

Member Newsletter

Working together for a healthier you

Coping with anti-transgender attitudes, speech

Transgender people are part of every region of the U.S. and around the world. They come from all racial, ethnic and faith-based backgrounds. There are about 1.4 million transgender adults in the U.S. alone — and millions more around the world, notes The National Center for Transgender Equality.

Across the U.S., there are people who keep pushing anti-transgender speech and ideas.

There are lawmakers who want to pass laws to make it harder for transgender people to get gender-affirming healthcare. Others work to ban books on transgender topics in schools. Some elected officials also speak out against and try to end events like drag shows.

In April 2023, the ACLU (American Civil Liberties Union) said it is tracking 467 anti-LGBTQ bills in the U.S. The ACLU is an

organization that works to defend the rights of all people.

“In the last few years, states have advanced a record number of bills that attack LGBTQ rights, especially transgender youth,” the ACLU wrote on its website. “The ACLU is tracking these attacks and working with our national network of affiliates to support LGBTQ people everywhere.”

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Peer and family supports lend a helping hand

Each Integrated Health Home location has trained peer support specialists to assist members. These people are mentors who can relate to your friend or loved one. The peer support specialist can help families and their loved one living with a Serious Mental Illness (SMI) determination. Peer support specialists know the recovery process because of their own lived experience. Peer support specialists receive training on how to engage people in services to support their recovery.

Peer support provides members:

- Resources to connect with the community
- Tools to use in times of crisis
- Help with treatment and wellness plans
- An advocate who will work with their clinical team

There are also family support specialists that educate and guide you through the behavioral health system. A family support specialist is an advocate for your friend or loved one and for you. Family support specialists help give a voice to the member’s family of choice. They give you the chance to explain your unique family situation. Also, they can connect you with Mercy Care’s other community partners that can provide services such as employment and housing support for your loved one. These community partners are members of the treatment team that you will be able to interact and connect with for your friend or loved one.

Peers and families play an important role in helping members be as healthy as possible. That is why Mercy Care works with the Arizona Peer and Family Coalition, an organization of peer and family member advocates. The coalition makes sure individuals and families have a say in the behavioral health policy decisions that affect their community. Want to learn more about how to get involved? Or, about peer and family support resources? Just email the Office of Individual and Family Affairs at OIFATeam@mercycares.org.

September is Suicide Prevention Awareness Month

Help keep loved ones safe from suicide by following **T-A-S-C**.

Tune-In – Notice changes in behavior or warning signs.

Ask about suicide

State the seriousness of suicide thoughts

Connect to helping resources

Some warning signs

Body language: being withdrawn, sleeping too much or not enough, increasing drug or alcohol use, anxious, agitated or reckless

Speech: talking about wanting to die, feeling hopeless, having no purpose or being a burden to others.

Suicide and Crisis Lifeline: **988**

Hours: Available 24 hours to call or text.

Languages: English, Spanish.

Source: www.livingworks.net and www.save.org

Coping with anti-transgender attitudes, speech

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The constant flood of anti-trans speech and laws can have a harmful effect on the mental health of members of the trans community, said Dr. Gagan Singh, Chief Medical Officer for Mercy Care.

“Members of the trans community have often experienced lifelong trauma, and this can thus retraumatize them and rekindle depression, anxiety and PTSD,” Singh said. “Think about this as someone who cannot get away from a highly traumatic situation because someone keeps on coming and attacking and abusing them. That is highly disruptive psychologically.”

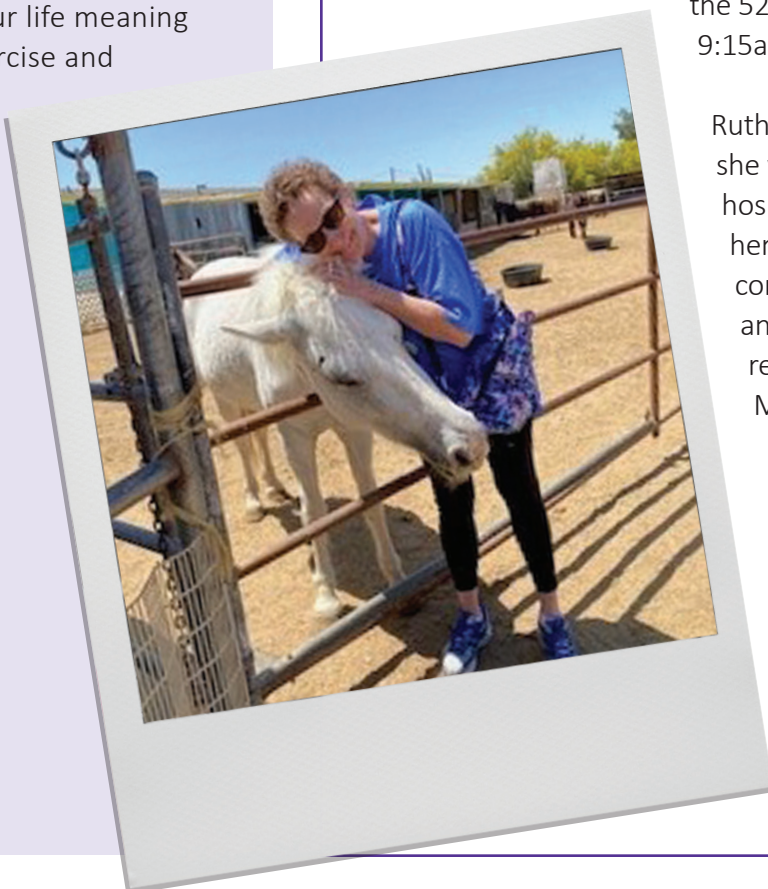
And it isn’t just a person’s mental health that suffers.

Dr. Singh notes that depression, anxiety and PTSD directly affect our physical health.

“People with these conditions have worse physical health outcomes than the general population,” he said. “The increased risk of developing depression, anxiety or PTSD is likely what drives this risk. In addition, for a subset of the population the repeated trauma might increase substance use risk which can also worsen physical health conditions.”

He offers ways that members of the trans community can keep their minds and bodies healthy.

- Turn off the TV and social media feed to limit your exposure to anti-trans speech
- Reach out to a community of support
- Find meaning through advocacy
- Find and do those things that give you joy and give your life meaning
- Eat right, sleep, exercise and stay away from drugs and alcohol
- Get help when things are getting out of hand



Snapshots of success – Tatyanna H.

Tatyanna H. started her recovery journey early, in middle school, but she is already taking all she’s learned to help others find hope through recovery. As a member of Mercy Care’s Youth Leadership Council (YLC), she gives valuable feedback about improving services to members.

During her two years with the YLC, she notes “I’ve liked connecting with people [in the YLC]. I like how I’m able to make a difference with my mental and physical care and the foster care system.”

Tatyanna just completed the 6-week Peer Support Certification at Recovery Empowerment Network (REN). She will put this training to use at her new role at Sevita Health in group homes as a Behavioral Health Technician. Tatyanna will help others with their recovery.

She says, “I have different perspectives, both as a family member of one with mental health concerns and receiving services for my own Serious Mental Health (SMI) designation. I can empathize. I will let people know that there’s hope and recovery is possible.”

Tatyanna credits her therapist at her first group home who helped her in recovery and in learning to love herself. She isn’t going through recovery alone though.

She says, “My girlfriend, family and friends are a big part of my recovery. They mean the world to me.”

In her spare time, Tatyanna enjoys creating music. She sings, plays piano and guitar, and composes music. She wants to share her music on YouTube and plans to use music as therapy in her peer support role.



Snapshots of success – Ruth Ann L.

Michigan native, Ruth Ann L., is feeling like herself again thanks to equine therapy and other treatments from her ACT team at La Frontera.

She has the unique opportunity to care for horses at the Good Shepherd Healing Ministries Horse Rescue in Apache Junction. Ruth Ann says, “When you groom a horse it makes you feel grounded.”

She also gives the horses water from her hand and feeds them a little hay to gain the animals’ trust. Since starting equine therapy in April, Ruth Ann spends the most time with Echo and Snowflake. Participants in equine therapy can come to the rescue to help some of the 52 horses on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays anytime from 9:15am to early evening.

Ruth Ann has come a long way in about a year’s time when she was experiencing dizziness, bipolar episodes and hospitalizations. She credits her doctor at La Frontera who knew her symptoms were from incorrect medication dosages and combinations. Ruth Ann is thriving with the right medications and involvement with her ACT team. She notes on her recovery, “The whole thing is a miracle. It’s all because of Mercy Care and the team at La Frontera.”

Ruth Ann has big plans this year including continuing in Toastmasters to hone her public speaking skills and participating in Recovery Reelz at Recovery Empowerment Network (REN) to learn filmmaking. In her spare time, Ruth Ann enjoys spending time with her dogs, Scooter and Sklyer, and plans to continue with equine therapy.

Resources for LGBTQ+ youth and adults in Arizona

You can always use support and acceptance from caring people to move forward in life. Several Arizona organizations offer a safe space, resources and services to assist lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning youth and adults.

To achieve your goals and self-reliance, many factors come into play. Some of these factors are access to housing, work and education opportunities, health care, life skills training and connecting with others.

Reach out to these organizations for support:

one*n*ten offers drop-in social support services such as housing and workforce training in Phoenix for LGBTQ youth ages 14-22. Call **602-400-2601**.

LGBT National Help Center offers coming out and peer support and local resources. Call **1-800-246-7743** if you are age 25 or younger. Visit **www.lgbthotline.org** for other support lines.

Phoenix Children's Hospital hosts a gender support group. Call **602-933-0659**.

El Rio Health provides transgender health care services. Call **520-670-3909**.

Phoenix Pride hosts the Pride and Rainbow Festivals in Phoenix. Several resources for the LGBTQ+ community can be found at **www.phoenixpride.org/resources**.

Arizona Department of Health Services' resource guide lists organizations and publications that offer support throughout the state. Visit **https://www.azdhs.gov/documents/prevention/womens-childrens-health/womens-health/adolescent-health-conference/resources.pdf**.

Contact Mercy Care Member Services if you have questions about covered support services.



2023 Connections Conference

On June 21 and 22, Mercy Care's Connections Conference hosted over 300 members and providers. This conference was two days of inspirational and educational sessions on innovative paths to recovery. **View sessions and handouts.** Or watch last year's virtual sessions including Personal Medicine at **mercyar.es/cc2022**.



Introducing Personal Medicine

Mercy Care is adding Personal Medicine as a treatment to help our members find success in recovery. Personal Medicine is not a pill or a prescribed drug—it is a practice. It empowers people to connect with their inner resilience and play an active role in their recovery.

Personal Medicine is led by Patricia E. Deegan, Ph.D., the founder of Pat Deegan & Associates (PDA). With over 30 years of experience as a leader and innovator in the field of behavioral health recovery, Dr. Deegan has spent her life revolutionizing the way we approach mental health treatment.

"Illnesses don't recover; people do," says Dr. Deegan.

Diagnosed with schizophrenia as a teenager, Dr. Deegan defied expectations and earned a doctorate in clinical psychology. Today, she leads PDA, a company run by and for people in recovery. PDA has trained thousands of individuals worldwide as Certified Personal Medicine Coaches (CPMCs), empowering them to support others on their healing journeys.

Research on Personal Medicine has shown this program works to help people find success in recovery. Those who participate in Personal Medicine report higher engagement in their own care, leading to better health. Adding this practice into behavioral health treatment can empower people to take control of their life and well-being.

Mercy Care is working with ACC-RBHA Behavioral Health Home providers to certify all Rehabilitation Specialists as CPMCs. We are also working on the certification of Personal Medicine Champions who will foster partnerships to further spread the benefits of Personal Medicine.

Mercy Care believe in the power of Personal Medicine. We are committed to promoting this practice and creating a supportive environment where individuals can claim their own healing journey.

Get Involved

We're looking for interested peers, youth and family members to serve on our committees. All committee members play an important role in guiding how we serve the community and how we provide care. You also help us come up with ways to improve services for our members. Contact **oifateam@MercyCareAZ.org** for details.

Find more ways to get involved by joining the AHCCCS OIFA mailing list.



Scams: Staying safe online and at home

In recent years, scams have targeted Mercy Care members. Some common scams are identity theft, fraudulent funds transfers, and even fake IRS or Social Security calls. Those who may become a victim to these scams can suffer loss of money and time to fix their identity.

One scam involves IRS calls, where scammers pose as tax officials and demand payment for alleged taxes owed to the IRS. Another scam is the “grandparent scam”. The fraudsters target older adults by pretending to be their grandchild that is reaching out for emergency funds. Also, online scams target Arizona residents through phishing emails or fake websites. These phishing emails and fake websites can look real and from trusted sources.

To get more information about scams, you can visit the official website of the **Arizona Attorney General Office**. They have a section to find details about current scams, alerts and reports filed in the courts.

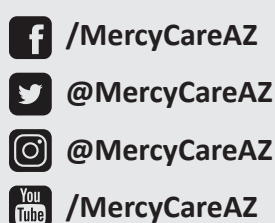
It is always important to be alert and rely on trusted websites and sources to stay safe!

Mercy Care

4500 E. Cotton Center Blvd
Phoenix, AZ 85040

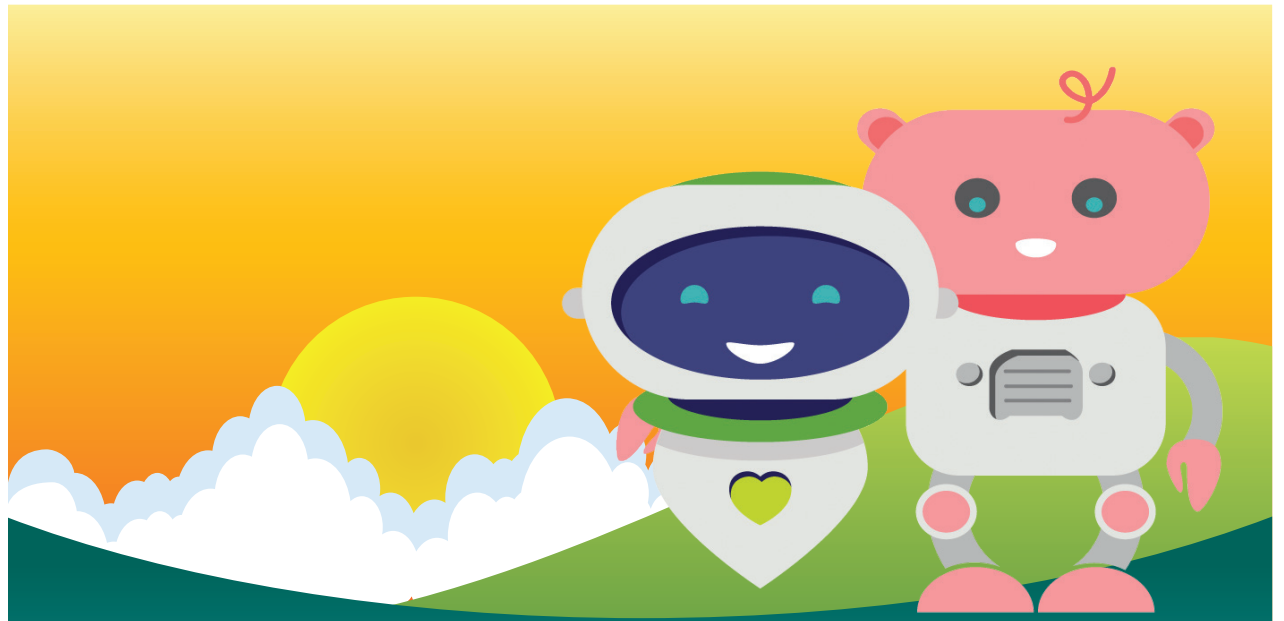
Contract services are funded under contract with AHCCCS. This is general health information and should not replace the advice or care you get from your provider. Always ask your provider about your own health care needs.

Mercy Care is administered by Aetna Medicaid Administrators, LLC, an Aetna company.



Call Mercy Care RBHA Member Services at **602-586-1841** or **1-800-564-5465**; (TTY/TDD **711**). We're available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. 24-hour nurse line: **602-586-1841** or **1-800-564-5465**.

www.MercyCareAZ.org



Everyone can use a little extra support...

Sign up for the Pyx Health app to:

- Find resources to support your physical and mental health.
- Connect with compassionate humans for a friendly chat or help with resources.
- Feel better each day with companionship and humor.



Simply search 'Pyx Health' in the Apple or Google Play stores or use your smartphone and go to www.HiPyx.com to get the app.

For a behavioral health crisis

Mercy Care members can call the **Arizona Behavioral Health Crisis Line** 24 hours a day, 7 days a week: **1-844-534-4673** or **1-844-534-HOPE** or Text **HOPE** to **4HOPE (44673)**

Native American resources

San Carlos Apache Reservation: **1-866-495-6735**
Gila River and Ak-Chin Indian Communities: **1-800-259-3449**
Salt River Pima Maricopa Indian Community: **1-855-331-6432**
Fort McDowell Yavapai Nation: **480-461-8888**
San Lucy District of the Tohono O'odham Nation: **480-461-8888**
Tohono O'odham Nation: **1-844-423-8759**
Pascua Yaqui Tribe: Tucson **520-591-7206**; Guadalupe **480-736-4943**
White Mountain Apache Tribe: **928-338-4811**
Navajo Nation: **928-551-0508**

Veterans Crisis Line: **1-800-273-8255**, press 1

Suicide and Crisis Lifeline: call or text **988**, available in English and Spanish, 24/7.

National crisis text line: Text **HOME** to **741741**, about any type of crisis.
<https://www.crisistextline.org/text-us/>

Teen Lifeline phone or text: **602-248-TEEN (8336)**

Crisis Line staff can help:

- Provide crisis support over the phone
- Dispatch a crisis mobile team to support you in the community
- Arrange for transportation to take you somewhere safe
- Help you arrange counseling or connection to your outpatient provider
- Provide options for dealing with other urgent situations

Always call 911 in life-threatening situations.

If you need someone to talk to

Call the Warm Line, **602-347-1100**. It's a support line operated by credentialed peer support specialists.

Available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.