Magellan’s Community-based Initiatives

A community approach to better behavioral health

One of the most complicated public health matters facing communities across the nation is providing adequate care for individuals with mental illness—illnesses that impact one in four adults, one in five children or approximately 57.7 million Americans, in a given year.

Without treatment, the consequences of these illnesses for individuals, and society as a whole, can be staggering: substance abuse, disability, unemployment, homelessness, inappropriate incarceration and suicide. And those with a serious mental illness—about 1 in 17 Americans—are particularly at risk.

In fact, more than 90 percent of people who commit suicide have a diagnosable mental disorder, most commonly a depressive disorder or a substance abuse disorder.

Yet all too often, these individuals do not get the treatment they need because they don’t know how—or who—to ask for help. At Magellan Health Services, we are leading the industry in changing this unfortunate reality through several innovative, community-based initiatives including suicide prevention, Crisis Intervention Teams and Mental Health First Aid. These programs are designed to better connect individuals with behavioral health conditions to the care they need as quickly as possible.

Suicide prevention

Empowering providers to engage those at risk

Suicide is a topic that continues to be neglected by many in the health care industry due, in large part, to the stigma attached to it. As a result, the core of the workforce is not properly trained to engage with individuals at risk for suicide.

To address this, Magellan developed a suicide prevention and intervention initiative to equip behavioral health care staff with the skills, knowledge, attitudes and support to more effectively intervene and engage with those who are at risk.

Initially launched in Maricopa County, Arizona, as a collaborative effort of Magellan, the Arizona Division of Behavioral Health Services, providers, members of Arizona’s judicial and legislative branches, police and other community stakeholders, the program’s key component is the training of all provider agency staff in suicide intervention and prevention using a national best-practice modality—Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training or ASIST.

A two-day program developed by LivingWorks Education, ASIST has repeatedly been shown to dramatically improve the self-confidence of mental health workers in engaging in suicide prevention and intervention with those at risk. It’s an approach that works:

- Since 2007, the suicide rate among those with a serious mental illness who were enrolled in the central Arizona behavioral health system has declined 30 percent, and the suicide rate among all behavioral health members has declined nearly 50 percent.
- Inpatient hospital rates declined 51 percent after Assertive Community Treatment staff took part in the ASIST training, resulting in savings estimated at more than $3 million.

Today, more than 3,100 caregivers have been trained in ASIST in Arizona alone. Among those surveyed, 90 percent agreed that they had the required skills and support to engage those at risk of suicide.
Based on our success in Arizona, Magellan rolled out ASIST training in five Pennsylvania counties, where 97 percent of those who have participated to date agreed or strongly agreed that they felt better prepared to help a person at risk of attempting suicide.

Crisis Intervention Teams
Expanding community safety nets

At Magellan Health Services, partnering with law enforcement is critical to improving the well-being and safety of people experiencing psychiatric crisis—and the community in general.

To facilitate this partnership, Magellan launched a Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) training program, modeled after similar programs across the country. CIT provides police officers and other first responders, who often deal with individuals with a potential mental illness, with the skills to:

- Recognize psychiatric symptoms in a crisis situation.
- Engage individuals in crisis as early as possible and build rapport to de-escalate the situation.
- Transport the person to a crisis center or clinic for treatment, reducing unnecessary incarceration and the burden on law enforcement.

CIT training encourages the interaction of law enforcement with the behavioral health system. CIT-trained law enforcement officers are better able to manage crisis situations, resulting in fewer injuries to the officers and to the people in crisis. People who have a mental illness are linked more quickly to appropriate treatment, which contributes to better outcomes.

Magellan’s CIT program is proving to be an effective way to create a more responsive behavioral health system in communities around the country:

- In Florida, more than 1,200 law enforcement personnel from 38 agencies across the state have participated in CIT training, which has contributed to a decline in arrests and use of force for individuals with a mental illness, as well as increased access to mental health treatment interventions for these individuals.
- In Maricopa County, Arizona, CIT training has increased awareness of system resources, which has resulted in more than 1,500 officer contacts with behavioral health facilities per month. In addition, efforts to accelerate linkages to treatment are getting law enforcement officers back on the street more quickly, reducing officer wait times at psychiatric facilities from two hours to just minutes.

Mental Health First Aid
Enhancing access to care

There is no question that the sooner someone experiencing a crisis gets help, the better the outcome will be. But most people are not prepared to intervene when they encounter a person in crisis.

Magellan is tackling this problem through its support of Mental Health First Aid (MHFA).6 MHFA is the initial help given to a person showing symptoms of mental illness or in a mental health crisis until appropriate professional, peer or family support can be engaged.

Now being taught by Magellan-trained trainers and its partners throughout the state of Arizona, the two-day course shows nonprofessionals how to recognize mental health disorders and provide assistance until professional help is available. To date, these trainers have taught more than 2,600 individuals how to approach a mental health crisis, providing another critical support to individuals with a mental illness.

To find out more about Magellan and our community-based initiatives, email BHSales@MagellanHealth.com.

6. Mental Health First Aid USA is managed, operated, and disseminated by the National Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare, the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, and the Missouri Department of Mental Health.