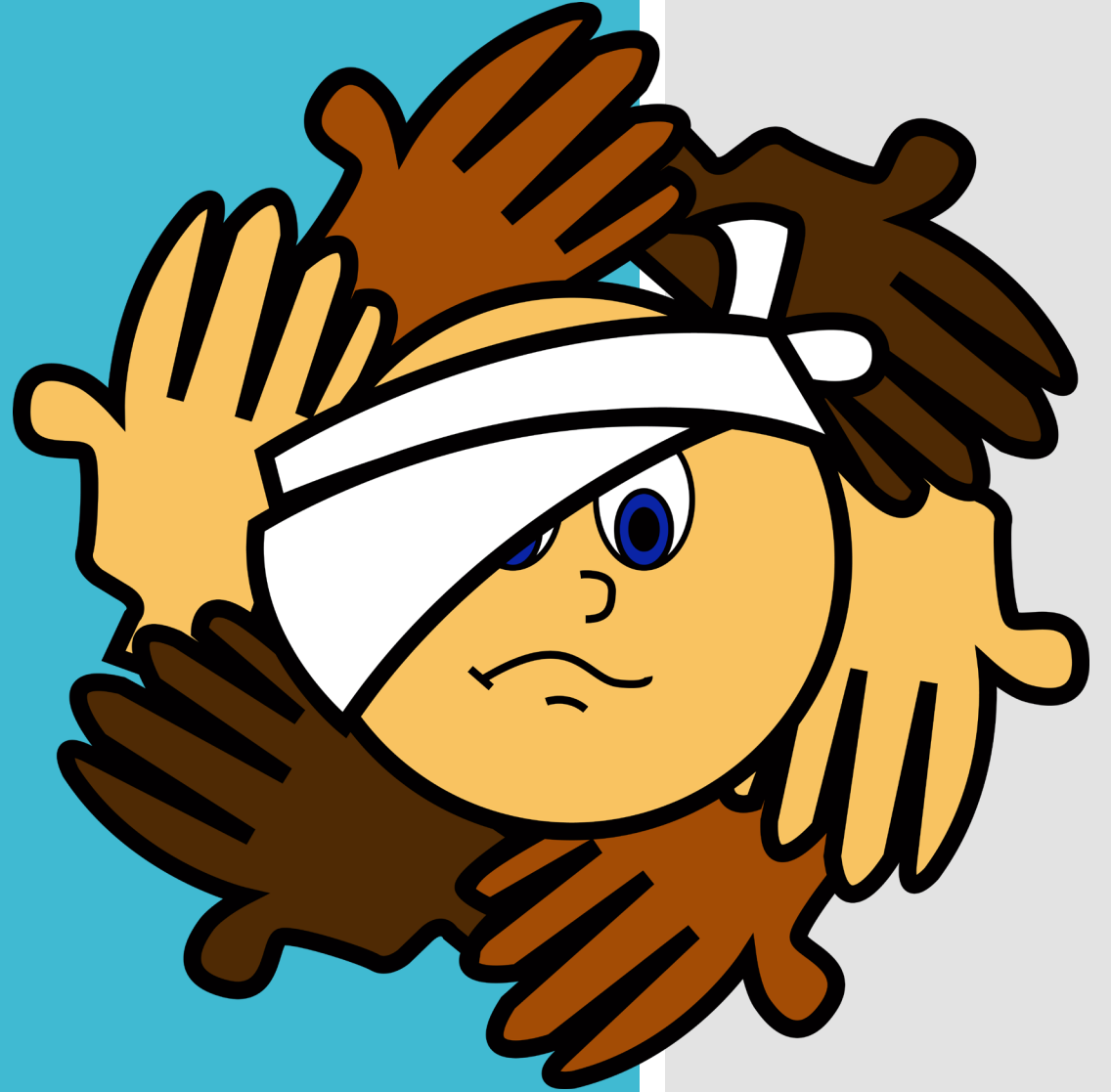


Maria Martinez, Brain Injury Advocate

- My mission is to advocate, educate, strengthen survivors to support each other as peers, spread awareness of brain injury within the Southern Region of Colorado as well support other brain injury communities in Colorado.
- Organizer of the community organization Pueblo Brain Injury, LLC.
- Leads brain injury support groups and organizes local brain injury activities for participants



Rural Community Barriers to Service Access

- Programs are too far to access
- Lack of computer/internet availability
- Support Services are focused on city priorities
- Not enough service providers, especially those who are culturally competent
- Funding is made only made available to city programs



Example of a Barrier to a Resources

- Brain Injury waiver is a Colorado Medicaid Program. It is designed to help you remain in your home and community after a brain injury
- Waiver Programs have extra program rules, and some have waitlists
- Navigating the process is difficult. Especially if you have a brain injury
- Lack of use is the result of these barriers



What can you do?

Start with Community Knowledge

- Understand who lives in the various rural communities of your state
- Take the time to learn where people access services?
- Learn about the various providers in the community & what they offer & **make them available locally**
- Learn about the agencies & their resources
- Invite providers and agency representatives to rural support groups, or events to teach about how to access services and to connect directly with those in need.



Train & Educate

- Providers need training on how to work with us
- Educate providers about what we need
- Educate case workers, especially about waivers
- Educate all providers about lack of resources
- Train providers how to work with your community
- Train providers what is available in your community & where your community accesses their resources
- When access to technology is increased connect system portals for various programs so that we don't have to apply over and over gain for various services



virtual
SURVIVOR
SUPPORT GROUPS



Virtual Support Groups:

- Peers supporting peers
- Peers creating & leading projects
- Community Agencies/providers presenting and learning from group members
- Peers supporting/advocating for each other from various brain injury communities
- Access to funding is minimal

Advocacy



Prepare the community to advocate for themselves through advocacy programs

Develop a support system: family, friends & community

Create rural based peer support programs

Funding to rural support programs and community-based service providers so that they can be self-sufficient

Hire culturally educated providers to assist the support groups

Provide access to translation services