

NEWS BY YOU

Watch for signs of child bullying

Submitted by Terri Kang, director of child and youth services for Magellan Health Services.

Being a kid can be tough. Add a bully to the mix, and being a kid can become unbearable.

A child can be set up for ridicule, rejection and even abuse by anything that stands out as different from the rest of his or her peer group. Bullying can happen at school, in the community, or online through social media. It's estimated that 30 percent of Arizona's children experience bullying. As the Regional Behavioral Health Authority for Maricopa County, Magellan Health Services is concerned about the long-term behavioral-health impacts of bullying on Arizona's children. Children who are bullied are more likely to have symptoms of depression, anxiety and other behavioral-health issues that persist well into adulthood. And it's not just the victim that is impacted. Bullying may lead to behavioral-health issues for the bully, the victim, and even bystanders who witness the bullying.

October is Bullying Awareness Prevention Month. Magellan Health Services of Arizona is working with Stop-BullyingAZ, Phoenix first lady Nicole Stanton's anti-bullying program, to raise awareness about bullying.

Awareness is especially important for parents. There are behavior changes a parent can look for that may be signs a child is dealing with bullying, including:

- » Refusing to go to school or making excuses for missing school, such as feeling sick when there are no other symptoms of illness.
- » Carrying weapons or objects that could be used as a weapon; if confronted, the child may say he or she needs a weapon for self-defense.
- » "Losing" money, valuable possessions, or articles of clothing; possessions may have been taken or coerced from the child by the bully.
- » Unexplained bruises or other injuries that the child tries to hide or make unlikely excuses.

Information: www.StopBullyingAZ.org; www.takementalhealthtoheart.com, or www.stopbullying.gov.