

Mental Health Awareness Should Be Focused on All Year Long

A message from Jim Leonard, CEO, Magellan Behavioral Health of Pennsylvania, Inc.

As we move past Mental Health Awareness Month and the impactful mental health focused community events and advocacy efforts that took place in May, it appears that this year is different in that there is not a reduction in mental health focus. Of course, for those of us that work in the mental health field, this is a 24/7 profession that requires an annual focus, and this won't be changing as we know. However, the change that I reference is for the non-mental health professionals and the many individuals and communities that celebrate May as Mental Health Awareness Month. In past years, moving into June and the summer months would bring a significantly reduced level of focus and conversation around the importance of mental health. In 2022, the conversations about mental health continue due to the troubling and shocking tragedies that dominate the national news, and the continued challenges from the pandemic.

In challenging moments such as these, it is important that mental health professionals understand that demand for our services will certainly increase in the short term and likely in the long term. To effectively handle this increase in demand, it is critical that anyone seeking mental health and substance use disorder services can receive services through a local provider or in our case at Magellan, to communicate with our Member Services team. At Magellan, we are strong supporters of the use of telehealth and will continue to advocate for its ongoing use. In addition, we support and host community events (see three [My Ascension](#) suicide prevention film screenings below as recent examples) on a frequent basis throughout the year to help our members and others in the community get connected to local resources. We also work closely with our county partners to share key information around programs and services. I encourage each one of us to step up to the challenge in front of us, and let's ensure that mental health awareness becomes an annual focus not because of the news cycle, but because it's the right conversation to have 365 days a year.

My Ascension suicide prevention film screenings

- Magellan collaborated with county stakeholders, local school districts, local providers, and other community supports to host three film screening events in early May to create impactful discussion and needed attention around suicide prevention. Each event included a panel discussion after the showing of the film, and there were local community resource tables to share key information with those in attendance.
 - May 3 from 5:30-8:30 p.m. at Liberty High School in Bethlehem, PA. Over 250 people in attendance and here is the [press release](#).
 - May 4 from 5:30-8:30 p.m. at the Learning Center on the Temple University Campus in Ambler, PA. Over 125 people in attendance and here is the [press release](#).
 - May 5 from 5:30-8:30 p.m. at Stroudsburg High School in Stroudsburg, PA. Over 200 people in attendance and here is the [press release](#).

