

Mental Health, Substance Use, and Homelessness

Flagstaff Community Town Hall

October 10, 2022 – Flagstaff, AZ

THE INTERSECTION OF MENTAL HEALTH, SUBSTANCE USE, AND HOMELESSNESS

Mental health, substance use, and homelessness, while not always present together, are often correlated, intersect, and interconnected.

Housing programs can be essential for allowing the opportunity for other services. When an individual is moved out of homelessness and into housing, and then surrounded with services where the agencies come to the individuals instead of the individual having to seek out services, there is more overall success in addressing all issues.

For recovery and sustainability, we should make recovery more accessible and flexible. Reducing isolation helps with recovery success. Some people may not be ready for treatment. It is important to build relationships, destigmatize conditions, and address prevention and early trauma or genetic predispositions.

It is also important for communities to work together, to have warm handoffs, and to ensure housing is readily available for those who need it.

ADDRESSING MENTAL HEALTH, SUBSTANCE USE, AND HOMELESSNESS

We should make it easier to access mental health services. We can do this by embedding mental health services into other service programs and bringing programs and information to our schools.

We need to normalize mental health like how we discuss physical health. We should rebrand mental health issues to wellness, like physical fitness. All populations and all organizations should work together to address these issues in a coordinated and integrated manner.

It is important to tailor treatment to the individual and to create opportunities for a buffet of different options for those seeking services.

Flexible funding to meet the needs of the community and different cultures, specifically our Native American communities, is critical.

We have many good programs or programs being launched that provide inspiration for effective approaches, such as the SHIFT program and Pathways to Community.

SETTING PRIORITIES

We need a cultural shift with rebranding, reframing, and destigmatizing mental health.

We can do this by sharing stories respectfully, prioritizing the time to make these changes, and utilizing peer support as part of an integrated approach.

We need to increase funding and reduce restrictions, affording providers more flexible funding.

Taking care of those who provide services is essential. We need more workforce reinforcement, both in recruiting additional people to enter these fields and supporting those who already serve. To do this, we could use additional support, funding, and on the job training programs.

Our relationships are our connections to those we serve. We should develop plans with a team approach, providing client navigation and warm handoffs.

WHAT ARIZONA'S ELECTED LEADERS NEED TO KNOW

- We need to tell Arizona leaders the stories of crisis to better inform them on why it is important to address trauma and housing issues and why flexible funding is critical.
- We should tell Arizona's elected leaders to get out and talk to people doing this work. Listen with an open mind and believe what the community says – everything else will follow once you see what is happening firsthand.
- We need to make mental health mainstream, reframe the challenge, and invite everyone in.

INDIVIDUAL COMMITMENTS TO ACTION

Recognizing that the power to change the future begins with each individual, participants committed to take personal actions based on their experience and discussions during the Flagstaff Community Town Hall. Below are individual actions that were shared.

I WILL...

- Continue to be an advocate to our social services partners and community.
- Join into the Verde Valley Town Hall to help promote future town hall events.
- Connect with programs to have meaningful conversations and connection around these issues, and vote.
- Contact the Guidance Center to coordinate housing.
- Continue to work with the local recovery community.
- Share the knowledge I learned with my constituent group.
- Create be a part of creating a more empathetic society.
- Vote to support social safety net programs.
- Feel more empowered to talk about the issues and propose solutions when talking with Arizona's leaders.
- Become a board member to support a vital non-profit serving this critical need.
- Continue to work with OWWA to develop capacity and resources for its NEAZ chapter.
- Lobby at the local, state, and federal level for increased human services funding, spread the word about program availability, and services provided.
- Continue to be a part of this community, learning and growing from it daily.
- Continue to educate myself and others on the importance of integrative care for issues surrounding mental health, substance use, and homelessness.
- Speak up about mental health, substance use and homelessness in our community, and redirect the conversation about people in our community.
- Continue doing the badass work I and my teams do.
- Build better relationships with community partners.
- Continue to actively support future leaders in the Verde Valley and connect with NAU and Flagstaff area high schools to expand future leaders in the region.
- Continue to contribute financially to Arizona Town Hall and recruit others to do likewise.