



## **PRESS RELEASE**

August 18, 2025

# **Peak Vista Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner Fellowship Program Graduates First Class**

**Colorado Springs, Colo.** – On Aug. 22, 2025, four individuals will graduate from Peak Vista Community Health Centers' (Peak Vista) Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner (PMHNP) Fellowship Program. Two will stay at Peak Vista and two will stay in Colorado Springs, continuing to care for the underserved population.

### **The PMHNP Fellowship is one of only four in Colorado.**

Peak Vista announced the PMHNP Fellowship in June of 2023 and welcomed the first class of Fellows in September of last year. It is one of four such programs in Colorado, with the others in Denver and the Western Slope.

The PMHNP Fellowship creates opportunities for nurse practitioner graduates from Colorado and beyond to receive mentorship and support along their professional journeys, with the ultimate goal of reducing provider burnout and addressing the shortage of mental health practitioners. During their 12-month stay, Fellows see patients three days a week, building rapport with their patients, growing their confidence in providing care and learning how to manage complex community health cases. They spend the rest of their time learning more about sub-specialties within psychiatry and researching ways to better the community's health.

"I love to see their growth," said Dr. Patricia Bursnall, director of the PMHNP Fellowship. "The Fellows' ability to dive into complicated patient care in a holistic, empathic manner – with special attention to the social determinants of health – inspires me to work hard to create a supportive program. With each group, we will continue to break down access barriers and provide quality psychiatric care to our community."

### **Colorado lacks accessible mental health care. The PMHNP Fellowship is solving that problem.**

- **More people need mental health care than ever before.** In 2023, the Colorado Health Institute (CHI) recorded that one in four Coloradans report having poor mental health – the highest number it has seen. After Peak Vista launched the PMHNP Fellowship, it saw more than 1,000 internal referrals from providers,

– more –

demonstrating the community's need for mental health services. The PMHNP Fellowship saw and cared for over 800 new patients between September 2024 and July 2025, through more than 4,000 visits. Those numbers continue to increase.

- **Mental health care is hard to access.** CHI also found that more than 880,000 Coloradans could not access mental or behavioral health services, often citing difficulties getting an appointment when they need it. The national average wait time for behavioral health services, according to the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), is 48 days. After training through the PMHNP Fellowship, the Fellows decreased their new patient wait times from two months to two weeks – 34 days under the national average.
- **We don't have enough mental health practitioners.** According to the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment Colorado Health Systems Directory Primary Care Office, there were 92 primary care physicians per 100,000 people in Colorado in 2021. For psychiatrists, that number was only 15. Studies show that nurse practitioner fellowships increase job retention, and the results from the first class of the PMHNP Fellowship support that.

Taylor Hartke, PMHNP-BC, a fellow in the 2025 class, said, "The PMHNP Fellowship was invaluable in shaping me into a better provider, not just through clinical training but through the unwavering emotional support and guidance of my attendings. Their passion for patient care and dedication to teaching created an environment that made all the difference in my first year as a provider."

### **The class of 2025 will provide mental health care in Colorado and beyond.**

All the Fellows from the 2025 class will remain in Colorado, a resounding boon for mental health care access in our community.

Taylor Hartke, PMHNP-BC

Hartke will stay in the Colorado Springs community, working in a holistic environment and working with the underserved population.

Brittany Marquez, PMHNP-BC

Marquez will remain at the PMHNP Fellowship as a senior fellow, educating the class of 2026.

Grace Otuokere, DNP, PMHNP-BC

Otuokere plans to continue caring for the underserved in Colorado Springs.

Rebecca Sours, FNP-C, PMHNP-C

Sours will continue with the PMHNP Fellowship as an attending faculty member.

The PMHNP Fellowship program has already selected the Fellows for the class of 2026, seeing triple the applications this year. Applications for the class of 2027 open in November 2025.

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### **About Peak Vista Community Health Centers**

Peak Vista Community Health Centers is a nonprofit organization providing exceptional health care to people facing access barriers through clinical programs and education. Celebrating over 50 years of community health service, Peak Vista offers primary medical, integrated behavioral health and dental care services. We proudly serve over 74,000 patients annually through 20 outpatient centers in Colorado's Pikes Peak and East Central regions. To learn more about Peak Vista, visit [PeakVista.org](https://PeakVista.org).

### **MEDIA CONTACT**

Zoe Morton

Assistant Director of Communications, PR and Events

Peak Vista Community Health Centers

(719) 344-6606

[Zoe.Morton@peakvista.org](mailto:Zoe.Morton@peakvista.org)