



Hi, I'm Dr. Laura Nelson from the Arizona Department of Health Services, Division of Behavioral Health.

In response to upcoming, significant funding reductions for this next fiscal year that starts in July, we created 3 dedicated project teams to plan for some very difficult but necessary changes.

During the month of April, these 3 project teams, which included consumers and family members from the community, focused on how to:

1. Transition adults with serious mental illness who do not qualify for Medicaid to a reduced benefit package;
2. Ensure that we have a comprehensive and effective statewide crisis system for anyone experiencing a behavioral health crisis; and
3. Modify supported housing benefits for adults with serious mental illness to fit within the allotted funding.

These teams have worked tirelessly to develop guidelines that the Regional Behavioral Health Authorities and their contracted providers will use to safely implement these changes.

Our goal is to provide the best behavioral health care we can for as many people as possible while working within the financial and legal considerations we face.

The guidelines, which were just released this week, represent hundreds if not thousands of work hours, careful and constant deliberation and many restless and sleepless nights by individuals within this agency, community members and other valued stakeholders.

We also listened to and reflected upon the feedback, comments and suggestions we heard from hundreds of consumers, family members, providers and other stakeholders who attended community forums conducted throughout the state during April.

While implementing these changes will not be easy, we believe we've made the best decisions we can based on the feedback we heard and given the funding constraints Arizona faces.

Some key points from the guidelines are as follows:

- If you are eligible for Medicaid, your benefits will not change, with one exception. You may be assessed charges for room and board when receiving residential services.
- Crisis services are available to anyone who needs mental health or substance use crisis services, regardless of Medicaid eligibility. Crisis services will include crisis phone lines, mobile response teams, and a limited amount of facility-based crisis stabilization.

- Moving forward, supported housing benefits, like assistance with rental payments or utilities, will only be available for adults with a serious mental illness who qualify for Medicaid.
 - However, if you are an adult with a serious mental illness who does not qualify for Medicaid but are currently receiving supported housing services, you will be able to continue to receive this support until a safe alternative can be arranged. You will not be evicted!
- If you are an adult with a serious mental illness and not eligible for Medicaid your benefits will change dramatically.
 - You will continue to have full access to your physician and a variety of medications. At this time, we do not think we can provide many brand name medications, but generic medications will be available. We are also continuing to research options for making brand name medications available, but there will likely be some out of pocket costs for these.
 - Other services, such as transportation, residential services, inpatient services, counseling and case management will no longer be covered.
 - As we have shared repeatedly, our commitment is to individually work with all you who will be impacted by these changes to facilitate a safe transition to this new system.

Although these decisions have been extremely difficult, we truly appreciate the efforts our Regional Behavioral Health Authorities, our providers and the community at-large have made in working with us in a manner that maintains human dignity, promotes the principles of recovery and preserves high quality care.

Thank you for your hard work and continued support during this very challenging time. We will continue to provide updated information as these guidelines are implemented.

If you have any questions about these guidelines, please contact your local Regional Behavioral Health Authority, or call us at 602-364-4558.

Thank you.