



mercy care



2024 Connections Conference

Celebrating resilience: Connecting to what matters to you

We are glad you're here for two days of inspirational and educational sessions on celebrating resilience, connecting to the right resources and creating innovative paths to recovery. Mercy Care is committed to breaking down barriers to health care for our members through our network of dedicated providers and our community partners.

Questions? Look for Mercy Care staff members wearing purple shirts or visit our conference check-in table.

Presentations and sessions

Day one: Thursday, April 11

OPENING REMARKS AND WELCOME | 9:30 – 9:45 A.M.

Opening remarks and welcome

Fiesta Ballroom

Tad Gary, Mercy Care Deputy Chief Executive Officer

Kate Murphy, AHCCCS Clinical Program Manager, Division of Grants and Innovation

Opening remarks

Tyson Gillespie, Mercy Care OIFA Administrator

Introduction to Office of Individual and Family Affairs (OIFA)

KEYNOTE | 9:45 – 10:45 A.M.

Not alone

Fiesta Ballroom

Stephen Bradford

One veteran's story of his journey going from broken to helping others who may also be broken and of the organizations that helped him along the way.

BREAKOUT SESSION 1 | 11 A.M. – 12 P.M.

Resilience in our journeys

RedRock

Drew Kinard, Child & Family Support Services (CFSS) Program Manager with members of the CFSS Young Adult Program

Three young adults from the CFSS Young Adult Program share their individual journeys and experiences in navigating the system as they transitioned from adolescence into adulthood. They will talk about their challenges and successes, what has worked and what hasn't, and what they've learned along their journeys.

Art in action

Tempe

Teresa Lundstrom, Center for Health and Recovery (CHR) Behavioral Health Technician and Art Coordinator

A guided art project embracing a dimension of wellness as a way to promote self-expression and stress management.

Increase recovery by creating fun events for life

Coronado

Melissa Posten, Member, Resilient Health

Activities in the community for participants to engage in social settings to help connect them to a sense of normalcy and belonging.

BREAKOUT SESSION 2 | 1:15 – 2:15 P.M.

Strategies for workforce resilience

RedRock

Paige LeForte, Spectrum Health Care Director of Continuous Care Programs

Attendees will gain insights into practical strategies for promoting self-care while at work, stress management, and interrupting cycles of burnout within their teams.

Art in action

Tempe

Teresa Lundstrom, Center for Health and Recovery (CHR) Behavioral Health Technician and Art Coordinator

A guided art project embracing a dimension of wellness as a way to promote self-expression and stress management.

Ticket to Work

Coronado

Jessica Cummings, Beacon Group, Ticket to Work Project Manager

A look at going back to work while on Social Security benefits, at how Ticket to Work can help with benefit planning and at incentives and the role they play in the process.

BREAKOUT SESSION 3 | 2:30 – 3:30 P.M.

Social security benefits: What you should know

RedRock

Jack Burns, Public Affairs Specialist for Arizona Social Security Administration

An overview of Social Security benefit programs, Medicare eligibility and enrollment, and other helpful information for those assisting clients with Medicare.

Show me the evidence

Tempe

Anthony Carrillo, Employment Rehabilitation Manager

Andrew Wambach, Housing Liaison; Noemi Zaragoza, Senior ACT Manager

Camilla Parker, Resource and Community Engagement Coordinator

This Mercy Care team will discuss evidence-based practices available in the Mercy Care network and review the core principles of the evidence-based practices: Assertive community treatment (ACT), permanent supportive housing (PSH), supported employment (SE) and Consumer Operated Services (COS) available in the network. Hear from individuals who have engaged in an EBP, how the EBP has impacted them, and where they are today.

First episode of psychosis

Coronado

Dr. Shasa Jackson, Valleywise Health/Manager of Specialty Outpatient Behavioral Health

First episode psychosis (FEP) programs provide rapid intervention and comprehensive support for adolescents and young adults experiencing an initial psychotic episode. Despite increased vulnerability during this critical window, research shows early treatment leads to better outcomes in minimizing further illness and disability. This introduction defines the purpose of FEP health homes, the population served, effective treatment models, and how an informed behavioral health workforce can support referral and care coordination for transitional aged youth after their first psychotic break.

Closing remarks

Fiesta Ballroom

Dr. Blythe FitzHarris, Mercy Care Chief Clinical Officer

Presentations and sessions

Day two: Friday, April 12

OPENING REMARKS AND WELCOME | 9:20 – 9:35 A.M.

Opening remarks and welcome

Fiesta Ballroom

Chaz Longwell, AHCCCS OIFA Recovery and Resiliency Programs Coordinator

Introduction to Office of Individual and Family Affairs (OIFA)

KEYNOTE | 9:35 – 10:35 A.M.

Personal medicine: Discover what you do to get well and stay well

Fiesta Ballroom

Jose Rojas, Mercy Care Employment and Rehabilitation Manager

Dr. Shasa Jackson, Valleywise Health/Manager of Specialty Outpatient Behavioral Health

Personal medicine are things we do to get and be well. This interactive session offers an overview of personal medicine and coaching and includes an activity to help you to identify your personal medicine.

PRESENTATION 1 | 10:35 – 11 A.M.

Mercy Care Health Assistant

Fiesta Ballroom

Colleen Soeder, RN, Mercy Care Director of Performance Management and Quality Improvement

Mercy Care Health Assistant is a tool for members that provides a personalized health action plan, rewards and incentives, access to educational information, the ability to digitally complete their Health Risk Assessment and surveys, a health tracker, and secure messaging.

BREAK | 11 – 11:15 A.M.

PRESENTATION 2 | 11:15 – 11:50 A.M.

Supporting families, supporting peers

Fiesta Ballroom

Robert Dodson, Recovery Empowerment Network (REN) Senior Manager

Greg Mingus, Recovery Empowerment Network (REN) Director of Development

An informative session about peer support and family support partners, about how families can benefit from working with peer and support partners and about the definition of 'family.' Learn how to access these services, and if you are interested, how you can become a support partner.

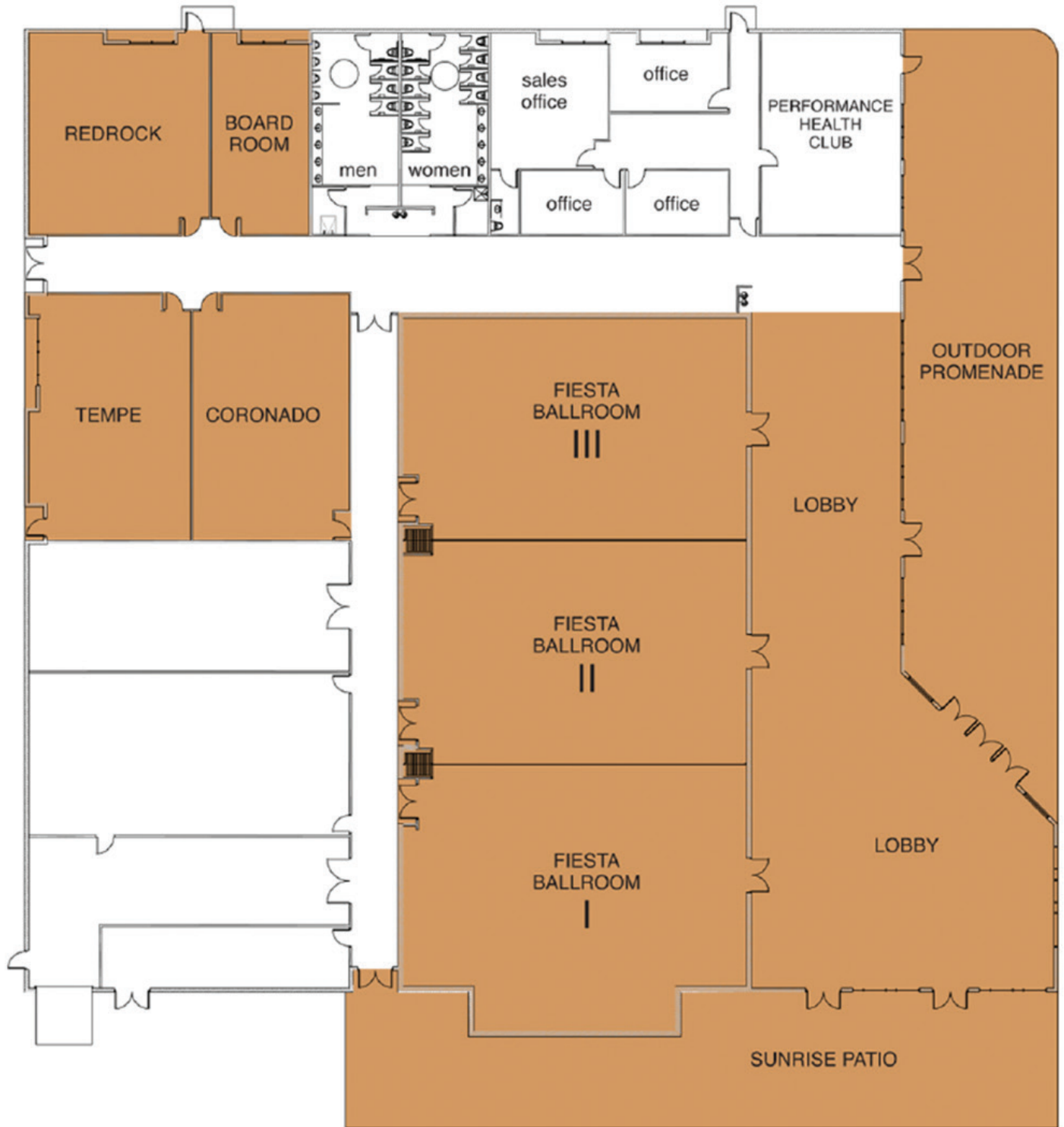
CLOSING REMARKS | 11:50 A.M. TO 12 P.M.

Closing remarks

Fiesta Ballroom

Lydia L'Esperance, Mercy Care Employment Vocational Administrator

Venue Map



Featured speakers



Stephen Bradford, a state certified peer support counselor, served in the U.S. Army for eight years, including two combat deployments in the Gulf War. He is an advocate for veterans and helps them heal through Instruments 4 Success (I4S), a program he founded under the name Honor House to donate musical instruments to veterans and raise awareness for veteran causes. In 2020, Honor House merged with the nonprofit Veterans First Ltd and became I4S. In 2023, he was inducted into the Arizona Veterans Hall of Fame.



Teresa Lundstrom oversees art programming at the Center for Health and Recovery (CHR). She coordinates services, facilitates groups, provides hands-on instruction with acrylic paint pouring, working with resin, clay and glass, making candles and jewelry, and holiday crafting. Her colleagues describe her as a creative, imaginative, hard worker who has developed meaningful connections with CHR's members.



Melissa Posten was born in Minnesota and started working in the healthcare industry in 1991. She was nominated for a caregiver of the year award in Minnesota, and the following year in Georgia. Melissa was involved in a bus accident, which caused a traumatic brain injury (TBI). She moved to Arizona and began getting help for her mental health. She started working with Resilient Health and found recovery by attending groups and supporting others.



Paige LeForte is the director of continuous care programs at Spectrum Healthcare, where she oversees Arizona's mobile crisis team operations and manages a men's and women's substance abuse residential treatment center. She is a licensed clinical social worker, has a bachelor's degree in applied human behavior from Northern Arizona University and a master's in social work from Arizona State University.



Jessica Cummings is a project manager for the Ticket to Work program at Beacon Group. With over 30 years of experience supporting individuals with disabilities in all stages of life, Jessica finds her greatest joy in helping people find employment. Her passion for helping others is undeniable and one of her remarkable strengths. She is a certified community partner work incentive counselor and provides expert advice on the benefits of returning to work.



Jack Burns is a public affairs specialist for the Social Security Administration in Arizona, where he's worked for more than 20 years. He provides no-cost educational workshops to staff and clients of Arizona's largest organizations to answer their questions about social security. He has a bachelor's degree from the University of Connecticut and a master's in education from Arizona State University.

Anthony Carrillo is an employment and rehabilitation manager with Mercy Care. He has more than 30 years of experience working in the behavioral health field in rehabilitation and vocational services, including developing and implementing programs. His passion and focus is on improving the quality of life for individuals receiving services.

Noemi Zaragoza is a senior assertive community treatment (ACT) manager with Mercy Care. She has more than 18 years of experience in the behavioral health field, working directly with members and their families in various roles. She earned a master's in administration with an emphasis on health sciences from Northern Arizona University.

Andrew Wambach is a housing liaison with the Mercy Care Housing Department. He's advocated for more specialized behavioral health care in services for people experiencing homelessness and has worked in housing and homeless services for the last eight years. He works to educate providers and community members about the importance of affordable and supportive housing programs.

Camilla Parker works in Mercy Care's Office of Individual and Family Affairs (OIFA). She has more than 20 years of lived experience and experience in managing family-delivered services in Maricopa County. She is an advocate for member voice and member choice who works to educate the community on the importance of peer and family-delivered services.



Dr. Shasha Jackson is an independently licensed clinical social worker that also holds a doctorate in behavioral health from Arizona State University. She has worked at Valleywise Health since 2016 and has served as the clinical coordinator for the First Episode Center – West Valley, the manager of outpatient specialty behavioral health services and now oversees all Valleywise health outpatient specialty programs.



Jose Rojas, an employment and rehabilitation manager for Mercy Care, received his Master of Science in Leadership from Grand Canyon University.

He is a certified personal medicine coach and trainer, has facilitated personal medicine cohorts and played a role in certifying over 65 individuals as personal medicine coaches. He has worked for 35 years in various capacities in social services ranging from working with young adults for social change, adults with HIV and substance use, crisis services, workforce development, employment, and psychosocial rehabilitation services.



Gina Amoroso is a peer support specialist at the First Episode Center. She spent over 20 years struggling to overcome substance use and behavioral health

matters, including five years living on the streets, deep into her addiction. In 2015, Gina found out that she was pregnant and entered inpatient treatment through Community Bridges' Center for Hope. She was welcomed and supported by peer support specialists, and now she supports others in their recovery.



Robert Rodgers is a clinical coordinator at Valleywise Health Avondale First Episode Center and a peer support specialist. He earned a master's in social work, is a licensed master social worker (LMSW), and is pursuing

a doctorate in psychology. He overcame a 30-year addiction, homelessness, and complex trauma to get where he is today. Now, he's passionate about helping others find recovery, just as the professionals who helped him gain a life he never imagined.

Robert Dodson has been the senior manager at Recovery Empowerment Network for eight years. He lives by the saying, "Changed lives, changing lives." He attended the University Of Phoenix. One of his professional goals is to increase his attention to fine detail to improve his workplace productivity, efficiency, and performance. A personal goal is getting healthier to increase his longevity and stop a family cycle of generations of diabetes.

Greg Mingus, director of development for Recovery Empowerment Network, has been deeply involved in peer support since 2012 and he empowers individuals to reshape their lives as they travel on their path of wellness. His own journey fuels his appreciation for the role of coaches and peer support specialists. Recognizing the impact that fitness has on one's well-being, he obtained a personal training certification, and eventually established REN's on-site fitness facility and program.



Colleen Soeder is a registered nurse and the director of performance management and quality improvement at Mercy Care. She is responsible for driving continuous improvement in quality of care and advancing health and quality outcomes.

Colleen has is a dynamic, detail-oriented and transformational Quality Management Director with over two decades of health care management experience and an extensive track record of success, utilizing critical thinking skills to manage complex projects and deliver superior outcomes, resulting in best-in-class care for over 400,000 Medicaid and dual-eligible members.

Get connected

Mercy Care Office of Individual and Family Affairs
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Get involved

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