

Walls of stigma falling for behavioral-health care in Arizona

Reducing stigma requires education and positive associations. That's why it's vital to fight misinformation and prejudice on all levels.

Over the past few years, Magellan and our partners have made extraordinary progress in bringing together mental- and physical-health care. We have implemented primary-care medical services at six of the system's adult clinics and developed an infrastructure of Integrated Health Homes that supports true coordination of care.

At the same time, we have developed health and wellness initiatives that address the whole health of individuals with serious mental illness. The need for these changes was imperative as individuals challenged with SMI face dramatically shorter life spans — dying

30 years earlier than those who don't face these challenges. Many have acute co-occurring conditions and, unfortunately, because of the stigma they face, they are reluctant to seek help for behavioral- and physical-health services.

Integrated Health Homes give us the opportunity to offer both. By bringing together the member, the primary-care provider and the mental-health-care provider, we enable each of them to better understand the full range of issues individuals with mental illness face. Once this happens, we know they will find common ground, understanding and a path forward to a healthier life for the member and, ultimately, a reduction in the stigma that plagues the illness.

For several years now, Magellan has supported the "One in Four" stigma-reduction and education campaign in partnership with the Mental Health Awareness Coalition, Family Involvement Center and NAMI Phoenix. The campaign was born out of the fact that

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The successful campaign has in the past shone a light on several extraordinary people, a key component of the campaign that tells real-life stories — ordinary people conquering mental illness and making extraordinary contributions — and their successful recovery journeys. This year we are also introducing healthy heroes. Healthy heroes are individuals who are working on their whole-health recovery — mental, physical and spiritual. We're featuring our extraordinary people/healthy heroes on the www.OneinFour.info site as well as on billboards around the Valley.

We are also proud to present an NPR "StoryCorps" story of recovery from

member Daniel Abril and his aunt and advocate Gloria Abril. Please visit www.MagellanofAZ.com to hear their story.

Listening, sharing, communicating and seeking to understand — these are the keys to tearing down the walls of stigma that prevent healing and recovery. I'm proud that we can enable these "untold stories" to be told. And I'm proud of the progress we've made transforming Central Arizona's behavioral-health-care system to an integrated-care system over the last nearly six years in order to be a catalyst for this positive change.

Richard Clarke, Ph.D. is the chief executive officer for Magellan Health Services of Arizona.



My Turn

RICHARD CLARKE

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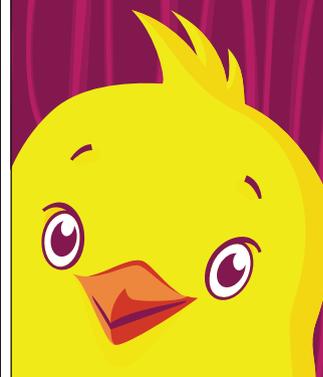
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