

# January 8, 2011: Tragedy Strikes Tucson

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# Tragedy Strikes Tucson

- January 8, 2011...a Saturday...10:00 AM
- Congress on your Corner town hall event in local grocery store parking lot
- Lone gunman...22 years old
- 13 wounded
  - U.S. Representative Giffords
- 6 killed
  - 9 year old little girl
  - Federal judge
  - Young staffer



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# Responding to the Tragedy

- Established Emergency Operations Center
  - Coordinate state, county, local response
- Established Tucson Tragedy Support Line
  - Pima County line
  - Statewide line
- Crisis responders reached out
  - Schools, religious institutions, and community groups to which the victims belonged
  - Available to the larger community: support groups/CISM
- Website resources; You Tube video message

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# The EOC

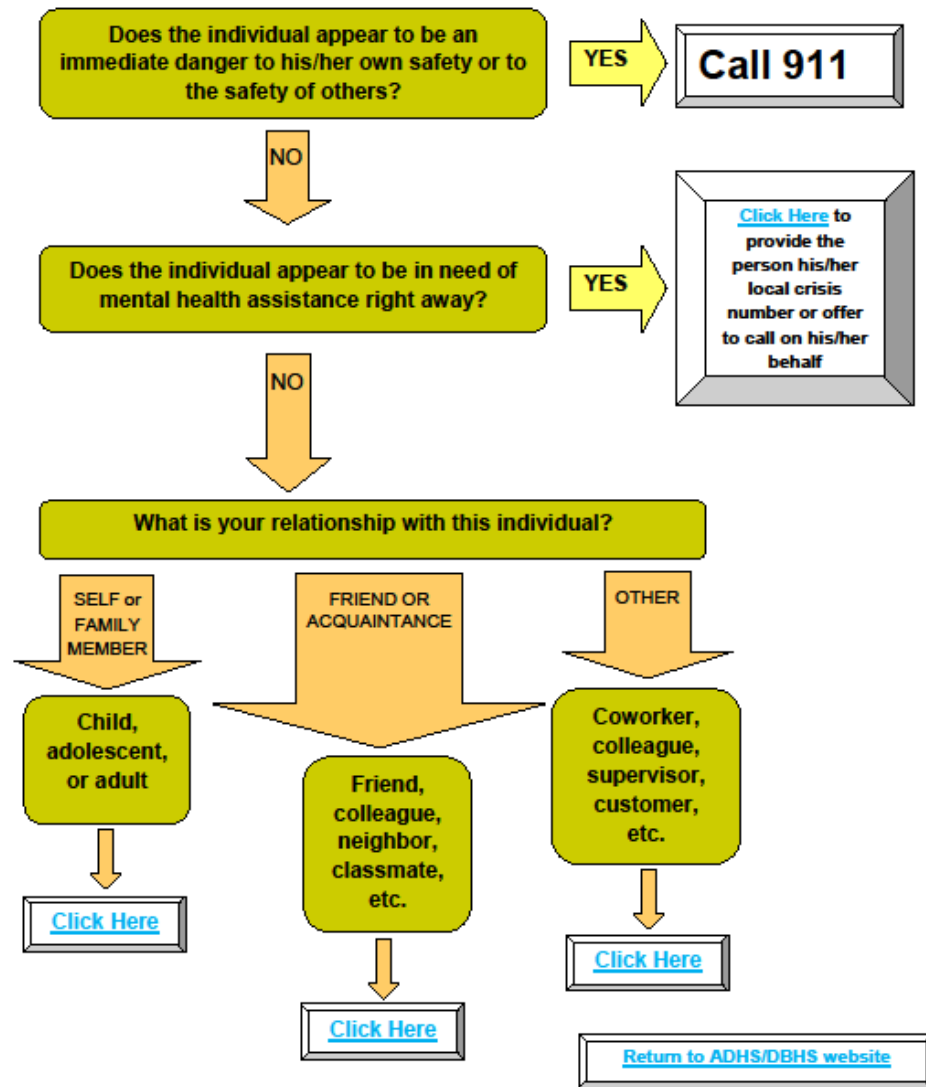
- Initial challenges...followed by
- Daily briefings
  - law enforcement, state and local government, first responders, faith-based organizations, local crisis-service providers, the Red Cross
- Set daily objectives and complete daily briefing forms to coordinate efforts, track progress and ensure objectives were met

# What to do when you are concerned about someone's mental health, including your own

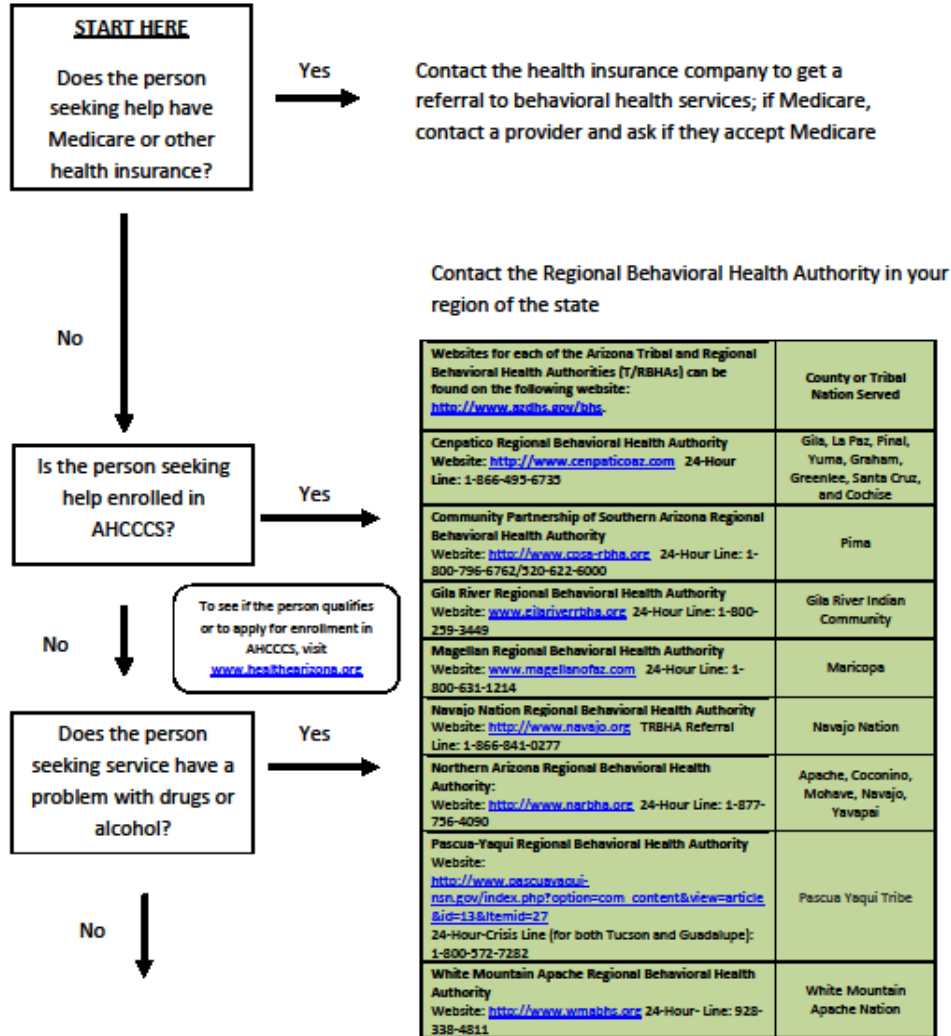
[Facts and Myths about Mental Illness](#)

[Learn How to Access Behavioral Health Services](#)

[Learn about the Court-Ordered Evaluation process in Arizona](#)



## Accessing/Paying for Behavioral Health Services



## Involuntary Evaluation and Treatment (Civil Commitment) in the State of Arizona

Note: The information below is intended to generally explain the Civil Commitment process in Arizona. It should NOT be relied on in place of legal advice.

Note: Civil Commitment processes for American Indians residing on tribal lands have different legal processes as tribes have legal jurisdiction over their tribal members on tribal lands. If questions arise with reference to American Indian members please contact the Regional Behavioral Health Authority Tribal Liaisons or view the ADHS/DBHS [Tribal Commitment information page](#).

Mental illness is a medical condition usually caused by a chemical imbalance in the brain that affects a person's mood, thinking, feeling, communication, and ability to do everyday tasks. Mental illness is treatable and persons with mental illness can and do recover. The treatment for mental illness depends upon the type of illness and unique needs of the individual. Some of the most common forms of treatment include medication, therapy/counseling, daily living skills training, and other kinds of supports. Just like treatment for any other medical condition such as diabetes or high blood pressure, the early detection, intervention and treatment of mental illnesses improves an individual's prospect for a full recovery and a richer quality of life.

Ideally, an individual with mental illness will seek out or voluntarily agree to get treatment. Voluntary treatment allows a person to direct his/her own recovery based upon his/her treatment preferences. It is always preferable for someone to willingly seek treatment than to be forced to get treatment. There are times, however, when a person is unable to recognize his/her need for mental health treatment, is unwilling to get help and poses a risk to self or others in the community. If that is the case, involuntary treatment (civil commitment) may become necessary.

### What is the Civil Commitment Process?

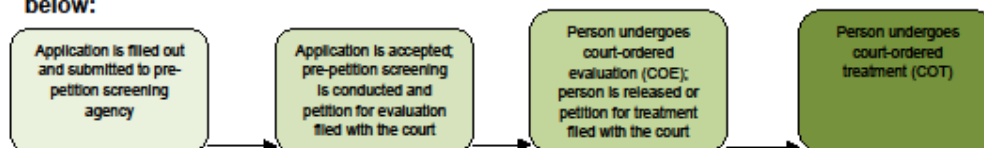
Civil Commitment is a legal process to determine whether a person with a mental illness who meets other established criteria should be ordered to receive mental health evaluation or treatment against his/her will. In Arizona, the criteria for involuntary evaluation and/or treatment are that the person is:

1. Unwilling or unable to accept voluntary evaluation/treatment; AND
2. As a result of a mental illness is:
  - o A danger to self;
  - o A danger to others;
  - o Gravely disabled (unable to take care of one's basic physical needs); OR
  - o Persistently or acutely disabled (likely to suffer severe mental or physical harm because of impaired judgment caused by a mental health condition).

A civil commitment is NOT a criminal proceeding or conviction and will NOT go on a person's criminal record.

**NOTE:** The civil commitment process is NOT available to persons who have a substance abuse and/or alcoholism condition, UNLESS the person also has a mental disorder and meets the established criteria.

These are the steps in the Civil Commitment process; each will be described in more detail below:



# Don't forget about

- Your enrolled members
  - 30,000 enrolled public behavioral health members in Tucson
  - 120,000 more enrolled members statewide
  - Impact on individuals with SMI
    - Media reports
    - Focus on mental illness and violence
- Your staff!
  - They may be struggling to deal with the event and must care for themselves and their families

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GIFFORDS  
U.S. CONGRESS

# Recovery begins

- Community movement toward unity and healing
  - Encouraged by victims, witnesses and families
- Foundations & memorial scholarships
- Mental Health First Aid campaign
  - Used federal disaster fund grant
  - 80 new instructors
  - Training ~3000 community members by end of the year
  - Nominal fee/free



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# Recovery begins

- Public mental-health education
  - Mental Health is a public health issue!
  - Learning about mental health has become a priority for school districts, employers, faith-based communities and other groups...take advantage of it!
  - Reaching out to community partners, including local media, school systems, and faith-based organizations
  - Tucson's daily paper has made mental illness one of two priorities for 2011; so far, a series of articles, several editorials and an extensive resource guide

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# Recovery begins

- Link BH leaders with county emergency response team; develop relationships
  - Meeting between behavioral health CEOs and Disaster Response Coordinators with County Health Officers
- Behavioral health now at the table
  - We are sought out
  - Recent AZ wildfires...

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# Lessons Learned

- Plan..Plan...Plan—Use the Toolkit!
  - Understand your role
  - Understand your agency
  - Understand your state
    - Involuntary commitment standards
    - Firearm regulations/gun control laws (National Instant Criminal Background Check System; NICS)
    - Privacy laws
  - Understand crisis communications

# Lessons Learned

- Plan for the likely needs of
  - the people you serve
  - your staff
  - elected officials
  - media
  - populations that may be re-traumatized by the event
  - the community at large
- In the context of a criminal action
  - the justice system will likely provide and/or organize ongoing support to victims and witnesses through the entire legal process...coordinate

# Lessons Learned

- Prepare foundation for good crisis response plan in advance
- Identify emergency-response roles for your staff
  - To organize/develop immediate action plans specific to the situation
  - To assist with data collection, analysis, and reporting
- Ensure backup staff available
- Make sure your plan can be activated outside of normal business hours

# Lessons Learned

- Build relationships with media in advance
  - Let the media know about your capabilities, programs, and achievements
  - Invite them to special events
  - This will help ensure your perspective is included in the public discussion after a tragedy
- Respond promptly and helpfully to media questions based on availability and priorities
- Be alert to trends in media coverage and new storylines that are emerging
- Expect media interest to resurface at anniversaries and whenever something new happens regarding the tragedy or its victims

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# Lessons Learned

- Identify supplemental treatment and support providers for specific needs
  - Ex: children's grief reactions.
  - faith-based organizations
  - Government entities, school systems, and employers can help reach large numbers of people.
- Have translated materials available

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# Thank you.

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