all Coloradans.

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