



# **Alcohol Use Disorder Treatment Practices at Denver Health**

## **A Summary of Survey Findings Prepared by the Center for Addiction Medicine Knowledge Management Team**

**February 2024**

### **Executive Summary**

In June 2023, the Denver Health Center for Addiction Medicine (CAM) Knowledge Management Team conducted a survey of 174 clinicians from 22 service areas who served patients with alcohol use disorder (AUD). The goal of the survey was to understand factors influencing AUD treatment decisions and current practices and patterns of pharmacological and behavioral health treatments. Clinicians were also surveyed about internal and external referral practices for patients with AUD. The survey is part of a broader effort to develop an AUD continuum of care evaluation model at Denver Health that identifies diagnoses, screenings, treatment, and retention for patients with AUD.

Results suggest that many clinicians consider complex patient-level factors – such as willingness to engage in treatment – as well as socioeconomic factors – such as housing status – when determining treatment for patients with AUD. There were substantial differences in the pharmacological and behavioral health treatment options that clinicians used depending on the type of clinician and the service area at Denver Health. The behavioral health treatments and support services that were used most often, including motivational

interviewing and warm handoffs, are not associated with distinct billing codes and therefore are challenging to track systematically. Clinicians who considered AUD severity for behavioral health treatment and referrals were more likely to report all types of treatment and referrals compared to those who did not consider AUD severity. Clinicians were more likely to provide or observe behavioral health treatments for patients with moderate AUD, compared to patients with mild or severe AUD.

These survey results provide a baseline for understanding AUD treatment practices across the Denver Health system. Because documentation quality varies throughout the continuum of care for patients with AUD - including documented diagnoses, referrals, and treatment – it is important to consider self-reported treatment practices alongside data extracted directly from electronic health records. Survey results will inform development of an AUD continuum of care model and identify areas of best practice as well as opportunities for quality improvement and additional training.