

Mental-health service options change for better

by *Laura K. Nelson, M.D.* - Dec. 8, 2009 12:00 AM
Special for the Republic

Change can be difficult and uncomfortable - we all know this. We also know that sometimes change is inevitable, and there is nothing we can do except make the best of it. But it is interesting that, when we choose to make a change, it often is just as difficult or uncomfortable as change that just happens. In fact, these "chosen changes" can be even more challenging and scary.

Choosing change for the publicly funded Maricopa County behavioral health [system](#) is exactly what the Arizona Department of Health Services did. We chose to implement significant structural changes in Maricopa County to facilitate more voice, choice and transparency. And, while some of this change has been met with skepticism or even criticism, we have maintained our resolve to successfully implement change over the past two years.

In response to feedback from consumers, family members, providers and other system stakeholders during the procurement process in 2007, we challenged the new [Maricopa County](#) Regional Behavioral Health Authority, Magellan of Arizona, to bring real

voice and choice to the nearly 21,000 people with serious mental illness living in and around Phoenix.

This meant transitioning the nation's largest collection of mental-health clinics operated by one agency, the Behavioral Health Authority, to community-provider network organizations within just 24 months.

It was an enormous task that required the [collaboration](#) of multiple system partners. In a span of about 18 months, we now have four provider networks in Maricopa County dedicated to serving adults with serious mental illness: CHOICES, Partners in Recovery, People of Color Network and Southwest Behavioral Health Network. Consumers have a choice not available before.

In addition to offering provider choice, it is vital that consumers have easy access to helpful information on provider performance so they can make informed decisions about where they choose to go for services.

This commitment led to another "chosen change." The department partnered with Magellan of Arizona to create an [interactive online](#) dashboard that simply and graphically depicts the real-time status or

Advertisement

GEVALIA Home is where it happens

**3 Boxes, 3 Bucks,
No Kidding!**

for ONLY **\$3** plus FREE SHIPPING!

CoffeeClubValues.com

Plus Free Travel Mug



Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™

"temperature" of the system on 18 key performance indicators addressing recovery, clinical quality, coordination of care and accountability.

Copyright © 2009, azcentral.com. All rights reserved. Users of this site agree to the Terms of Service and Privacy Policy/Your California Privacy Rights

Progress can be tracked month over month for the Behavioral Health Authority, each provider network, and even for each individual clinic. In addition to aiding consumers in making informed choices, the dashboard will better allow providers to see the areas in which they are doing well, and where they need to focus improvement efforts.

Learn about this exciting new system at www.MagellanofAZ.com. And stay tuned. In the future, we will be expanding our commitment to transparency to include performance-outcome measures for children's services, crisis services and more.

Additional change is on the way and while, at times, it appears to be difficult and uncomfortable, the benefits realized from these efforts to offer voice, choice and transparency is something we can all be proud of.

Laura K. Nelson, M.D. is acting deputy director of the Arizona Department of Health Services, Division of Behavioral Health Services.

Advertisement

GEVALIA® Home is where it happens

**3 Boxes, 3 Bucks,
No Kidding!**

for ONLY **\$3** plus **FREE SHIPPING!**

CoffeeClubValues.com

Plus Free Travel Mug

Print Powered By FormatDynamics™