



Annual Report  
2019-2020



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## **Brief History**

In December 2007, Metropolitan State University of Denver student Abigail Roberston was murdered by her ex-boyfriend. This tragedy was deeply felt by the entirety of the Auraria community and in 2008, the Auraria Healthy Relationships Coalition - a tri-institutional committee of student affairs professionals, campus safety representatives, students, and Abigail's mother, Kathy Robertson - successfully applied to the Department of Justice's Office on Violence Against Women grant program, "Grants to Reduce Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, Sexual Assault, and Stalking on Campus". Through the award of this \$500,000 grant, the Phoenix Center at Auraria (PCA) was established in early 2009. This initial grant was three years in duration and was followed by a period of primarily student fee funding until the PCA was awarded a Domestic Violence Program (DVP) grant in 2013 and a Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) grant in 2017.

Upon its establishment, the PCA hosted a staff of two professional staff members and was able to serve 70 clients in the 2009-2010 academic year. Since that time, the PCA has grown significantly to a staff of 4.5 professional staff members, expanded to a second site at the University of Colorado Anschutz with 1 professional staff member, and was able to collectively serve 233 clients in-office and field 249 helpline calls in the 2018-2019 academic year.

## **Place in the CU System**

The Phoenix Center at Auraria is the only service provider of its kind in the University of Colorado system providing comprehensive advocacy, crisis counseling, and prevention education resources. The nearest related program is CU Boulder's Office of Victim Assistance, a subsidiary of the counseling center, which provides advocacy and counseling services but does not provide prevention education. The Phoenix Center at Auraria is a leader in the field of interpersonal violence and prevention resources and utilizes an innovative anti-oppressionist framework to support numerous campus partners as well as PCA clients.



## Mission & Goals

### Office Mission Statement

The mission of the Phoenix Center at Auraria (PCA) is to implement campus response services, provide education, and facilitate dialogue related to interpersonal violence in the Auraria community. Through a dedication to the empowerment model of service and a seamless implementation of campus response services, we work to ensure that the students, faculty, and staff associated with Metro State University Denver, University of Colorado Denver, and the Community College Denver (hereafter the tri-institutions) may continue pursuit of their educational, personal, and professional goals regardless of their experiences with interpersonal violence (IPV).

### Office Vision Statement

The vision of the Phoenix Center at Auraria is to create a trauma-informed and prevention-focused campus environment which is no longer conducive to ongoing incidents of interpersonal violence. Additionally, the PCA envisions an environment in which no student, faculty, or staff member's goals are negatively impacted by lack of institutional support following an experience of interpersonal violence.

### Office Goals

#### *Goal Progress*

In August of 2019, the professional staff of the PCA came together to outline a number of goals for completion by the end of the 2019-2020 academic year. These goals are the following:

- Continue to expand workshop offerings and venues
- Increase active event programming
- Honor 10 year anniversary
- Provide support groups for survivors and/or loved ones of survivors
- Explore student advisory board
- Provide January VPE training
- Formalize Phoenix Center at Anschutz independent operation
- Successfully reapply for VOCA funding

Through pursuit of our goals and dedication to our mission as stated above we were able to accomplish many, though not all, of our goals. Notably, the Phoenix Center at Auraria was significantly negatively impacted by the global pandemic which forced operations to move wholly remote in March of 2020.

- We were able to add additional workshops and expand collaborations to include additional content related to comprehensive sexuality education, "Queer Sex Ed", and undertook an overhaul of our existing programming.



- During the time the PCA was able to operate in-person, active programming was increased through events such as “Coffee & Sex” pop-ups where passers-by could stop for a free cup of coffee and discuss any questions or thoughts they had regarding healthy sexuality and consent. Additionally, the PCA undertook a number of pop-up self-care events to support the campus community.
- Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting budget impacts, the PCA was unable to honor its 10<sup>th</sup> year on the Auraria campus.
- Due to ongoing staffing challenges and the impacts of the pandemic, the PCA was not able to provide support groups for survivors and loved ones of survivors during this academic year.
- The PCA began exploring the possibility of a student advisory board and has reimagined this endeavor to expand the existing advisory board (consisting of the Deans of Students from each Auraria Institution) to include students, faculty, and other staff members of the universities. This goal will continue to be pursued in the coming year.
- The PCA was able to provide January VPE training and will continue to do so on an ongoing basis so as to provide student interns and employees with additional opportunities to participate in PCA programming.
- The Phoenix Center at Anschutz, formerly a sub-site of the Phoenix Center at Auraria, is currently operating independently with the exception of conjoined grant projects as directed by the Vice Chancellor.
- The PCA was delighted to apply for and receive additional funding through the Victims of Crime Act and this project will begin January 2021.

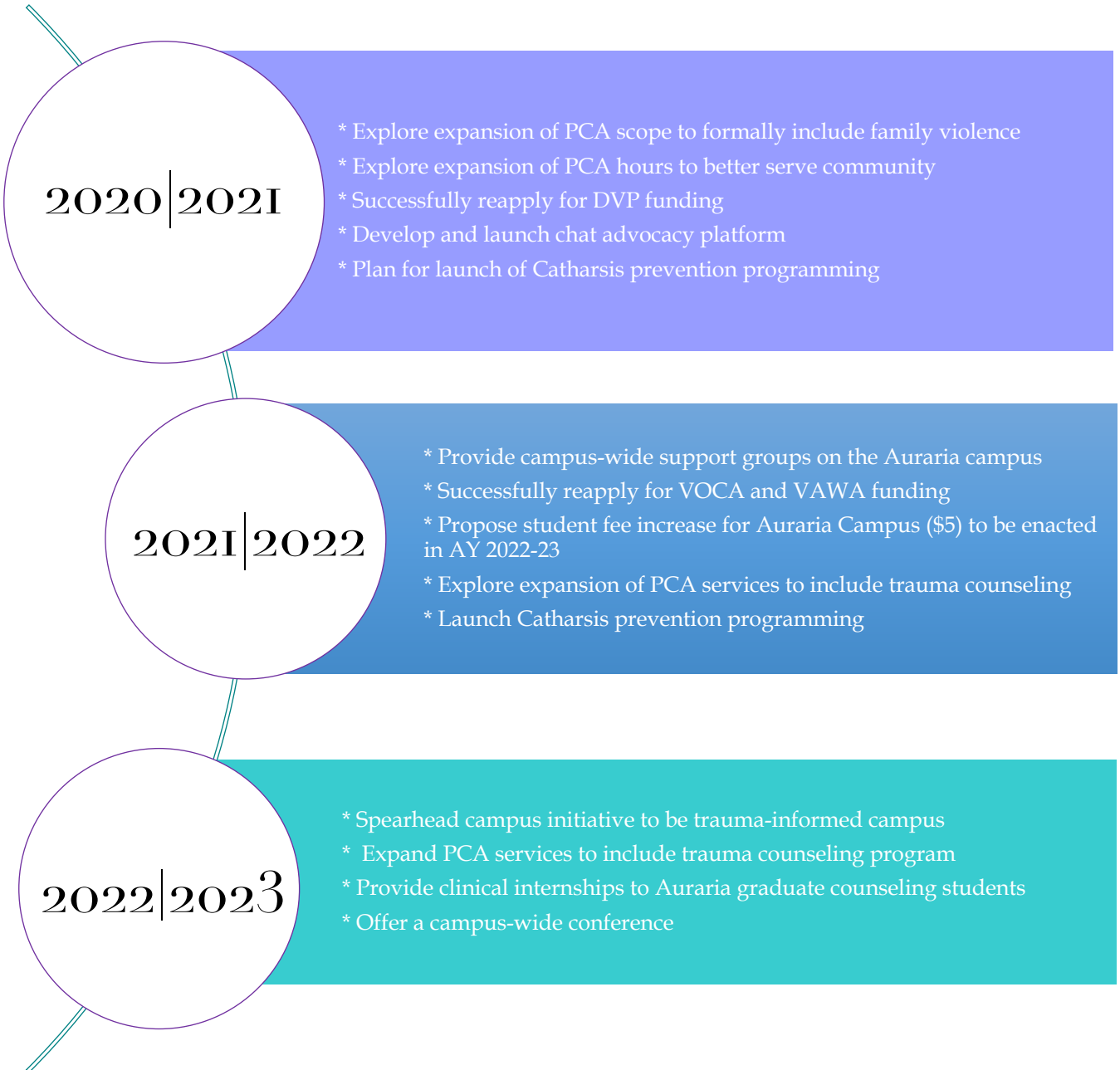
In addition to the goals stated for the 2019-2019 year, the PCA was additionally able to achieve a goal previously set for future years:

- During the renewal cycle for the existing VOCA grant, the PCA determined to apply for prevention education funding (previously slated as a goal for 2021-2022) and was awarded a sizeable grant through the Violence Against Women Act which will begin January 2021.



*Longterm Goals*

In August of 2019, the staff at the PCA conducted a summit to review our mission, vision, and goals. We developed the following list of goals and direction for our future:





## **Impact of COVID-19**

On March 13, 2020, the Phoenix Center at Auraria was required to close its on-campus location and pivot to fully remote services due to the COVID-19 pandemic. While the Universities had expected this remote phase to last only a short time, the remote work period extended through the end of the academic year and into the next. University finance departments project that this pandemic will result in a 5% budget shortfall due to loss of enrollment and subsequent student fees. Due to the PCA's diverse funding model, it remains largely operational and shielded in part from the projected budgetary impacts.

In addition to funding impacts, this period of remote working and advocacy required the PCA to rapidly innovate and change programming and services to meet the ongoing needs of the Auraria community. The following are the initiatives that were developed and undertaken during this time period.

### **Prevention Education**

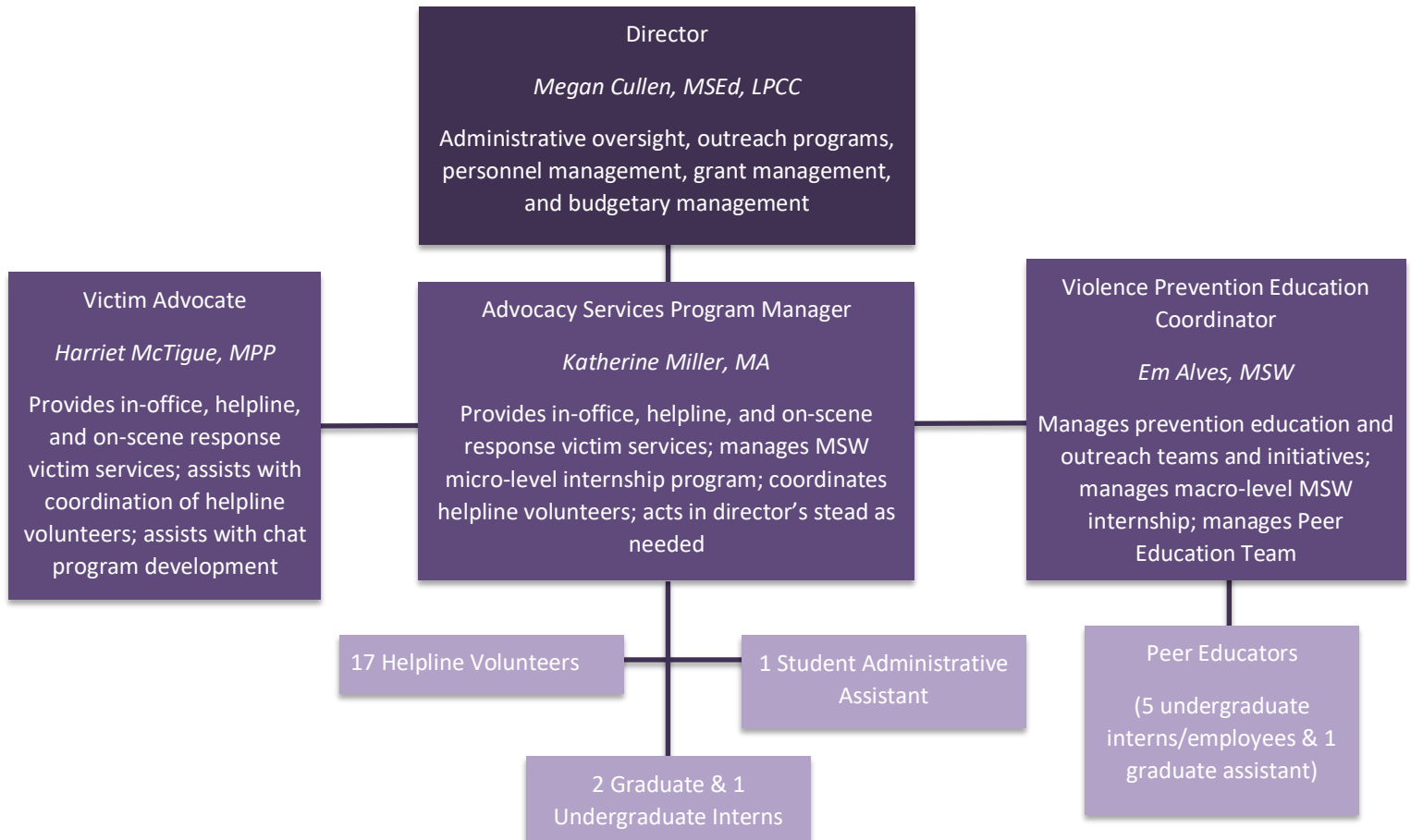
The PCA recognized that prevention education initiatives would have to change dramatically due to a decrease in classroom presentations, lack of bathroom sign exposure and access, and an inability to do traditional, in-person prevention programming. As such, the VPE Coordinator increased social media posting, reached out to faculty and staff to discuss virtual training options, developed collaborations which allowed virtual events to occur, and developed the PCA's first podcast: The Phoenix Cast.

### **Advocacy**

The advocacy staff, lead by the Advocacy Services Program Manager, worked diligently to transition to zoom and phone appointments for all advocacy clientele. This included developing an emergency tele-advocacy policy, developing related consent forms, moving intake paperwork to a virtual platform, engaging online scheduling in a much more meaningful way than had previously been utilized, beginning to develop the chat platform (slated for launch January 2021), taking on the helpline without volunteer support for much of the summer, altering Helpline training and supervision, and providing a much greater level of diverse services to clients (e.g. housing, financial support, navigating health anxiety, etc.)



## Organizational Chart 2019-2020







## Trainings, Outreach, and Education

The PCA is committed to preventing instances of relationship violence, sexual violence, and stalking through comprehensive education. The standardized curricula offerings for the 2018-2019 academic year were as follows:

**PCA General Overview** | The PCA Overview presentations reviews the services available to students, faculty, and staff of CU Denver, MSU Denver, and CCD.

**Supporting Survivors** | This skill building session breaks down some survivor myths, discusses victim blaming, and dives into how to respond when someone discloses to you. *This curriculum can also be co-presented with the CU Denver Office of Equity.*

**Interpersonal Violence 101** | This session will provide a general overview of all aspects of interpersonal violence and will include interactive activities to help folks think about the dynamics of violence and issues such as consent, healthy relationships, and how to help a friend.

**Interpersonal Violence 301** | IPV 301 is a graduate-level curriculum addressing interpersonal violence in our society through collaborative discussions regarding identity and privileges and the intersections with interpersonal violence, effective bystander intervention, media literacy, and developing professional and empowering responses to survivor disclosures.

**Healthy Relationships** | An interactive discussion in which Violence Prevention Educators and participants work to create a shared definition of healthy relationships (intimate or otherwise) by placing emphasis on the importance of our personal values, boundaries, and needs. The group will also explore healthy ways love is expressed, harbingers of relationships in trouble, and power and control dynamics. In this way the course works to empower participants with the knowledge and ability to differentiate among healthy, unhealthy, and abusive relationships.

**Bystander Intervention** | Have you ever wanted to step into a situation because you knew something was wrong, particularly if it is a friend you are worried about? This workshop discusses bystander intervention and works to develop strategies to intervene in difficult situations. The focus is on incidents of stalking, sexual assault and relationship violence, but principles can be applied to much more.

**Media Literacy** | This workshop provokes discussion about what interpersonal violence is and how media and pop culture messages contribute to the normalization of it in our culture. Through activities, images and video clips the concepts of sexual objectification and gender construction in the social media age will be illustrated. The discussion will also look at intersections of race, class, and power as they relate to interpersonal violence. This workshop is intended to help participants think critically



about a media heavy society and how it can affect views on interpersonal violence and what individuals and groups can do to create social change.

**Gender Construction** | This workshop is designed to highlight how language and societally constructed gender roles can contribute to sexism and interpersonal violence. We will explore how and why a binary gender system contributes to interpersonal violence and how we can help disarm and shift harmful gender stereotypes. This workshop aims to deconstruct the social construction of gender and help attendees critically think about gender privilege, inequality, and interpersonal violence.

**Comprehensive Sexuality Education** | In partnership with CCD's first year curriculum, the PCA now offers a sexuality education curriculum which intentionally navigates the needs of the LGBTQIA community and provides necessary information to students who may not have received comprehensive education in the past.

Additionally, the PCA was able to offer a number of customized curriculums to campus partners, academic departments, and administrative departments which were tailored to their individual needs.

## **Community & Campus Involvement**

### Campus Committees

The Phoenix Center at Auraria is involved in a number of tri-institutional and university-specific committees which are focused on providing students, faculty, and staff at each institution with an engaging and rewarding educational and professional environment. The PCA chairs the Auraria Outreach & Education committee which meets monthly to discuss PCA programming initiatives relevant to the campus community. The PCA also served on the Restorative Justice exploratory committee for CU Denver.

### Community Involvement

In addition to serving on various campus committees, the PCA also serves on the Sexual Assault Interagency Council, the SAIC Title IX Working Group, and the Campus Partners Group with various community stakeholders committed to keeping our metro area safe and engaging in trauma-informed practices.



**2019-2020  
Phoenix Center at Auraria  
Utilization**

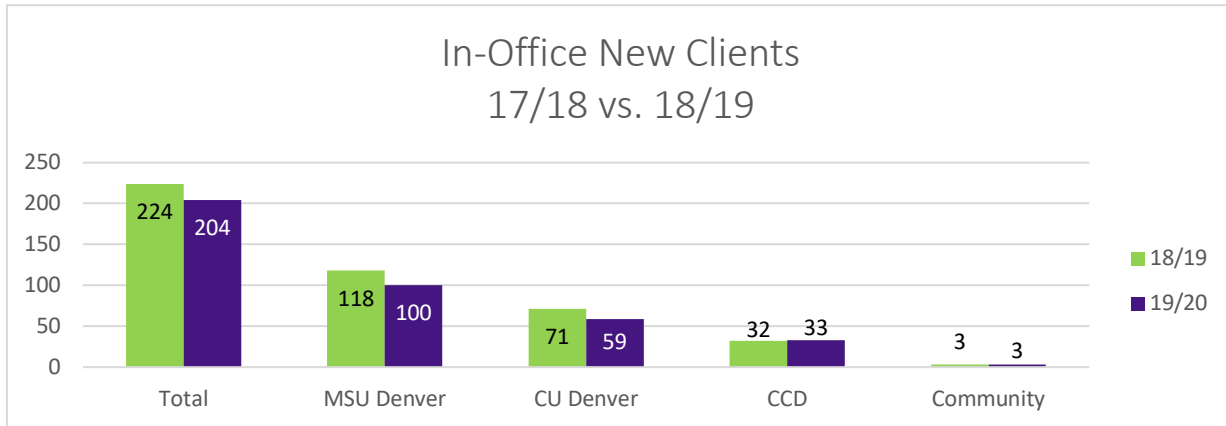
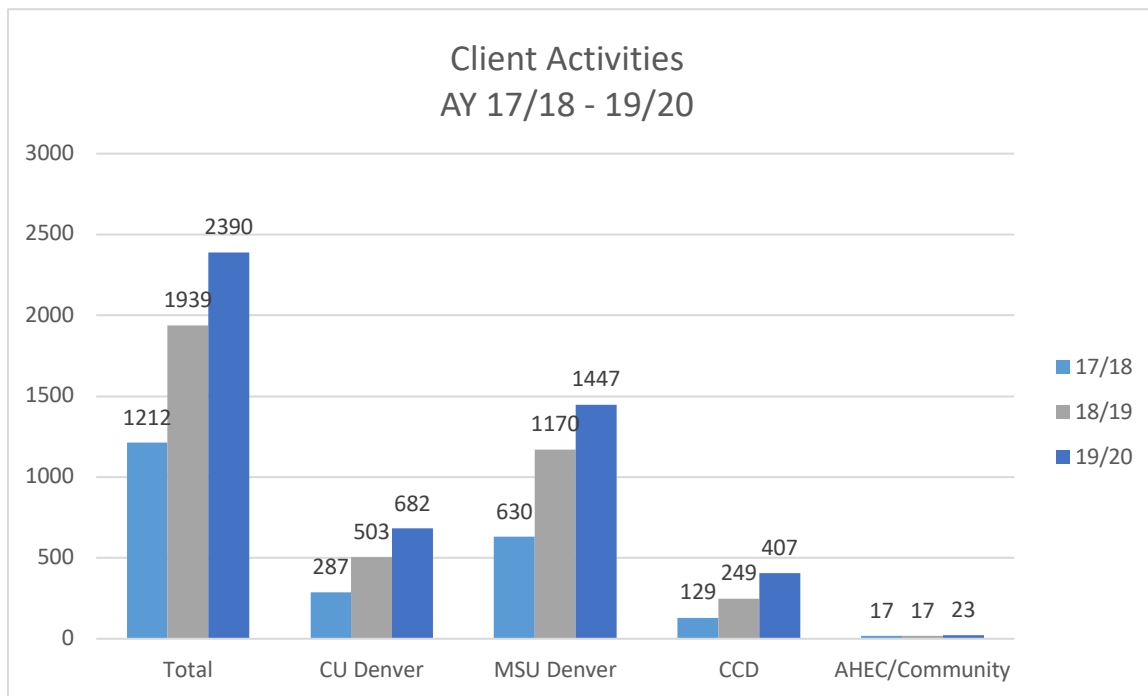


Figure 1. New, Unduplicated In-Office Clients. Figure 1 indicates the number of clients the PCA served according to institutional affiliation across the last two academic years.

Over the 2019-2020 academic 29% of clients served at the PCA were CU Denver affiliates. The 24/7 helpline received 150 calls, 14 of which were identified as originating from CU Denver community members; an additional 89 calls were placed by individuals who did not wish to identify their campus affiliation. Advocates from the PCA responded to the Health Center at Auraria, the Auraria Police Department and other campus offices a total of 4 times for CU Denver students.



During the 2019-2020 academic year, PCA staff noted the previous rise in acuity of concern continued throughout the year and crystallized during the global pandemic. This rise in acuity is measured utilizing the data the PCA records regarding client contacts or work activities performed on behalf of or alongside a client. A client contact can



represent advocacy services with or on behalf of a client, coordination with Title IX/Office of Equity staff, advocacy with professors or supervisors, information gathering for administrative and criminal processes, coordination with community victim-services, and others. During the 2018-2019 academic year, the 224 clients served by the PCA were affiliated with a total of 1,939 contacts. By comparison, during the 2019-2020 academic year, the 204 clients served by the PCA are affiliated with a total of 2,390 contacts. This represents a 23% increase in service delivery in the last year despite a decrease in clients (Figure 2). During the pandemic and subsequent stay-at-home order, this issue became more evident as fewer clients were seeking services but contact data remained on an upward trajectory.

### *Prevention Education*

In the past academic year, the PCA Violence Prevention Educators (VPEs) presented 85 workshops and trainings for the Auraria community and facilitated 55 campus events and information tables interacting with a total of 2,534 individuals. Additionally, through increased social media engagement and the Phoenix Cast, the PCA was able to make an additional 23,163 impressions.

**Student Feedback:** Feedback is requested from participants from presentations lasting 60 minutes or longer. Feedback is utilized to update curricula, improve service delivery, and direct continuing education efforts for the Violence Prevention Educator team. Notably, students indicated that they appreciated the open, honest nature of the presentations provided by the PCA and the accessibility of the presenters themselves. Additionally, feedback is requested from consenting clients at the conclusion of their relationship with the PCA. This feedback is utilized for staff and student employee performance reviews, to improve service delivery, to craft grant requests to further meet student need, and to assist the PCA in assessing changes needed to the scope of service.

Of the voluntary client satisfaction surveys collected anonymously from individuals served by the PCA in the last academic year, 100% of those who completed a survey reported that they felt more confident exercising safety strategies, knew more about their options, and felt more empowered to safeguard their safety.

In addition to the quantitative feedback, the PCA also solicits qualitative feedback. Survey responses from this past year which we are authorized by the author to share include the following:

“Katherine was great. Very empathetic and really helped me find the resources I needed to be okay. I know now I don’t have to struggle alone and she is here for me if I need more resources. Thank you for all you to here at The Phoenix Center” – CU Denver Survivor of Relationship Violence

“Sincerely, thank you for all that you do. It cannot be easy, but we need you.” – CU Denver Survivor of Sexual Violence

“I really appreciated the compassion and strength of Harriet McTigue. Meeting her calmed my anxieties around the situation I was facing. We look for options. But mainly, it just helped me feel not so alone and isolated with the interpersonal violence I experience where I am living now. I don't have any money to leave this circumstance easily. So finding coping skills, and community outreach was really important to give me hope. Harriet helped me with all these things. She is a great person/employee.” – CU Denver Survivor of Relationship Violence

“Until I met Harriet at the Phoenix Center, I felt incredibly overwhelmed and paralyzed by the amount of steps I had to take to manage my life with my case. I was in a deep depression and couldn't fathom how to move forward with my life and felt like there was very little point in trying to find joy anymore. When this event happened, I was initially trepidatious about speaking to someone I didn't know about what I needed, but upon meeting Harriet I immediately felt comfortable. She is the most reliable piece of this insane puzzle and I could not have done as well as I have without her. Thank you so much Harriet for everything you do. You are a blessing and a saint and the world is a better place because of you.” – MSU Denver Survivor of Relationship Violence



## Phoenix Center Photo Album 2019-2020

### Grand Opening of New Space Tivoli 227



During the summer of 2019, the PCA undertook a move from its original home in Tivoli 259 to its new home in Tivoli 227. This represented a large increase in space and a much more visible location. For the occasion, the PCA commissioned a new sign and held an open house for the entire Auraria community.

From left: Katherine Miller (Advocacy Services Program Manager), Megan Cullen (Director), Em Alves (Violence Prevention Education Coordinator), & KC Chaviano (Business Services Coordinator)



## Red Flag Campaign September 2019



### Halloween Shenanigans

This year, PCA staff and students dressed up and decorated the office as Scooby Doo!

VPE Sid Nelson (Fred), VPEC Em Alves (Velma), and Paige Davis (Daphne) unmask the villains (VPE Naomi Hattenhauer and Director Megan Cullen) in the case of the Missing Scooby Snacks.



### Coffee & Sex Pop-Up Events

Left: stickers printed for the event

Right: VPEs Mitch Weiner, Naomi Hattenhauer, Maria Andrade, and Alex Behler talk to students at the event.



### Virtual Denim Day

Due to the global pandemic, Sexual Assault Awareness Month 2020 was entirely virtual. Thankfully, under the direction of VPEC Em Alves and the hard work of the VPE team, we were able to host a full range of SAAM events and had excellent Denim Day participation!