



“Stigma... promotes expectations in both the public at large and individual consumers that people with mental illness are incapable of the responsibilities commensurate with living independently.” – Patrick W. Corrigan, PsyD, professor of psychology, Illinois Institute of Technology

“Now our expectations are very different for people [with mental illness], and their expectations for themselves are very different. We find more and more people with severe mental illness recovering.” – Dr. William Anthony, professor of rehabilitation counseling, Sargent College of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences, Boston University, and director of the Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation

Dear Community Members,

Late last month, I had the pleasure of hosting a tour of some of the mental health facilities and resources here in the Valley. Our guests included representatives from the State House, the State Senate staff, the Maricopa County Adult Probation Department, AHCCCS, St. Luke’s Health Initiative and the Phoenix Black Chamber of Commerce. They visited National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Arizona, ConnectionsAZ’s Urgent Psychiatric Care (UPC) Center, PSA Art Awakenings, Family Involvement Center, and CHOICES Network’s Arcadia Clinic. While traveling between stops, our guests also heard Katie Ayotte and Erika Montañó, two very Extraordinary People, tell of their firsthand experiences with the mental health system.

While I can’t say for sure what our guests’ original expectations were of the tour and of those experiencing mental illness in our behavioral health system, I can tell you what I heard from them. A number of them told me that they had no idea that some of these agencies even existed and were impressed to see the system function within an organized environment focused on connecting our recipients to quality care. They were also struck by our ability to maintain a focus on outcomes even in the face of budget cuts. Our guests saw the importance of providing those experiencing serious mental illness with a mix of traditional and creative alternatives that create therapeutic opportunity and help them to lead lives where they can contribute to the community:

- Getting urgent care 24/7 (UPC)
- Expressing themselves through art, writing and music (Art Awakenings)
- Making their voices heard through advocacy groups (NAMI and Mental Health Awareness Coalition) and opportunities to serve on Magellan committees, initiatives and its governance board
- Connecting with others in the community and learning from the experiences of family and peer mentors (Family Involvement Center)
- Working with a team dedicated to helping them recover and live productive lives in the community through counseling, medication, housing support, education opportunities, and job search support (Arcadia Clinic)

Our guests also discovered that most people dealing with mental illness are like you and me and, in fact, that one in four people experiences some form of mental illness. I believe that our guests left with a new

understanding of mental illness, the unwarranted stigma attached to it, and a revised set of expectations of those who live with it.

Our guests witnessed many successes of the system and heard of its struggles, too. Further budget cuts loom on the horizon as the recession goes on, and we continue to try to find ways to assist those whose benefits have been cut or reduced. For example, we have partnered with NAMI Arizona, Mental Health America of Arizona, Recovery Empowerment Network, Southwest Network and other behavioral health-care advocates and service providers to develop a non-Title 19 resource hotline to connect people to resources in the community. Staffed by trained volunteers, the hotline is available on weekdays from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and can be reached at (602) 759-8175.

I'm pleased that our guests joined us for the tour. I'd like to thank them—and you—for committing to help us change expectations. Your advocacy will add to the groundswell for change—not just in attitudes but in the lives of those struggling with behavioral health issues.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Richard Clarke". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Richard" and last name "Clarke" clearly distinguishable.

Richard Clarke, Ph.D.
Chief Executive Officer
Magellan Health Services of Arizona