

Helping Members Change Their Lives (And Our Own Lives, Too)

As a former Medicaid recipient who relied on treatment from community behavioral health centers, I know first-hand the transformative power a peer specialist can have in a person's life.

In my late teens and early twenties, I bounced from state hospitals to crisis stabilization units desperate to end my life. I had no hope that the goals I had envisioned prior to these struggles could be realized. When I started working with a peer specialist, I began to view myself and my future in a more positive light. My peer specialist expected me to recover and connected me to the resources and supports that empowered my recovery process. The painful experiences of my past paired with skills and knowledge of the healthcare system have provided me a platform for me to help others while creating lasting change. The opportunity to do such meaningful, passion-filled work for more than 40 hours of my week keeps me inspired and grateful to be a part of helping our members' lead healthy and vibrant lives.

The work we do through Magellan Complete Care of Florida's peer navigation program is literally changing the trajectory of peoples' lives. Peer support offers hope to the hopeless. It helps our members see new possibility in a life that feels limited. I often tell the team that they have the hardest job in healthcare, as the members we support have multiple chronic health conditions, may live in poverty, and have challenges getting their basic needs met, such as food and housing. The team is 100 percent field-based and every day they show up and not only listen and support our members, but are willing to share pieces of their own story to inspire hope and change.

The results have been nothing less than extraordinary. We've seen decreased inpatient days and a reduction in healthcare spending, but more importantly, members are re-engaging in their community and reaching goals related to their health and wellness. We bear witness to life change as members discover their power and break through barriers to accomplish what had once been buried dreams.

These potentially life changing interactions happen every single day with our staff and the members they touch. There are a lot of examples of member success stories, but here are two that underscore the power of peer support:

- Kevin's low self-esteem led him to live a very unhappy and socially reclusive life. Driven by fear of the world and feelings of being uncared for, Kevin attempted suicide. Thanks to the support provided by Magellan Complete Care through a peer specialist that visits him weekly, Kevin now lives a positive and socially involved life. He enjoys spending time with his new friends and communicating with his peer specialist.
- Joe struggled with debilitating challenges such as depression, suicidal attempts, chronic homelessness, wheelchair-boundedness, severe eye health problems, frequent hospital admissions, inconsistent medication usage and medical follow-ups. Magellan Complete Care worked with Joe to move toward the road to recovery through a complex case management program with a care coordination team and a peer support specialist. The team linked Joe to medical and psychiatric providers, a mental health agency and helped him obtain an independent living facility, food stamps, a new wheelchair, phone, eye glasses, and transportation assistance to attend appointments and follow-ups. Magellan Complete Care also assisted Joe in obtaining a referral for a prosthetic leg. Magellan then linked Joe with a job agency to support his goal of acquiring a

job.

The members' feelings of hope, pride, and self-confidence are contagious and we share these feelings when we reflect on the difference the health plan and staff makes in members lives. Our members are changing their own lives, but ours are changing along with them.