Changing the face of accountability
By Mary Jo Whitfield
Vice President of Behavioral Health
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From 2000 through 2006, I worked at Value Options, the Regional Behavioral Health Authority (RBHA) at the time. In those days, the RBHA ran the clinics serving persons with a serious mental illness (SMI).

At that time, state audits and their results had a big impact on how we provided services. After one negative audit result, we knew we needed to do more. We started including members and their families as part of the process.

Thus, Peer and Family Mentors began. We picked 5 clinics. We hired 12 peers and 12 family members. They worked with the clinical teams providing services. We put into place a wellness and recovery approach to work with SMI members. Who better to support this work than persons with lived experience?

Fast forward to the present. Today, we have a well-established, trained peer workforce. They continue the work started many years ago. Providers who serve persons living with a serious mental illness know the value of hiring staff with lived experience. Those getting services are more open to help from a person who has been where they are. And, from a person who successfully reached the other side.

For many years, the substance use disorder community saw the value of hiring people in recovery. They worked to outreach and engage persons struggling with addiction. Over the years, they saw the need to professionalize their workforce. Recovery was not the final goal. Today, we see many people working in the substance use treatment world. They have gone to school. They have advanced degrees. They are licensed substance abuse counselors and/or other professionals.

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Your 2018-2019 Member Handbook
Your new Mercy Care RBHA Member Handbook is ready! There are different ways you can get a copy.

You can find it our website at www.MercyCareAZ.org. Just go to the RBHA section and click on ‘For Members.’ Look for the ‘Handbook’ tab.

You can get a handbook from your behavioral health provider or direct care clinic.

You can also request a printed (paper) copy of the handbook. Just call Mercy Care RBHA Service at 602-586-1841 or toll-free 1-800-564-5465; (TTY/TDD 711). We’re available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Provider directory is now available
We update our provider directory every month. And the most recent version is ready!

It’s important to note that providers might change after we print a copy of the provider directory. But you can get the most up-to-date information using our online “Find a Provider” search tool at www.MercyCareAZ.org.

If you want a printed (paper) copy mailed to you, you can call Mercy Care RBHA Member Services at 602-586-1841 or toll-free 1-800-564-5465; (TTY/TDD 711). We’re available 24/7 to help connect you to care.

A focus on recovery
At Mercy Care, we’re dedicated to supporting our members in their recovery journey. We’re here to help you reach your recovery goals. To improve your health and wellness and the quality of your lives. We want our members to be part of the community.

Mercy Care's Office of Individual and Family Affairs (OIFA) is one of the ways we support our members and their families. The department focuses on recovery through involvement. Getting involved is an important part of recovery. It can help connect you to services. It also empowers you to take charge of your recovery goals.

Here are some “snapshots of success.” These are short stories about the good things that can happen by getting involved with support services.

If you want to get connected to supportive services, you can talk to your case manager. Or, you can call Mercy Care RBHA Member Services at 602-586-1841 or 1-800-564-5465 (TTY/TDD 711). We’re available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Running in the right direction
My name is Laure. I’m a 57-year-old woman. In 1976, I went to treatment and was told that I was an alcoholic. I was 15.

I struggled again and entered treatment in 1978. Then, again, for the last time, in 1982. My last drink was November 6, 1982. My only instruction was don’t drink, read your Big Book, go to meetings and talk to your sponsor. I was hospitalized in 1985, 3 months after the death of my younger sister.

That’s when I was diagnosed with bipolar disorder. I was told at that time that I would not be able to hold down a job, be able to take care of myself and that I had a lifelong illness that was not curable. There was a part of me that didn’t believe in my own abilities. My confidence was slowly shrinking. Eventually, during my time of attending meetings for substance use, my friends found out that I was taking medication for a mental health diagnosis. They told me to get off the pills because it was taking them, I told them, I’m not sober, I’m not sober, I’m confused, so I did what I knew best. I ran for my life. I’m a good runner!

Eventually, I started at a new clinic. I started seeing a psychologist (which I am still seeing once a week). I got involved in learning about mental illness and completed WRAP training. I continued to attend meetings and received my Peer Support Certification. I went to the Gilbertson Institute of Advocacy training. I got a job as a cook and cashier. I had not been around or worked with people in over 15 years. I was kind of terrified, especially of failing.

In 2017, I applied at S.T.A.R. (Stand Together And Recover). In April 2018, I celebrated my one-year anniversary there. I am the chair of the Peer and Family Advisory Council meetings at my clinic. I’m also part of the Member Advocacy Committee with Mercy Care.

In the fall, I am planning on returning to school at ASU. Today, I surround myself with people that are going to lift me up and support me. I have an excellent team at my clinic. They are very supportive. I feel the strongest I have ever felt in my life.

I want to empower people. I want to help them find the person that has been tucked away by others’ beliefs. I want to help them make their own beliefs. I want to show others that anything is possible with hard work and finding the right combination of support, and right combination of medications.
Getting support finding work

When you’re ready to begin looking for work, Mercy Care is ready to help. Here are some things you may want to know about how to find a job.

Q: How can Mercy Care help members get jobs?
A: Mercy Care works with Supported Employment Providers. These are providers who will help you choose, get and keep a job that interests you. They will help you learn about your work interests, write resumes, apply for jobs and prepare for an interview.

They also help you understand how to protect your benefits once you begin earning a paycheck. Once you get a job, your Job Coach can help you learn the tasks on the job or ask your employer for supports.

All Mercy Care clinics have an assigned Supported Employment Provider and a staff member from the Arizona Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Program. The VR staff can work hand-in-hand with your clinical team. But, you have the freedom to choose any provider you want. These are the providers:

BEACON GROUP
2222 North 24th St.
Phoenix, AZ 85008
602-685-9703, ext. 201

FOCUS EMPLOYMENT SERVICES
2345 E. Thomas Road, Ste., 412
Phoenix, AZ 85016
602-312-1045

LIFEWELL
202 E. Earll, Ste. 200
Phoenix, AZ 85012
602-808-2822

MARC COMMUNITY RESOURCES
924 N. Country Club Dr.
Mesa, AZ 85201
480-969-3800
Information and referral line: 480-994-4407

RECOVERY EMPOWERMENT NETWORK
212 E. Osborn Rd.
Phoenix, AZ 85012
602-248-0368

Breastfeeding protects baby and mother

The cells, hormones, and antibodies in breastmilk protect babies from illness. This protection is unique. It changes to meet your baby’s needs. And breastfeeding can help you, too. It can lower your risk of Type 2 diabetes, certain types of breast cancer and ovarian cancer. Breastfeeding may also help you lose pregnancy weight.

Learning to breastfeed takes time, practice and patience. A good latch is important for your baby to breastfeed correctly and for your comfort. During the early days of breastfeeding, it can take time for your baby to latch on well.

You can tell whether your baby is getting plenty of milk. He or she will be mostly content and will gain weight steadily after the first week of age. If you worry that your baby isn’t getting enough milk, talk to your baby’s doctor.

You can take certain medicines while breastfeeding, but not all. Always talk to your doctor or pharmacist about medicines you’re using and ask before you start using new medicines. This includes prescription and over-the-counter drugs, vitamins, and dietary or herbal supplements.

You can still breastfeed even after you return to work or school. Planning ahead for your return to work can help ease the transition. Talk with your employer about your options.

Resources for you

The Arizona Women Infants & Children (WIC) program offers food, nutrition counseling, and access to health services for women, infants, and children. Breastfeeding mothers supported by WIC may receive peer counselor support, an enhanced food package, breast pumps, and other supplies. Call WIC at 1-800-252-5942 to see if you qualify.

For help and information, you can call the Arizona Department of Health Services Breastfeeding Hotline at 1-800-833-4642, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Also, La Leche League of Arizona offers mother-to-mother support for women who choose to breastfeed. Call 602-234-1956 or visit www.lllofaz.org.

Sources: “Your Guide to Breastfeeding” from the CDC (Centers for Disease Control) Office on Women’s Health

ValleyLife
1142 W. Hatcher Rd.
Phoenix, AZ 85021
602-371-0806

WEDCO EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING CENTER
2929 E. Camelback Rd., Ste. 210
Phoenix, AZ 85016
602-274-2605

Q: What should I do if I can’t find anyone at my clinic to help me try to find a job?
A: Your Rehabilitation Specialist (RS) or case manager will help you. They can help you learn about finding a job or choosing a Supported Employment Provider. If you aren’t getting the help you need, contact the Clinical Director at your clinic. You can also email us at EmploymentVocationalServices@MercyCareAZ.org. We’re here to help.

Q: Are there places to go to find jobs?
A: It’s important to know that most job postings are found online. You also apply for most jobs online. There are hundreds of websites that list jobs. A couple of our favorites are https://www indeed com and https://www. azjobconnection gov/.

Keep trying!

The State Vocational Rehabilitation Program works with many Supported Employment Providers. If you didn’t have success in finding a job, talk to your VR Counselor about picking a different provider. Another provider might be a better fit for you. If you haven’t worked with the State VR program, the picture below explains the process.

Q: Where can I go to learn more about Supported Employment and other resources for job seekers?
A: Visit our website at www. MercyCareAZ org. Click on “For Members” under Mercy Care RBHA. Then, go to Resources. Under Employment, you’ll find information about Supported Employment services and answers to common questions.

During a behavioral health crisis

You can call the Behavioral Health Crisis Line 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

- Maricopa County: 602-222-9444
- Pima and Pinal Counties: 1-866-495-6735
- Gila County: 1-877-756-4090

Crisis Line staff can help:
- Meet you in the community
- Take you somewhere safe
- Help you identify your resources for care
- Help you arrange counseling
- Provide options for dealing with other urgent situations

Always call 911 in life-threatening situations.

If you need someone to talk to
Call the Warm Line, 602-347-1100. The support line operated by credentialed peer support specialists.

Available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
Changing the face of accountability

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Their job description no longer contains the term “peer” unless they self-disclose. That means that there is no obvious distinction between them and their colleagues. It is my hope that the recovery movement in the world of mental health treatments evolves in the same way.

People living with a serious mental illness can learn to manage that illness. They can go to school. They can earn advanced degrees. They can obtain licensure to practice as licensed therapists in our field. They can hold administrative positions in state agencies and health plans. I know this to be true as many of the peers we hired for our project hold those positions today.

They are living proof that those living with a serious mental illness can live happy, productive lives.

Their jobs are governed by the same expectations as their colleagues. They are highly successful in their fields.

We have also incorporated a new method to ensure our members and their families have a voice in their treatment and services here. Technology affords us the ability to evaluate the services we offer our members. Our members can use an iPad at the end of their session to fill out an electronic survey. Once the survey is complete, our member simply pushes a button to send the survey right to our database.

Our Advisory Council reviews the surveys. The council then works with our leadership to make system improvements. They also work to promote staff appreciation.

Measuring Cultural Competency

We’re committed to our members and their care. It’s very important to us. That’s why we spend a lot of time and effort making sure cultural competency is part of everything we do. This means being respectful to your beliefs and your culture. It also means understanding your language needs.

We require our providers to support members with culturally sensitive services. They use the Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services (CLAS) standards as a guide. These standards make sure that services are respectful to your culture and language needs.

We have two departments at Mercy Care that keep an eye on how providers are doing. They are Cultural Competency and Quality Management. They offer support to providers. They make sure members are getting services in the right way. And that helps to be sure we are always improving services sensitive to your culture and way of life.

Have you been screened for colorectal cancer?

Colorectal cancer screenings typically start at age 50. Your risk of colorectal cancer increases with age. You can reduce your risk by getting regular screenings. With screening, colorectal cancer can be found when small and treatable.

Beginning in June 2019, Mercy Care will partner with primary care providers (PCPs) to help members get screened for colorectal cancer. You may receive a call from your PCP or from Mercy Care to help you get screened. You may have the option to get a Fecal Immunochemical Test (FIT) sent directly to your home. The FIT test is a screening that is done yearly. It’s one of the least invasive screening methods.

There are different types of colorectal cancer screenings. Talk with your doctor to find the right one for you.

It’s time to quit tobacco

If you use tobacco, quitting is one of the best things that you can do for your health. If you get medication and coaching, you can double your chance for successfully quitting tobacco.

You can get help or coaching through group education, over-the-phone and text messaging. You can get medication from your doctor. You can call the Arizona Smokers Helpline (ASHLine) at 1-800-556-6222 for coaching. The ASHLine has resources to help you quit tobacco. It also offers information to help protect you and your loved ones from secondhand smoke. Many people have quit smoking and stopped tobacco use through programs offered by the ASHLine.

If you want more information on quitting tobacco, you can:

1. Call Mercy Care RBHA Member Services at 602-586-1841 or 1-800-564-5465 (TTY/TDD 711) anytime, 24/7.
2. Talk to your doctor.
3. Call the Arizona Smokers Helpline (ASHLine) at 1-800-556-6222 or visit www.ashline.org.

In addition to the ASHLine, there are other resources available for you. For more information on quitting tobacco, go to Tobacco Free Arizona at http://bit.ly/2M2FHj6. Tobacco Free Arizona is a program to help Arizonans know the risks of tobacco use and resources for quitting.
Get tested for infections
Mercy Care offers private, voluntary STI and HIV (the virus that causes AIDS) testing to all members. There’s no cost for testing and treatment. All women who are pregnant, or plan to get pregnant, should get tested as soon as possible. STIs can affect your developing baby and your health. Testing early in pregnancy may keep you and your baby healthier.*

There are ways to prevent STIs:

- Practice abstinence
- Use condoms
- Limit number of partners
- Get vaccinated (HPV recommended for young women ages 11-26 and young men ages 11-21, and Hepatitis B if you were not vaccinated when you were younger)
- Talk with your partner about staying safe

You can speak to your PCP or OB-GYN to get tested. Counseling is available for members who test positive. Always follow your provider’s treatment instructions. If you test positive, your partner should be treated too, even if they do not have symptoms.

For anonymous, no-cost/low-cost testing in Maricopa County, visit https://www.maricopa.gov/2026/Free-Testing-Events.

*Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Might in pregnancy may keep you and your baby healthier.*

Mercy Care RBHA Member Services: We’re here for you
Sometimes you need help, but aren’t sure where to turn. Maybe you’re not sure whether you can get the help you need. You might need help finding the right care or service during a difficult time. Or, you may need help rescheduling a doctor’s visit.

Calling Mercy Care RBHA Member Services is a good place to start. You can call us at 602-586-1841 or 1-800-564-5465 (TTY/TDD 711). We are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

We can help you get connected to care. We can also help you with:

- Benefit inquiries
- General mental health/substance use (GMH/SU) services
- Getting behavioral health care for a child/adolescent
- Getting behavioral health care or other assistance for children in out-of-home placement or adopted
- Getting a SAM evaluation
- SAM clinic assignment inquiries
- Behavioral health clinic transfer requests
- Getting connected to the Crisis Response Network
- Petition requests
- Eligibility questions
- Pharmacy issue inquiries
- Inter-RBHA transfer questions
- Prior authorization questions
- Complaints
- Grievance and Appeals
- Community resources
- Member Handbook requests
- Resource guides
- Reimbursement inquiries
- PCP/Specialist change (SMI members only)
- ID replacement card (SMI members only)
- Getting a ride (SMI members only)
- Housing inquiries (SMI members only)

Mercy Care
4755 S. 44th Place, Phoenix, AZ 85040.

Contract services are funded under contract with AHCCCS. This is general health information and should not replace advice or care you get from your provider. Always ask your provider about your own health care needs.

Mercy Care is administered by Aetna Medicaid Administrators, LLC, an Aetna company.

Call Mercy Care RBHA Member Services at 602-586-1841 or 1-800-564-5465; (TTY/TDD 711). We’re available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. 24-hour nurse line: 602-586-1841 or 1-800-564-5465.

www.MercyCareAZ.org

Events calendar

February
Child and Family Advisory Partnership (CFAP) Community Forum
Get connected to the support you need to raise a child with emotional, physical and/or behavioral health needs. Dinner, Spanish interpretation and child watch provided. There is no cost to attend. 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, February 27
Family Involvement Center
5333 N. 7th St., Ste. A 100
Phoenix Valley Metro bus route 7
602-288-0155 to pre-register

March
Compassion Queen Creek 2019
A one-day, free health clinic providing basic medical, dental, vision and other health services. Social services agencies are available to answer questions and educate guests on resources available for on-going support.
7 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday, March 2
J.O. Combs Middle School
37611 N. Pecan Creek Dr., San Tan Valley
For information, Pam Kavathas at 480-309-1577, Pamkavathas@gmail.com or https://compassionconnectionaz.org/

Adult System of Care (ASOC) Community Forum
Get information about supportive services within our community and any updates to our network and system of care. There is no cost to attend. Spanish-language interpretation is available. Light refreshments will be served. Members can get a ride to the meeting. Call Member Services at 602-586-1841 or toll-free 1-800-564-5465. (TTY/TDD 711)
Phoenix Valley Metro bus route 16.
Wednesday, April 17
5:30 to 7:30 p.m.
RI International
2701 N. 16th St., Ste. A-119, Phoenix

May
Child and Family Advisory Partnership (CFAP) Community Forum
Get connected to the support you need to raise a child with emotional, physical and/or behavioral health needs. Dinner, Spanish interpretation and child watch provided. There is no cost to attend. 5:30 to 7:30 p.m.
Wednesday, April 24
Family Involvement Center
5333 N. 7th St., Ste. A 100
Phoenix Valley Metro bus route 7
602-288-0155 to pre-register

Lowering Risk of Chronic Illness
Chronic illnesses are the most easily preventable of all health problems.

These unhealthy behaviors can cause chronic illness:

- Lack of activity
- Poor Nutrition
- Smoking
- Drinking large amounts of alcohol

You can lower your risk of chronic illness by doing the following:

- Increasing exercise
- Eating healthy
- Quitting smoking
- Limiting alcohol

Spring 2019