

THEIR STORIES ARE ARIZONA'S STORIES.



FOR THE THOUSANDS OF  
ARIZONANS STRUGGLING TO COPE,

IT'S NOT OK.

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# A TRAGIC CYCLE

IMAGINE SUFFERING WITH A MENTAL ILLNESS — THE PAIN, THE FEAR, THE UNCERTAINTY — EVERY SINGLE DAY OF YOUR LIFE. JANE HAS LIVED THAT STRUGGLE FOR MORE THAN 20 YEARS.

Like many others in her position, Jane held a fulfilling job and was a productive taxpayer until the symptoms of her mental illness made it impossible for her to work. In recent years, she maintained her financial independence by frugally managing her Social Security Disability Income (SSDI). In addition, the services she received from her public mental health provider helped her maintain balance in her life. Her medications were not expensive and she rarely reached the 'doughnut hole' in her Medicare plan. Jane had an excellent working relationship with her case manager and psychiatrist.

When state budget cuts eliminated case management and physician services for Jane, she began a dramatic

decline in her ability to function. Without the professional support during episodes of high anxiety and depression, Jane became highly unstable. She has now been hospitalized for 78 days in four different episodes since July 1, 2010. In Jane's case, the costs incurred by hospitals, doctors, law enforcement and insurance companies are estimated to exceed \$100,000.

Many of these costs will be absorbed by the taxpayers in our community. Doctors are aware that Jane will have no support in the community each time they discharge her. She will go back to her apartment to start the cycle over again. Doesn't a taxpayer, a member of our community, deserve better?

## MORE THAN \$100,000 FOR ONE PATIENT

Jane was hospitalized for 78 days in four different episodes after a dramatic decline. Many of the costs for her care will be absorbed by the taxpayers in our community.



‘ALL ARIZONANS DESERVE TO BE SAFE, HEALTHY AND SECURE. I DIDN’T ASK FOR ANY OF THIS.’

*Mark is one of the thousands of individuals who lost mental health services in 2010. In many cases, counseling and case management are just as important as medications. This is his story:*

I thought I’d gotten lucky and squeaked in. I heard that state services were being cut, but as far as I knew, I still had AHCCCS. I entered the building, found my case manager and then it happened: She told me she couldn’t talk to me because I was non-Title 19. I would still receive coverage for my medicine and still have med management once a month. But there would be no more classes, no food box, no counseling, and no bus pass.

Now I’m on my own. All Arizonans deserve to be safe, healthy and secure. I didn’t ask for any of this. In fact, I was going to start a program that has been shown to be very effective for depression, but not anymore. I guess that it doesn’t really matter because I have no transportation for these functions. It’s only about an hour walk from my house, but as hot as Phoenix gets, I could never walk it. So I am stranded at home, and that’s where I’m at now. I leave the apartment once a month to get my medications, but even that is getting harder. The heat makes my condition worse. Someday, it will be too much.

‘HE DOES NOT UNDERSTAND WHAT IS HAPPENING TO HIM. I AM LOSING MY SON.’

Six years ago, my son was diagnosed with schizophrenia. We immediately met with his doctor to discuss his future and effective treatments to help him recover. He spent the first several months at Desert Vista Hospital, an inpatient treatment center for individuals with mental illness, to stabilize his condition. As his health improved, he was transferred to a half way house and eventually to an apartment where he lived on his own, with the continued support of a case worker, counselor and other individuals and programs. A constant worry for me was that without continuous care, his illness would take over and he would never come back from it.

In July 2010, the Legislature cut services for the mentally ill. My son lost his case manager, counselor, transportation and several other vital services that were keeping him well. It was like taking insulin away from a diabetic. His condition spiraled and as a result he has spent the last seven months in jail. His condition continues to spiral downward and he does not understand what is happening to him. I am losing my son. He deserved better than this. Every Arizona family deserves better.

*Ron’s son is only one example of how cuts have directly and severely impacted people’s lives and our community. Taxpayers did not ask for a state government that refuses to support our most vulnerable citizens.*

# 55% SPIKE IN ADMISSIONS

to the urgent psychiatric care center in Maricopa County since state budget cuts began in 2009.

## TELLING THE STORY

People who suffer from Serious Mental Illness are often fearful of having their pictures and names in publications because of the stigma of mental illness. They may also fear retribution from the agencies where they receive services. Sometimes, the fear is part of the paranoia caused by the disorder. Often, the people who have suffered the most are not capa-

ble of making an informed consent to have their pictures and stories published. For all of these reasons, this publication is telling their stories through the people who know them and who work tirelessly to help them.

— Emily Jenkins, President and CEO,  
Arizona Council of Human Service Providers

# SHELL GAME AT STATE CAPITOL SELLS OUT ARIZONA'S FUTURE



On July 1, 2010, more than 13,000 Arizonans suffering from a serious mental illness who were not eligible for AHCCCS (Non-Title XIX clients) lost most of their benefits, including case management and brand name medications. In addition, the state Legislature appropriated funds only for generic medications, in spite of the fact that for many of these individuals, generics

have proven ineffective.

Arizona politicians are selling out our future when they make flawed, harmful public policy decisions. They are severely hurting people who have been stable, productive members of our community, and these draconian cuts will not result in any savings. The reality is a shell game of increased costs and cost shifting to local hospitals, emergency rooms, police and fire emergency services, county jails and state prisons. Who picks up the tab? Taxpayers – every time. It's simple: we'll pay deeply later for the cuts of today.

People with serious mental illness can successfully cope with their illnesses when they have access to care. Appropriate medications, supervision, case management, counseling, transportation, and supported housing are vital components to recovery. Frankly, it's what these taxpayers earned and what they deserve. Now is the time to rise above penny-wise, pound-foolish thinking. Arizona families need leaders who work for them.

— Clarke Romans, Executive Director  
National Alliance on Mental Illness, Southern Arizona

## A PATTERN OF HARMFUL PUBLIC POLICY DECISIONS:

JULY 2009

- Non Title XIX Cuts

JANUARY 2010

- General mental health and substance abuse cuts

JULY 2010

Cuts in services to the Seriously Mentally Ill:

- Generic medications only
- No case management
- No transportation
- No counseling

JULY 2011

- Freeze of AHCCCS enrollment of "childless adults"



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