

THE YARROW COLLECTIVE

2024 ANNUAL REPORT &
STRATEGIC PRIORITIES
2025-2030



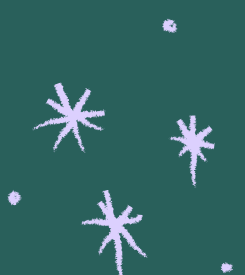
PEER SUPPORT, EDUCATION, & ADVOCACY
JANUARY 2025

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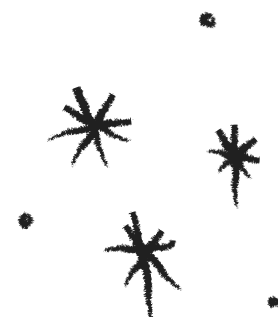


PEER SUPPORT, EDUCATION & ADVOCACY

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LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR



I am so proud to have led Yarrow Collective through tremendous growth this past year alongside an incredible team with a lot of heart. The last few years, we have listened diligently to the communities we are part of, dug deep into our values, and continuously renewed our commitment to the integrity of the peer support and harm reduction movements Yarrow Collective is founded upon.

Something that continuously strikes me about peer support is the magic of relationships without an agenda. At Yarrow Collective, we get to practice community without trying to “fix” each other.

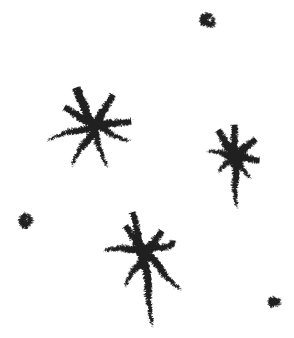
As we traverse the nonlinearity of our healing, I am continuously invited to sit with the discomfort of the despair and hopelessness people are going through, to bear witness to people’s most raw and human moments. I find the more I embrace this discomfort, the more I discover something unnameably beautiful beneath the despair — something perhaps more resilient than hope. We might call it community, we might call it connection, we might call it love or authenticity, we might call it the reason we’re still alive.



Probably each of us calls this ineffable thing something different, but when I catch that feeling in our work at Yarrow Collective, I know we are doing something right. I am ever-grateful and ever-humbled to witness the beauty and transformation that can come from crisis.



LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR



In 2024, we saw twice the number of participants at peer support groups than the year prior, launched a 1:1 peer support program, expanded our training opportunities in peer support and liberatory harm reduction approaches, became a 501(c)(3) independent from fiscal sponsorship, and grew our team with additional full-time positions. There is a huge demand for our work, that we have been responding to best we can, while staying connected to our most important asset: **Heart.**



As we head into this new year and as many in our communities are fielding panic and fear for the future, I am grounded in fierce devotion to the peer support movement Yarrow Collective is part of and the communities we serve. I hope you will join us in celebrating how far we've come, and in moving towards our dreams for the future.

With gratitude,
Silen Wellington

Your lives matter. Your voices matter. Your stories matter.

- Laverne Cox

2024 BOARD OF DIRECTORS



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Chair of the Board



NZE OKORONTA
Secretary of the Board



MARYBETH SWANSON
Treasurer of the Board

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SILEN WELLINGTON
Director



GEENA RUPP
Administrative Director

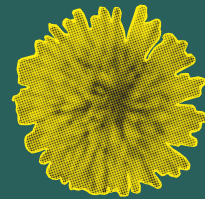
ASHLEIGH JONES
Training Director

LUCRECIA MEDRANO
Harm Reduction & BIPOC Director





THE MISSION THAT UNITES US



VISION

Our vision is for all Coloradans, particularly those with multiple-marginalized identities, to feel connected to community, access diverse behavioral health supports beyond clinical settings, and feel empowered within culturally relevant pathways to recovery and healing.

MISSION

Yarrow Collective is a *by/for/with* **Lived Experience Organization** that builds non-carceral, consent-based alternatives to behavioral health services through peer support and harm reduction.

As a community we:

- allow space for mental distress,
- awaken to the wisdom of our lived experiences,
- aspire towards healing justice,
- amplify our voices, &
- advocate for meaningful choice and change.

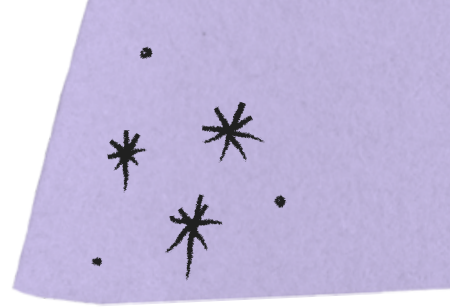
WHY PEER SUPPORT?

Yarrow Collective's programming is entirely driven by the voices and priorities of persons with lived/living experience with the challenges we aim to address.

The voices of persons with lived/living experience with mental health or substance use struggles are generally the least empowered in traditional system responses to behavioral health crises or problematic drug use, which has led to power imbalances, coercion, and treatment systems that reinforce systemic oppressions.

As a by//for//with organization, Yarrow Collective relies on the leadership of persons with lived/living experience, prioritizing BIPOC and LGBTQ+ community members for training and facilitating community-based peer support groups, social connectedness events, and 1:1 peer support. We believe that it is by//for//with programming that will ultimately address issues of access and equity related to bringing culturally relevant and contextualized care, support, and wellness to more people across Colorado.

Our communities are centered by, for, & with people who have lived/living experience with a psychiatric diagnosis, trauma, extreme states, houselessness, disabilities or chronic illness, problems with substances, incarceration, criminalization, and other life-interrupting challenges.



WHO WE SERVED IN 2024

The Yarrow Collective seeks to serve multiply-marginalized individuals who have lived/living experience with any range of mental health or substance use-related struggles.

Overall Participation Numbers



4,406

Drop-ins to peer support groups



1,119

Unduplicated peer support group participants



332

One-to-one peer support sessions



3,294

Community members attending a Yarrow event

Overall Demographics

93%

Hold at least one marginalized identity

65%

LGBTQ+

41%

BIPOC

72%

Living with a disability

Age

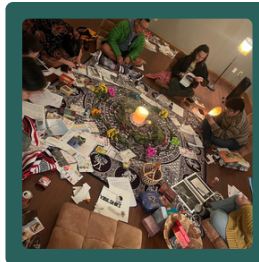
13-18 Years	7.5%	35-44 Years	22.4%
18-24 Years	14.8%	45-54 Years	14.3%
25-34 Years	31.7%	55+ Years	6.9%



2024 IMPACT OVERVIEW: PEER SUPPORT GROUPS

Yarrow Collective currently operates **15** Alternatives to Suicide-style **peer support groups per month** for

- adults in-person and virtually,
- teens,
- BIPOC-only adults,
- transgender & nonbinary adults and youth,
- people living with chronic illness or disability



* Alternatives to Suicide Values

Mutuality * Consent & Choice * Curiosity over Fear * Healing in Community

Drop-ins

2,998



Feel less alone as a result of coming to group

92%

Would strongly recommend this group to others

95%



Feel like they can count on people in group for support

95%

"I finally feel less alone in my struggles."

"This is the only place where I feel seen and normal."

"It's helped me be less suicidal and feel more motivated in my own personal work, art, and activism about disability."

"In group, I can actually say that stuff (about suicidality) out loud and it's been really cathartic."

"I've felt safe and supported here in groups more than I ever have."

2024 IMPACT OVERVIEW: HARM REDUCTION

Yarrow Collective operates **five liberatory harm reduction spaces for people who use drugs**, including a Risk Less Live More group for folks who are unhoused, BIPOC-only Saving Ourselves, a group at Longview Behavioral Health Center, New Sight in the Larimer County Jail, and mobile harm reduction outreach.

* The goal of all of Yarrow’s peer support groups is to **foster connection and belonging**, particularly for persons who are unable or apprehensive about seeking care in traditional behavioral healthcare settings for any variety of reasons such as cost, structural barriers, oppressive systems, stigmatization, or past unhelpful experiences in clinical or criminal justice settings.

* **Liberatory Harm Reduction Peer Support** involves relating with substance use and people who use drugs with radical acceptance, compassion, and dignity of all people. It holds deep roots in by/for/with liberatory and social justice movements.



400

People who use drugs attended a harm reduction group

674

Naloxone kits

1,486

Fentanyl testing strips

54

People who use drugs received 1:1 harm reduction peer support

292

Acudetox sessions

61%

in our New Sight and Longview groups are **criminal-justice involved**

100%

in our Saving Ourselves group are **BIPOC**

25%

in our community harm reduction groups are **LGBTQ+**

68%

in our Risk Less, Live More group are **unhoused**

2024 IMPACT OVERVIEW: TRAINING & COMMUNITY

Yarrow Collective regularly coordinates and hosts community-building and educational events by//for//with people with lived/living experience.

Our mini-workshops and multi-day trainings cover the principles and values of harm reduction peer support, non-coercive approaches to suicidality, and best practices in peer-to-peer community alternatives.

Our community events spark awareness and dialogue about peer support and build a sense of connected and thriving community. A cornerstone of Yarrow Collective's work is our strong belief that **healing happens in community**.



Training, Workshops, and Webinars

38



People who attended a training, workshop, or webinar

2,554

Community-building Events

18



People who attended a community-building event

431

Training Provided on:

- *Intentional Peer Support*
- *Alternatives to Suicide*
- *Harm Reduction Peer Support*
- *Peer Support Orientations*
- *Acudetox*
- *Webinars on Special Topics in Noncarceral Alternatives*

STORIES OF IMPACT



I am a wife, mother of two amazing children, and in recovery from a 13 year addiction. I felt completely alone when I finally decided to quit using. My Yarrow peer supporter **helped my family get a roof over our heads and out of a toxic environment**, and she did it in such a supportive, non-judgmental way. She understood what I was going through and gave me just enough of a push without doing it for me. Support like this is exactly what is needed in this world!

~Marina



HEALING IN COMMUNITY

Before attending the in-person Alternatives to Suicide group, I lived with suicidality for most of my life. I would go to the hospital once a year for 5 years. When I went to the in-person group and talked about my suicidality, I didn't feel like they were trying to fix me, but to understand me. Since then, **it has been over 2 years since I went to an inpatient hospital** and I can't thank the Yarrow Collective enough for believing in me before I could believe in myself.

~Art



SUPPORTING YOUNG MOTHERS IN RECOVERY



My Yarrow peer supporter has been an instrumental part of my journey, providing unwavering support and guidance during some of the most challenging times in my life. Through Yarrow, I've receive one-on-one support that has **empowered my decision-making, transportation, job search assistance, emergency support for my baby, recovery support** for substance use challenges, and constant comfort and strength. My peer supporter's presence in my life has positively impacted my mental health, relationships, and overall well-being for myself and my family. I am grateful for their tireless efforts and commitment to helping me achieve my goals. ~Brittani M.

DEVELOPING YOUTH LEADERSHIP



ECHO (youth peer support group) gave me the first taste of peer support and, after coming to groups for some time, I **found a space where I could grow into a leader** and I got trained to co-facilitate. Through facilitating groups, I've learned how to truly provide a space for people to be comfortable and share their story as a younger person – a chance they might not be able to find in many more places. I have now gone on to blend my passion for art and mental health to create Yarrow's *Eclipse* drop-in mental health support space. ~Rocky

Strategic Priorities:

Harm Reduction

Peer Support



01

Expand individual and group community-based peer-to-peer support alternatives.

- Maintain virtual and in-person community-based peer support groups
- Expand 1:1 peer support in the community



02

Build more peer support connections for persons in jail or in community re-entry.

- Train and support inmate-to-inmate peer support in Larimer County Jail and Department of Corrections.
- Expand 1:1 peer support for community re-entry



03

Build thriving communities of connection and support through educational, social, cultural, and expressive events and gatherings.



Strategic Priorities: Peer Respite



Establish a community-based peer respite in Larimer County as an alternative to hospitalization or police for people in acute distress.

A peer respite is a voluntary, short-term, overnight option in a homelike environment that provides community-based, **non-clinical crisis support** to help people find new understanding and ways to move forward. Peer respites serve as **psychiatric hospital diversion programs** to support individuals experiencing or at-risk of a psychiatric crisis. Fourteen states have peer respites, largely funded by state and local behavioral health agencies.

Benefits of Peer Respite:

- Costs significantly less than hospital care
- Respite guests are significantly less likely to use psychiatric inpatient or emergency services
- Respite guests report significant improvements in mental health, empowerment, and satisfaction relative to hospital care
- Respites provide less coercive and less intrusive supports



Strategic Priorities: Training

Expand educational offerings to serve as a peer training hub statewide.



01

Expand Intentional Peer Support, Alternatives to Suicide, and Liberatory Harm Reduction trainings to clinical and peer organizations across the state and beyond. Create a statewide network of peer trainers .



02

Sensitize criminal justice and clinical professionals on the values and principles of peer support and special current issues on best practices.

03

Build critical consciousness among the peer support workforce about liberatory and social justice roots of peer support and harm reduction work.



04

Support a thriving peer workforce through co-reflection groups for peer supporters internal and external to Yarrow.

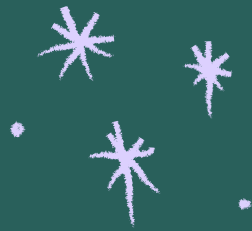
Strategic Priorities: Organizational



- 01 Secure an accessible **brick-and-mortar space** for Yarrow peer support groups, educational events, harm reductions services, offices, and 1:1 peer support.
- 02 Increase capacity to serve in **advocacy** roles across the state through committee memberships, policy statements, and greater outreach to relevant private, local, and state organizations and entities.
- 03 Increase the **accessibility and sustainable growth** trajectory of Yarrow's programming by diversifying our funding streams, including through government contracts, private philanthropy, and more.



THANK YOU TO OUR FUNDERS



Guber Family Giving Fund

And the many private donors who have contributed \$5 to \$5,000.

We thank you for your contributions and support!

CONTACT US

We delight in the beauty of the butterfly, but rarely admit the changes it has gone through to achieve that beauty.

-Maya Angelou



FOR MORE ABOUT US OR TO DONATE

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