

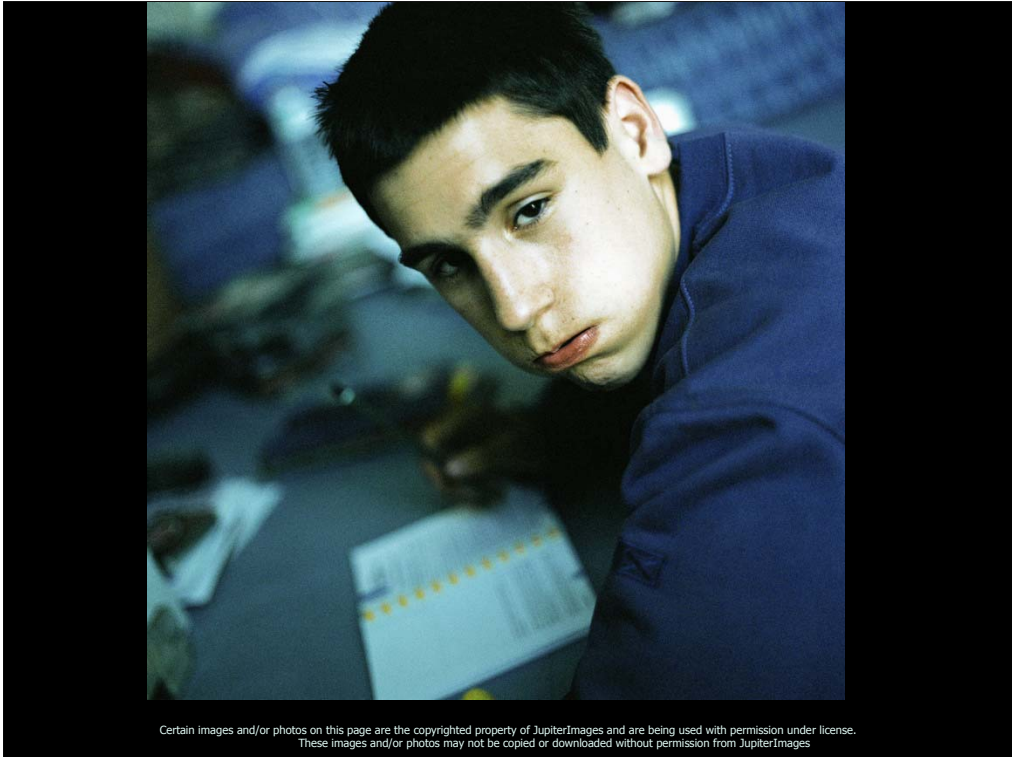


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I'd like for you to get to know Joe. Joe's really a nice guy once you get to know him, but he's had a pretty tough life, and just now he doesn't care too much whether he lives or dies.



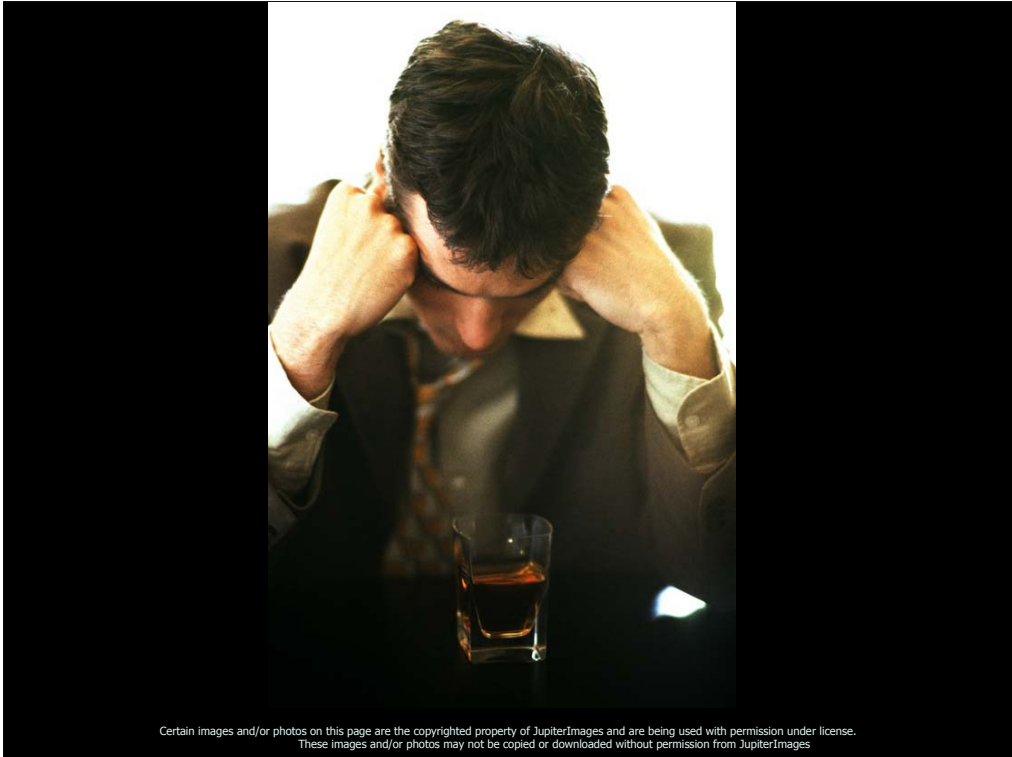
And if you want to get to know him, you'll have to go on down to the jail, because that's where he is.



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Joe's early years were pretty normal; he was a bright, outgoing kid. Maybe a little more moody than other kids, but not so much that anybody really noticed. At around 15, Joe's grades at school started to decline. His teachers were mystified by him – he was friendly, helpful, and a good student sometimes, but exceptionally quiet and nonresponsive at others. And sometimes, he was fidgety, tense, and the most minor things irritated him.

Joe's single mom noticed a change in him, but chalked it up to normal adolescence. She worked hard to provide for her three kids and didn't have much time left over to pay close attention. And he always squeaked through, passing all his classes.



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Joe found that he didn't like those agitated, irritable feelings, and he soon discovered that drinking and smoking pot made him more mellow. The problem was that those substances were permanently affecting his brain, and his mood swings got worse. By the time Joe was 21, he was addicted to alcohol and drugs.

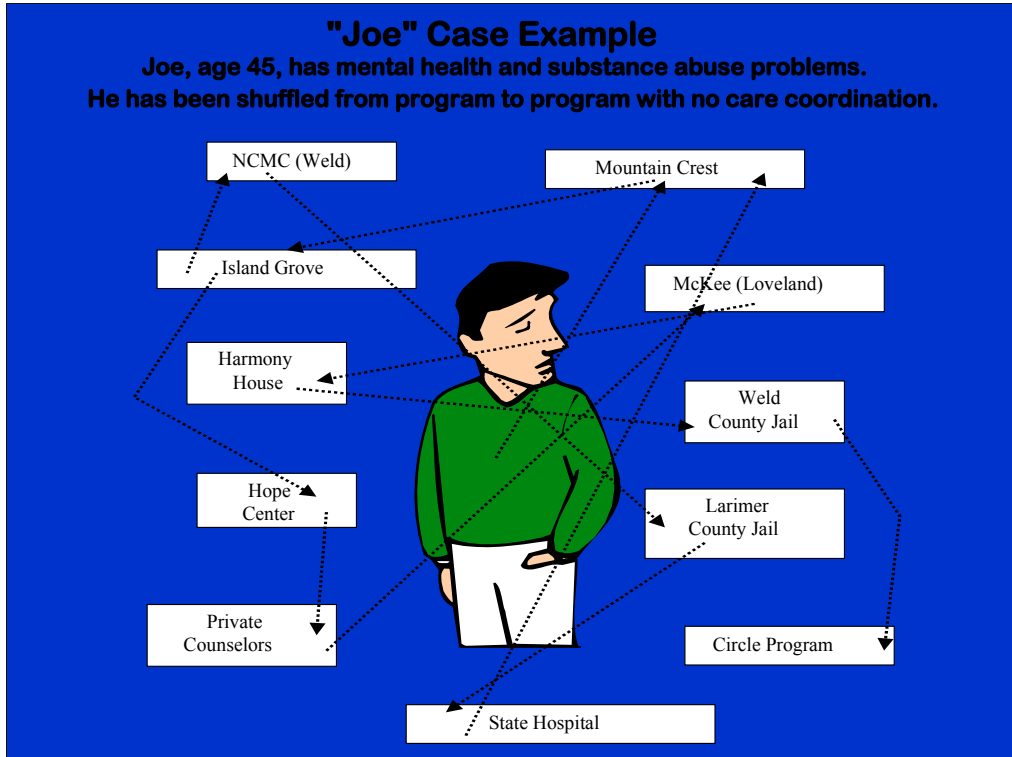
By 25, Joe recognized that although occasionally he was still calm and functional, at other times there was a firestorm in his brain so great that he could hardly stand it.



By 30, he'd lost several jobs and just about all his friends, and had entered a cycle of hitting the lowest of lows, living on the streets and barely surviving, then getting some help and doing a little better for awhile, and then regressing.

## "Joe" Case Example

Joe, age 45, has mental health and substance abuse problems.  
He has been shuffled from program to program with no care coordination.



When we meet Joe, he is 45. In the past two years since he's been in our community, he's been involved with at least 11 organizations, none of whom were aware that he had received treatment from so many other providers.

**\$250,000**



He's been contacted by police at least 50 times, has been in and out of ER, detox, and jail, has nearly lost his life several times, has cost the system nearly a quarter of a million dollars, and the outcome was jail.

**Mental  
Illness**



**Disease of  
the brain**



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Joe is a person with a disease. Just like any one of us might at any time get heart disease or lung disease or cancer, Joe's biological disease attacks an organ, only instead of attacking the heart or the lungs, it has attacked Joe's brain.

**Treatment works!**

Like cancer, we have effective treatments for biological mental disorders. Like cancer, the treatments work best when caught early, before further damage is done. Like cancer, the treatments work to varying degrees of success, but we've come a long way in the effectiveness of treatments in the last 20 years.

# **Community Mental Health and Substance Abuse Partnership of Larimer County**

I have been asked to talk about the Mental Health and Substance Abuse Partnership in Larimer County, why we came together, who we are and how we are achieving success. We came together because providers and consumers of mental health and substance abuse services were angry and frustrated with a system that did not work for anyone.



**“The ‘system’ is a rat maze – overwhelming to both providers and families. It’s complicated, and the funding streams are not connected.”**

**- Health & Human Service Provider**

Here is how one of our local service providers put it:

**“People are dying”**

**- Consumer Advocate**

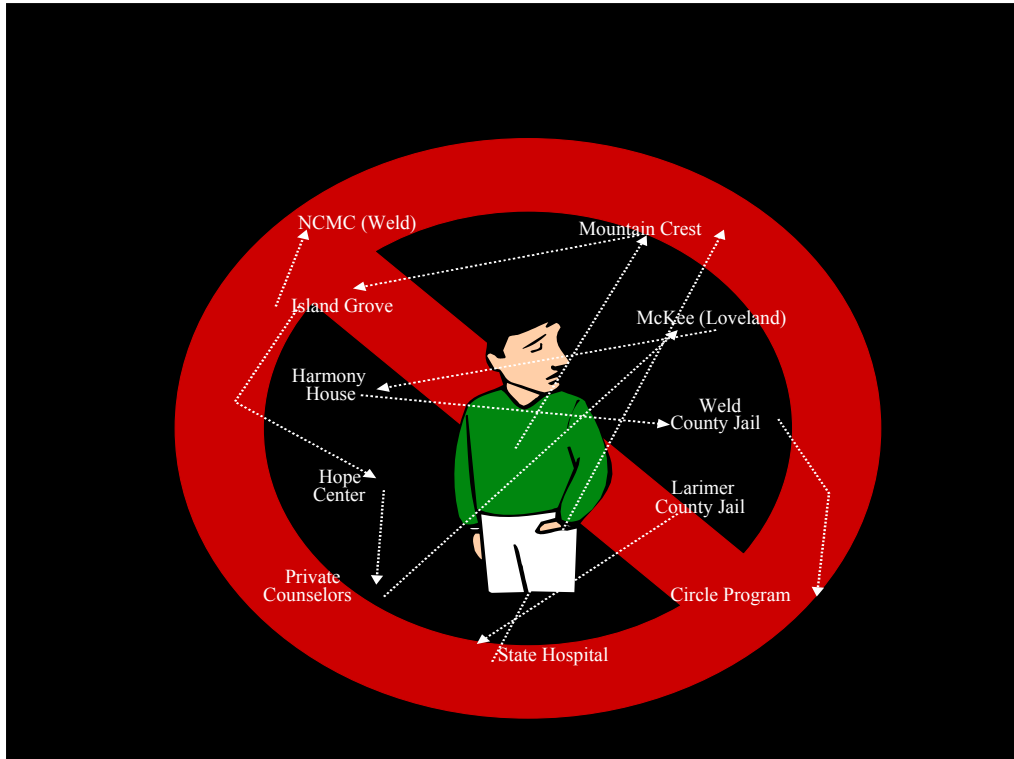
We came together because people were ending up in emergency departments or jail. In the words of one of our consumer leaders we came together because “people are dying.”

Our goal is to significantly change our system of mental health and substance abuse care. To create a system that helps people like Joe; that helps anyone with mental illness or substance use disorders.

**Restructure how we provide mental health and substance abuse services to be more effective in helping the 30,000 people in our community who suffer the most from these issues.**

Our goal is to significantly change our system of mental health and substance abuse care. To create a system that helps people like Joe; that helps anyone with mental illness or substance use disorders.

We really are all about making significant and lasting change in our systems of care.



In other words, we want to change Joe's story. Our quiet mantra is becoming "No more Joes"

*[NOTE: During the next series of slides Erin describes her organization – a partnership representing 34 organizations and consumer groups. She highlights their accomplishments to date, what is currently underway and their goals for the future.]*

**What if...**

So we are doing all this to prevent more stories like Joe's. If our efforts are as successful and we believe they will be we think Joe's story could look different. What if:



What if:

Joe's shop teacher had noticed the signs of his disease when he was 15, and had encouraged his Mom to call Connections. At Connections Joe was referred to a private therapist who provided treatment for both his mental illness and his substance abuse problems at a cost Joe's Mom could afford. He also got hooked up with a psychiatrist who prescribed and monitored appropriate medications.

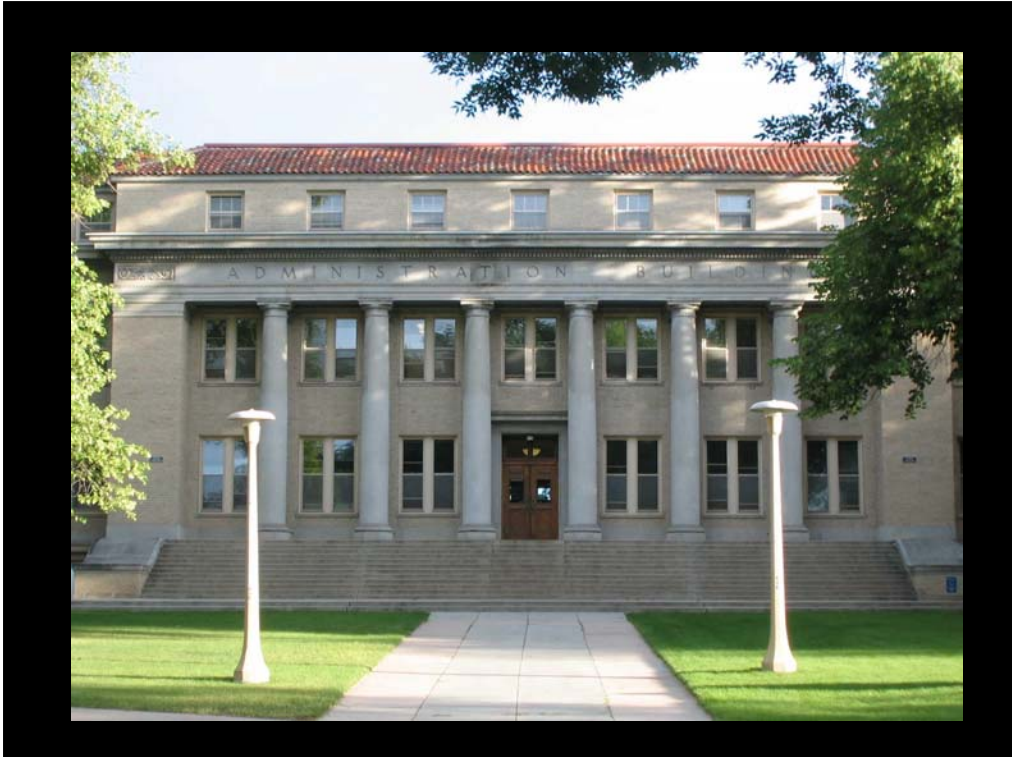


After doing well for a few years, Joe begins to struggle with the pressures and lack of structure in his early adult years. He goes off his meds and starts drinking, smoking a lot of pot and using other drugs. Late one night, Joe starts talking about suicide, seriously alarming his girlfriend. She gets him to the hospital emergency room where he enters a special assessment center designed to serve those who have mental health or substance abuse crises. The center gets a records release, looks up his records and consults with his past provider(s). Joe is evaluated right away. Joe is a bright guy, and in a supportive setting, he acknowledges that his illness has become life-threatening.



With the support of his girlfriend and Mom, Joe enters a detox center. Then he goes to a 30 day residential treatment center that is known for its expertise in both mental illness and substance abuse, and he receives treatment for both issues at the same time.

30 days is not enough time for most people to achieve sobriety, and Joe is still in a fragile state. He worries that he will not find a job and will slide back into his old habits. He is offered and accepts a placement in a new after-care transitional housing center for three months. Here he gets continued therapy and assistance finding a place to live and a steady job. When he leaves this program, he maintains contact with his care coordinator for another six months. Joe is successful in breaking his addiction, which was interrupted after 2 years instead of continuing on through his life.



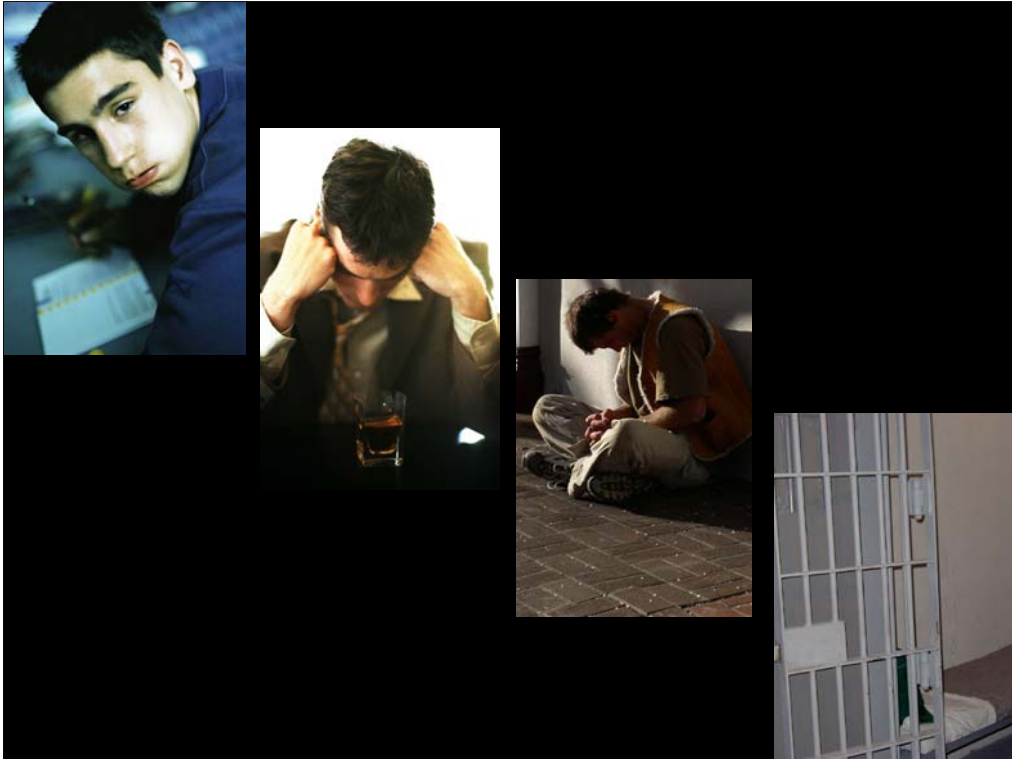
At 22, Joe enters college and goes on to a challenging but fulfilling, productive life. His disease will require constant attention throughout his life, but at 45 he has a healthy, caring family and enjoys his life with them. He has had no jail time, has used remarkably less primary care, the police and ambulance don't even know who he is, and he has never again been close to suicide.



What if, this was Joe's story?

The first Joe is reality, the second Joe is the changed reality that we're working on. We have more work to do before the 2<sup>nd</sup> Joe can become a reality but we have achieved some critical successes so far. Our journey has not been without potholes and roadblocks but we have managed to overcome most of our challenges.

I am honored to be here today representing what I consider to be a very exciting project. I have a closing comment for you but would be happy to take questions if there are any ...



In closing:

We believe if we don't change our local system, we will continue to throw away the lives of people who are afflicted with a disease. A disease that, like cancer, they never asked for nor can control without interventions.

**What  
if...**



We need to see change at all levels. We would love to see every community in Colorado join in efforts to create positive change at the state level. What if, Colorado led the country in effective system change around mental health and substance abuse treatment?

Thanks for including me in your discussions today.