



*The human crisis is always a crisis of understanding: what we genuinely understand, we can do. – Raymond William, novelist*

Dear Community,

Since the tragic events that occurred in Tucson on January 8, it's become clear that in addition to facing a budget crisis, our state faces a crisis of understanding when it comes to the behavioral health system.

As law enforcement and media looked for answers to what happened in Tucson, unsubstantiated assumptions about the availability and quality of mental health services was put forth. What didn't garner as much attention was the good work of our colleagues in the Tucson—Community Partnership of Southern Arizona and other providers—who stepped up immediately with supports services and a local Tucson hotline to help their fellow citizens cope with the tragedy.

What the event in Tucson has revealed is that help *is* available. But, what's needed is education on how and when to seek it. As a first step in the right direction, Magellan and the Arizona Department of Health Services/Division of Behavioral Health Services (ADHS/DBHS) set up a 24-hour toll-free statewide hotline shortly after the shootings. Staffed by behavioral health professionals from Crisis Response Network, the hotline, **1-800-203-CARES (1-800-203-2273)**, has already provided counseling for nearly 400 Arizonans, helping them to process their emotions about the shootings and their concerns for their own friends or family experiencing difficulties. Additionally, ADHS/DBHS has created and posted on their website a mental health checklist that is a simple flowchart to guide individuals seeking assistance. The checklist can be found at <http://www.azdhs.gov/bhs/>.

Magellan and the state are currently in discussions about forming a workgroup to identify the best ways to prevent future incidents like the one in Tucson. In addition, we are working together with ADHS/DBHS, NAMI and Community Partnership of Southern Arizona to bring to our state the Mental Health First Aid training course. This course is designed to provide members of the public with skills to help someone who may be challenged with mental illness or experiencing a mental health crisis. Magellan has also developed with ADHS/DBHS a resource list for use in schools and education settings.

Education is also important when it comes to correcting the misconceptions about mental illness that come to the surface as a result of an event like that in Tucson. It's vital to recognize that the vast majority of those who live with mental illness are not violent and represent no threat to others. Quite the contrary; it is those with mental illness who are often themselves the victims of violence. In fact, a study published in the Archives of General Psychiatry (2005) found that "those with SMI [serious mental illness] are 11 times more likely to be victims of violent crime than the general population."

Educating our citizens and continuing to transform the system won't be easy considering the anticipated \$825 million budget shortfall in fiscal 2011 and the estimated \$1.4 billion deficit in fiscal 2012. Mental health services have been hit particularly hard by budget cuts during the past several months and more funding reductions to services that help our most vulnerable population are likely on the way.

In reviewing Gov. Brewer's proposed budget, it is clear that she is keenly aware of the challenges facing the individuals and families who live with mental illness and substance abuse every day. As a result, her proposed budget advocates preserving the crisis mental health system, which continues to make

significant progress in providing access to quality mental health services. She also has earmarked \$10.3 million in her budget plan to prevent gaps in recipients' psychiatric medication.

At the same time, the mental health community is united in its efforts to find new ways that help recipients on their recovery journey through low cost, efficient and effective service practices. This includes developing groundbreaking family and peer support programs, consumer-run warm lines, mentor training programs; measuring meaningful outcomes for individuals, families and the system through an innovative dashboard; and leading a suicide prevention and intervention initiative that will have a real and measurable impact on those most at risk of suicide—individuals who live with serious mental illness. Working together, we have made real headway in transforming the system while saving the state general fund more than \$68 million in reduced administration, increased efficiencies and re-tooled service benefits, over the last three fiscal years.

Undeniably, this is a turbulent time in Arizona. Our Medicaid system is still among the best in the nation, despite funding cuts, and it's been a key economic driver in addition to providing quality care. We must remember that challenges bring opportunities, and together we can make an impact in the education of the public about mental illness, and find new solutions that help us deliver the best possible care to members of our community who need it the most.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Richard Clarke". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional style.

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