

Dr. Nelson Message



Week 3: Last week of Community Forums – Looking Ahead

Hello,

I'm Dr. Nelson, with the Arizona Department of Health Services Division of Behavioral Health.

As you may know, during the month of April, we have partnered with our Regional Behavioral Health Authorities and local providers to host many community forums around Arizona. These forums have allowed people we serve, their family members, service providers and other stakeholders to ask questions and to share concerns and ideas regarding significant budget reductions impacting the public behavioral health system.

As I previously shared, there are 3 primary areas we are focusing on:

- a statewide crisis system for any person experiencing a behavioral health crisis,
- a reduced benefit package for adults with serious mental illness who don't qualify for Medicaid, and
- supportive housing services for adults with serious mental illness who DO qualify for Medicaid.

There are some very important decisions that must be finalized this week.

I would like to thank those of you who attended these community meetings. It not only takes time and effort to come but also courage to speak up. Thank you.

If you have not yet been able to attend a forum, but would like to, please take a look at the event calendar posted on this website, and try to attend one this week. There are several in Maricopa County as well as forums in Bullhead City, Lake Havasu City, Payson, and Apache Junction.

We plan to finalize some important decisions and to issue written guidance to our Regional Behavioral Health Authorities and their providers by May 1. Specifically for those adults with serious mental illness who don't qualify for Medicaid, we feel it is imperative that we have at least 60 days to individually work with them and their families to safely transition them to the reduced benefit package by July 1st 2010.

In the coming weeks and months, we will continue to work closely with our Regional Behavioral Health Authorities and community providers throughout Arizona to oversee and monitor this transition process. In addition, we will continue to be here to address questions and concerns that you have during this challenging transition period.

Again, please try to attend a community forum if you can. You can also call us at 1-800-867-5808 or send an email to dbhsinfo@azdhs.gov. Thank you!