



## Cheyenne mayor's luncheon covers youth mental health services

By Kristine Galloway, Wyoming Tribune Eagle  
May 4, 2017

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CHEYENNE – Local youth and youth-oriented organizations learned Wednesday about a statewide effort to provide comprehensive mental health care for youth ages 4 to 20.

Magellan Healthcare and Cheyenne Mayor Marian Orr hosted a luncheon to bring awareness to the Wyoming Care Management Entity High Fidelity Wraparound.

Through the initiative, Magellan Healthcare aims to streamline mental health services for youth, thereby increasing the youth's chances for success.

Tammy Cooley, senior program director for Magellan Health, said, "We bring together all the important people from a youth's life."

She said that might include a therapist, behavioral health specialists from the schools, teachers, coaches, religious mentors and others.

"We bring everybody together from all the different systems that they might be involved with and help all those different people prioritize the needs of the youth," she said.

Cooley said this helps prevent families from needing multiple appointments each week for their children or multiple different plans for the child's care.

"It brings it all together in one place, so the family is focused, and everybody is on the same page for what needs to happen, as far as support and behavioral health intervention," she said.

Cooley said the High Fidelity Wrap-around is evidence-based and has been utilized in other states for more than 20 years.

Erin Wasz-kiewicz, communications manager for Wyoming's Care Management Entity and Magellan Health, said the High Fidelity Wraparound effort existed in several counties across the state before Magellan Health took over and expanded the program statewide in July 2015.

The program is currently available to students who qualify or are currently served by Medicaid because the program is funded through Medicaid. But there are options for kids who don't qualify for Medicaid as well.

Cooley said, "The state has made available a mental health waiver that can allow those youth to come into our program, enroll in Medicaid for a short time, get their behavioral health needs met and then move on as they succeed."

Cooley added that Magellan Health hopes to partner with organizations across the state, both to help provide services to youth and to provide funding that will allow more kids to take advantage of the services.

"Our goal is to really make this available to all youth who need it," Cooley said.

Uplift, an organization that supports and advocates for children with serious mental health concerns and other health-care needs, partnered with Magellan Health last year in support of the High Fidelity Wraparound.

Michelle Heinen, executive director of Uplift and a former teacher, said the High Fidelity Wraparound is important because so many entities are recognizing that everyone learns differently, and has unique strengths and challenges.

"Often hidden disabilities are some of the hardest to persevere through. When you're talking about youth and young adults, it's pretty easy to be labeled a behavior problem instead of someone with a challenge," Heinen said.

This effort helps bring awareness to the fact that a "checkup from the neck up" is as important as physical health care, she said.

Cooley said the effort is close to her heart because, like many of the kids the wraparound serves, she was labeled as a troubled child when she was young.

"School tried to match interventions to fix me, and that wasn't what I needed." She said she really needed a support system at home, which she didn't have, not because her family didn't try, but because it wasn't available.

“So this work is very passionate to me because I had people – just ordinary people – step up and guide me, help me along my way, who believed in me, who made me feel like I was important, and that was enough for me to gain confidence for me to do what I needed to do to make different choices,” Cooley said.

Orr spoke at the event about the need to build more local psychiatric amenities for youth, as well as fighting against the stigma of mental health disorders for youth and adults.

Gov. Matt Mead spoke at the event about the need to be aware of the effect budget cuts can have on families struggling with mental health issues and the need for appropriate services. He also issued a proclamation naming May 1-7, 2017, as Children’s Mental Health Awareness Week.

The audience also heard from youth who struggle with mental wellness and are affected by the services Magellan Healthcare and Uplift provide.

Madison Bates, a local college student, cried when she explained her history of anxiety and suicide attempts to the audience, members of which called out supportive comments to help her through her story.

“Mental health illness – it’s not just ADHD or (Oppositional Defiance Disorder). It’s anxiety, depression, schizophrenia, OCD,” she said.

Bates also explained that everyone leaves a legacy and that everyone can be successful with the right supports. “People are so much stronger than they think they are. I have depression, anxiety and ADHD. I still take my medication, and I’m still doing great.”