

“Health and Hope in Our Communities, Addressing Stigma and Discrimination”

Audience Questions and Answers:

1. **What is being done to remove roadblocks to receive help when the person is overwhelmed, but encounters numerous steps and a long wait for treatment, despite needing help immediately?**
 - The Magellan Behavioral Health of Pennsylvania member handbook has a full list of crisis intervention services, warmlines, and peer support contact information. Go [here](#) and see page 11 for the information in Lehigh County and Northampton County.
2. **How can we get more education out to all about the stigma and misinformation about these topics included in public education and to all? Do you think having more peer specialists will help?**
 - NAMI Lehigh Valley is a leader in our region for providing education and support on many mental health topics. Please go [here](#) to learn more, and to see recent presentations to include the importance of peer support. In addition, you can find upcoming events and support group meetings here also.
3. **What are your thoughts on mental health classes in K-12 schools? For instance, coping skills and mindfulness for children.**

Please refer to the recording of the plenary session for this answer. In addition:

 - An increase of legislative advocacy on this topic should occur.
 - The PA Department of Education lists mental health resources [here](#) within the Safe Schools Initiative.
4. **I am a registered nurse who has sacrificed my own mental health since the pandemic began. What do I do if I am worried about my own mental health?**

Please refer to the recording of the plenary session for this answer. In addition:

 - It is suggested that you speak with your supervisor and/or HR staff to determine the resources available to you.
 - The Magellan Behavioral Health of Pennsylvania member handbook has a full list of crisis intervention services, warmlines, and peer support contact information. Go [here](#) and see page 11 for the information in Lehigh County and Northampton County.
5. **I have ADHD and a mental illness. Who do I disclose my illness to at work to obtain extended time on work-related tasks and how does the law protect me?**

Please refer to the recording of the plenary session for this answer. In addition:

 - It is suggested that you speak with your supervisor and/or HR staff.
 - The Americans with Disabilities Act along with many helpful resources can be found [here](#).
6. **Why is the pay so low for the ACT team staff when we truly make a difference risking our lives daily. Provider workforce issues are currently very significant, and we recommend legislative advocacy to help this issue. In October, there was a Behavioral Health Commission Special Report released to include several recommendations to the PA General Assembly. The full report is [here](#), and please take note of the first recommendation on page 6 that recommends \$37 million to stabilize, strengthen, and expand the workforce.**
7. **Currently there is a void in Mental Health/SUD outpatient treatment with recent provider closures and staff departures. What are some solutions for those needing this vital service?**

The recent closures and provider workforce issues are presenting increased challenges for service delivery. The [Behavioral Health Commission Special Report](#) just released in October includes a recommendation on page 8 suggesting \$39 million is needed to expand capacity for services and supports. To check on current behavioral health providers available through Magellan Behavioral Health of Pennsylvania in the Lehigh Valley, please go to the provider search [here](#).

8. Why isn't the current mental health parity law being enforced? What can we do to help get it enforced?

At a federal level, [here](#) is the 2022 MHPAEA Report to Congress titled, 'Realizing Parity, Reducing Stigma, and Raising Awareness.' This report emphasizes the need for greater enforcement, and highlights the resources dedicated to this effort. At the state level, the Pennsylvania Insurance Department provides helpful information [here](#) about your rights and resources available related to Mental Health Parity.

9. Mental health needs are rising for children with disabilities. But there are long wait lists for service. What can parents do to get help in the Lehigh Valley?

This issue continues to frustrate parents, and this is understandable. Fortunately, there are several resources available that can provide some assistance with this process. Here are several suggestions to discuss with your primary care provider(PCP) or to review and follow up on your own:

- Penn State Health Children's Hospital now offers remote guidance to primary care providers via the telephone, to include supporting providers in Lehigh County and Northampton County. Learn more about this program [here](#).
- Please know that children with disabilities may qualify for Medicaid. Learn more about the resources available through the PA Medical Assistance Program [here](#).
- At the County level, County Assistance offices can provide additional support.
 - Lehigh County Assistance Office: (610) 821-6509
 - Northampton County Assistance Office: (610) 250-1700
- Magellan resources include a webpage dedicated to [Autism resources](#) and a [PCP Toolkit](#).

10. What do you think about our overall progress moving towards person first treatment? How can we as both communities and agencies further our progress in this aspect? With regard to stigma, how can we improve our response regarding trauma informed care?

Person First Treatment and Trauma Informed Care have significantly improved over the past decade, but there is still plenty of work to do for the sharing of education materials. In Pennsylvania and the Lehigh Valley in particular, we are fortunate to have two helpful resources to learn from and to share with local stakeholders to include school districts. Go to [Resilient PA](#) and [Resilient Lehigh Valley](#) to review presentations and learn best practices for sharing this information.

Thank you to our panelists for their participation in this important discussion:

- **Congresswoman Susan Wild, House of Representatives, 7th Congressional District**
- **Scott Kiefer, CEO of Recovery Partnership, Founder of Consumer Satisfaction Team of Lehigh Valley**
- **Maggie Murphy, Executive Director, NAMI Lehigh Valley Chapter**
- **Jordan Westerman, MSW, Community Health Specialist, Bethlehem Health Bureau**
- **Pastor Genie Watson, Ecumenical Associate with Lehigh Conference of Churches**
- **Maria T. Zubillaga, Clinical Supervisor with Life Guidance and Hispanic American Organization, and a mental health psychotherapist with Hispanic American Organization**
- **Jim Presto, Lehigh Valley Regional Chapter President of American Foundation for Suicide Prevention and Facilitator of Aavidum Youth Mental Health**