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Public-private partnership will help foster families

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Each year, more than 3,000 Arizona families open their homes and their hearts to give children in foster care a secure, healthy and nurturing place in which to thrive and learn.

November is National Adoption Month and to help raise awareness for foster care and adoption, the Arizona Department of Economic Security and Magellan Health Services began distributing a new Foster Care Tool Kit.

Created through this collaboration, the tool kit is a guide for current and prospective foster families. It is now available online through the DES website, Magellan website or by calling 1-877-KIDS-NEEDU.

Our foster families already go above and beyond to help Arizona's children in foster care, but they simply cannot do this alone. The Foster Care Tool Kit is a one-stop guide connecting them to community resources such as child care, health services, mental health services, clothing and more to ensure families receive the help needed to support their children's success. That's why we teamed up.

The tool kit contains information and provides answers to many of the questions prospective foster parents have. Becoming a foster parent is so crucial today because of the numbers of children in need. Many foster parents tell us that they find such happiness from participating in the program as well as the pride and satisfaction they feel, knowing they are making a difference in a child's life.

We know many children in foster care have behavioral health needs. Both DES and Magellan are dedicated to helping the foster care community, especially children in foster care, by providing timely access to behavioral health services when needed.

Magellan is responsible for making sure all children who enter the foster care system in Central Arizona GSA 6 are assessed for their behavioral health needs right away. Once assessed, if the child needs behavioral health services, those services are received within 30 days after the assessment. Services range from case management (highest-used service) to behavioral health counseling and therapy (second most used service) to a variety of direct support services. Magellan continues to work collaboratively with the department to ensure children involved with Child Protective Services have access to behavioral health services if needed.

It takes a community to care for families and children who need our help. That's why Magellan and DES worked together to create the Foster Care Tool Kit. Public-private partnerships such as this one are vitally important when serving children in our care.

While the Foster Care Tool Kit is a great example of this public-private partnership, it is just one resource. There are other ways community and faith-based organizations can tap into the work we are doing to help Arizona's children and families. Providing a hot meal to a busy family or transportation to and from the grocery store or doctor's office are other thoughtful gestures we can extend to our neighbors.

We ask that you consider what you or your organization can do to help make a difference in the lives of children, family, friends and neighbors. When we partner together, we can have a greater impact.