

Magellan Health takes aim at curbing suicides

Magellan Health Services Inc. in Avon is promoting more and better efforts to train mental-health case workers to stem the thousands of Americans who succumb each year to suicide.

"Despite the steady number of suicides-which total about 35,000 in the U.S. each year-most mental health providers across the country have not made suicide prevention part of their core mission and they don't have comprehensive training and intervention programs in place to address this growing issue," said David W. Covington, chief of adult services for Magellan Health Services of Arizona.

Covington and Magellan's other clinical leaders have been promoting its suicide-prevention training initiative during the health-services provider's three-day national conference that ends Thursday in Atlanta.

Covington, an executive committee member of the National Alliance for Suicide Prevention, says Magellan Health-Arizona has devised a training regimen used to train more than 1,200 mental-health case worker in that state.

Before the training, most of the 1,700 case workers surveyed in Maricopa County, Ariz., felt ill-equipped to counsel suicidal individuals, Magellan said.

Magellan has created more than 30 master trainers to administer its Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST) in a two-day program it says has been shown to dramatically improve case workers' self-confidence and skills to engage with those at risk of suicide.

Magellan says it plans shortly to introduce the ASIST program nationwide.

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