



*"Bullying, to me, starts very small around the kindergarten age where the first thing we learn is to call each other names. Something so small can be so long lasting in someone's life." – Shane Koyczan, Canadian poet and writer*

Good afternoon!

October is National Bullying Prevention Month. It's a time when organizations and communities across the country come together to educate the public and increase awareness about bullying prevention. At Magellan Health Services of Arizona, we believe it is vitally important to take an active role in helping to stop bullying in our communities.

Why is bullying awareness and prevention so important in the context of mental health?

First and foremost, it's because bullying is so widespread and its effects can be so damaging. Because of the many high profile instances of bullying, including those ending in suicide, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) formed a panel to study the research on bullying, which led to several key findings. The panel concluded that bullying is a significant health problem, with between 20 and 56 percent of youth involved in bullying annually. And they determined that bullying has the potential for great harm, with close association between bullying and suicide (*Journal of Adolescent Health*, Volume 53, Supplement 1 (July 2013), published by Elsevier).

Second, recent research also has shown that childhood bullying may be linked to the development of psychiatric disorders in adulthood. A study published in the *Journal of American Medical Association (JAMA) Psychiatry* in February 2013 (authors: William E. Copeland, Ph.D.; Dieter Wolke, Ph.D.; Adrian Angold, MRCPsych; E. Jane Costello, Ph.D.) followed more than 1,000 participants between the ages of 9 and 16 years who had bullied others and/or had themselves been bullied. These same children were then assessed in young adulthood for psychiatric outcomes. The assessments showed that youth who were victims of bullying had a greater chance of having anxiety and panic disorders in adulthood, while youth who bullied others and were victims of bullying had higher rates of depression, panic disorder and suicidality (in males) as adults.

Third, children with mental health issues--who are anxious, depressed and withdrawn--are at higher risk of being bullied. And those who bully may be depressed and anxious as well.

Faced with these disturbing findings, Magellan is working with organizations here in Arizona to help step up efforts to prevent bullying. This month, more than 750 children in elementary and middle school grades attended an anti-bullying pep rally sponsored by StopBullyingAZ, the Phoenix Mercury, Magellan Health Services of Arizona and PetSmart. Phoenix Children's Theater performed skits with bullying scenarios and anti-bullying subject matter experts--including Terri Kang, Magellan director of child and youth services--who discussed bullying signs and how to help.

I encourage you to get involved in future efforts to end the bullying epidemic. Even at a personal level, you can make a difference by dispelling the stereotypes about bullying--that it's harmless, that everyone has to go through it, that it's just kid stuff. Spread the word: there is zero tolerance for bullying--a playground activity that can leave lasting scars.

Sincerely,



Richard T. Clarke  
Chief Executive Officer  
Magellan Health Services of Arizona

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