

Colorado tackles eating disorders by limiting use of BMI and diet pill sales to kids

May 31 2023, by Jesse Bedayn



Visitors stand on the west steps of the Colorado Capitol, April 23, 2023, in Denver. Colorado is tackling a surge in eating disorders with two bills signed Tuesday, May 30. The legislation will create a state program dedicated finding solutions to the mental illness, ban the use of body mass index in determining treatment and restrict the sale of diet pills to minors. Credit: AP Photo/David Zalubowski, File

In the midst of a [surge in eating disorders](#) across the country, Colorado's acting governor signed bills Tuesday that will create a state program dedicated to addressing the mental illness, limit the use of body mass index in determining treatment and restrict the sale of diet pills to minors.

Colorado and several other states tackling the issue are responding to the nearly 30 million Americans—roughly the population of Texas—who will struggle with an [eating disorder](#), such as anorexia or bulimia, in their lifetime. More than 10,000 people will lose their life to the condition every year, according to data cited by the National Association of Anorexia Nervosa and Associated Disorders.

"Eating disorders are serious and have one of the highest mortality rates of any [mental illness](#)," Vincent Atchity, CEO of Mental Health Colorado, said in a statement on the bills. "We will save lives by removing barriers to care and helping those who are struggling (to) find healing."

The changes will take effect at different times, but roughly within a year.

One of the bills, signed by Colorado's Lieutenant Gov. Dianne Primavera in her capacity as acting governor, will largely ax the use of body mass index, or BMI, in determining the level of treatment for eating disorders, even though it remains an industry standard.

Proponents of the new law say the centuries old BMI—a calculation of someone's height and weight—is antiquated and flawed.

Eating disorders are not invariably linked to body weight or BMI, said Claire Engels, program coordinator for the Eating Disorder Foundation, which supported the [bill](#). Instead, they center around eating habits, anxiety, depression, trauma and control. That means those with eating

disorders who fall outside the BMI prescription struggle to get proper care or are expelled from treatment prematurely.

Instead, the law will compel health insurers to consider a patient's eating behaviors, [heart rate](#) or [blood pressure](#) among other criteria when determining treatment coverage.

The same law will also limit the sale of diet pills to minors after experts argued that they can exacerbate, or even instigate, eating disorders.

A second bill signed Tuesday will create a state program that will offer resources on eating disorders, administer a grant to research the mental illness, and raise awareness publicly and among students, parents and staff at schools.

The pandemic worsened the crisis by pushing some, especially teenagers, into isolation, filling hospital beds and further burdening the already overwhelmed treatment centers. Colorado is joined by a number of states, including California, New York and Texas, in considering bills to quell the problem this year.

Other proposals across the U.S. include restricting social media algorithms from promoting potentially [harmful content](#) and including curriculum on eating [disorders](#) in middle and high schools.

© 2023 The Associated Press. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed without permission.

Citation: Colorado tackles eating disorders by limiting use of BMI and diet pill sales to kids (2023, May 31) retrieved 5 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2023-05-colorado-tackles-disorders-limiting-bmi.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private

study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.