

# FAMILY CONNECTIONS

*News for Families from the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources,  
Bureau for Behavioral Health's  
Office of Children, Youth and Families*

*Family Connections  
Issue III*

*Summertime can be fun with vacations, swimming, camping, cookouts, relaxing in the yard, ice cream, and playing outside games. Have a wonderful summer and enjoy times with your family.*

***We wish all fathers a Happy Father's Day.***



## **SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES DEALING WITH DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

Thank you for giving me this opportunity to share this information about the YWCA of Charleston's Resolve Family Abuse Program. Resolve is celebrating its 40<sup>th</sup> year as the only licensed domestic violence provider in Kanawha, Boone, and Clay counties. When people think of us, they usually think of our safe house, Hope House. Hope House is a part of what we do, but there is so much more to Resolve. I'm excited to be able to share all that we do! Resolve's program model can be broken down into four service categories:

*(Continued on next page.)*

## SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES WITH DOMESTIC

### VIOLENCE Continued

Those are: Emergency Domestic Violence Safe House and Court Advocacy; Case Management and Counseling; Prevention Education; and Visitation and Exchange. Through Emergency Domestic Violence, a safe house is provided at Hope House as well as court advocacy. The Resolve Family Abuse Program meets the urgent safety needs of domestic violence survivors and their children.



### Emergency Domestic Violence Safe House and Court Advocacy

Survivors are provided with around the clock services at Hope House in a safety-centered environment. While at Hope House, through the guidance of Advocates, Resolve ensures that survivors become more knowledgeable of resources available in their community, while also equipping them with strategies to enhance their safety in the future. Once a victim has made the decision to leave their abuser, Resolve is there to assist them in creating goals which often includes providing safe refuge.

The survivor's first need is for a safe space to stay. Hope House is a 16-bed emergency safe house used to aid in the protection of domestic violence survivors. It provides safe refuge for survivors and their children from violence regardless of gender.

*(Continued on next page.)*

### SELF CARE CORNER

Don't let a few bad days distract from the fact that you are making amazing progress. You should be so proud of yourself.



BlessingManifesting

**“The work we do at Resolve allows me to see the strength and resilience of the human spirit on a regular basis. I feel privileged to be a small part of the journey survivors are on towards happiness and health, though I’ll always dream of a time where my work is no longer necessary.” –Melissa Hammack, Hope House Coordinator.**

## **Case Management and Counseling**

Domestic Violence Advocates provide case management, employment resources, referrals to housing, and assistance in applying for mainstream benefits and resources. Resolve also offers a 24-hour crisis hotline; a 24-hour crisis chat (new due to COVID); counseling services; support groups; and a children's group that includes tutoring, recreation, and support service; and a rapid rehousing program to move clients from the safe house into their own permanent housing, all at no charge to participants.

Resolve also offers a 24-hour crisis hotline, a 24-hour crisis chat which is new due to COVID, counseling services, support groups, and a children's group that includes tutoring, recreation, and supportive services, a rapid rehousing program to move clients from the safe house into their own permanent housing, all at no charge to participants.

At Resolve, we understand it is rare for anyone to make positive life choices while fleeing an abuser. Advocates for Resolve assist survivors with locating safe, affordable, permanent housing. Resolve Advocates work closely with other mainstream community resources such as housing authorities, the Kanawha Valley Collective, Health Right, Covenant House, REACH, and The Counseling Connection. The Victim and Safe House Services Coordinator (VSSC) provides warm referrals to the YWCA's Transitional Housing program and Resolve's Rapid Re-housing program. The VSSC provides intensive one-on-one housing focused case management which emphasizes permanent housing options that best fit the particular program participant. With domestic violence and homelessness at an all-time high, Resolve's Rapid Re-housing program works to quickly rehouse or relocate people who are actively fleeing domestic violence.

Counseling services that are offered help to keep survivors engaged in the continuance of their pursuit of independence and safety. Sessions are offered one-on-one with trained Domestic Violence Counselors, free of any financial burden to the survivor. Support group sessions promote interaction between survivors. It is the desire of Resolve that through support groups, survivors will find strength and encouragement from their peers who they can turn to when they leave the safe house.

*(Continued on the next page.)*



**SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES DEALING WITH DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**  
*Continued*

Group domestic violence counseling through support group can be an enormous help to survivors, especially if the group is filled with survivors in different stages of their exit from their relationships. This benefits survivors because it not only shows them that leaving is possible, and they will also have a network of support that includes people who are or who have been in a similar situation. That network of support can also help survivors in planning their exit from the relationship, providing them with safety planning, and acting as emotional support during the difficult process of leaving the relationship.

Court Advocacy is the second part of this category, and it is a program element that Resolve takes great pride in. Resolve's Court Advocates have offices in each courthouse of all three counties in our catchment area. Court Advocates assist with completing the extensive documentation needed when requesting a Domestic Violence Protection Order (DVPO). This is a critical service offered to anyone trying to obtain a DVPO because many have not filled this type of paperwork before. Escaping a domestic violence situation is already emotionally draining enough, without having to struggle through 16 pages of technical documents. Resolve's Court Advocates work closely with other system-based advocates in law enforcement, prosecutor's offices, and other organizations. Court Advocates also work closely with their county's magistrates and know the unique documentation expectations of each magistrate.

A critical component offered by the Court Advocates is survivor accompaniment to court proceedings. Resolve has a full-time Domestic Violence Court Advocate in Boone County and a part-time Domestic Violence Court Advocate in Clay County. Both counties have very few community resources and the needs of victims in Boone and Clay counties can vary greatly when compared to victims in Kanawha County. Therefore, Court Advocates in these counties also serve as liaison between the victim and available resources offered by YWCA, and other local organizations.

### **Prevention Education**

Another key program component that helps Resolve ultimately achieve its goals is prevention education. Children who witness domestic violence or are the victims of abuse themselves are at serious risk for long-term physical and mental health problems.

*(Continued on the next page.)*

**SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES DEALING WITH DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**  
*Continued*

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that among women and men who have experienced intimate partner violence, 26% of women and 15% of men first experienced violence by a partner before they turned 18. Resolve addresses this concern with its Teen Dating/Youth Services Program.

With prevention education, Resolve shifts its focus from domestic violence victims to young children in the communities it serves. In partnership with the Boards of Education in Kanawha, Boone, and Clay counties, the Youth Services Coordinator provides interactive domestic violence presentations at local schools within the service area. Through these presentations and workshops, young children and teens learn about resources available to help domestic violence victims and appropriate behavior towards their peers. Teens are taught the basics of healthy relationships, including boundaries, and proper dating behavior. Through empowering young people, it is the aspiration of Resolve that domestic violence be reduced in the future through teaching children and teens about healthy relationships.

The Youth Services Coordinator also facilitates a children's support group session for children who are part of a family fleeing domestic violence. Topics are age-appropriate and range from learning to share and identifying feelings to healthy relationships and healthy boundaries. The Youth Service Coordinator works with each child in Hope House to ensure their physical, mental, and emotional needs are being met. Resolve is committed to teaching children about healthy relationships and violence-free living.

### **Visitation Exchange**

The fourth and final programmatic element Resolve addresses is the Monitored Visitation and Exchange program, which allows children in high-conflict custody situations safe access to both parents, through the utilization of a monitored visitation center.

Monitored Visitation and Exchange staff facilitate all visitations and exchanges, so parents and guardians have no personal interaction with each other. This reduces the tension from the situation and makes the exchange or visitation less stressful for the child.

At Resolve, we serve approximately 2,000 people a year across the program. We have a staff of 24 and will soon be adding a full-time counselor.

*(Continued on the next page.)*

**SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES DEALING WITH DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**  
**Continued**

In summer of 2020 Resolve became the first domestic violence safe house with a pet shelter on site to provide space for people fleeing domestic violence to bring their pets with them. To date, we have housed 4 dogs and 6 cats. Resolve also added a 24-hour crisis chat feature to our website at [ywcacharleston.org](http://ywcacharleston.org) after Governor Jim Justice instituted his Stay At Home order at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. The 24-hour crisis hotline calls dropped by more than 40%, and it was clear that victims struggled with being able to have a phone conversation about their abuse with the abuser in the next room.

Often, people will ask "What should I do if I know someone who is in an abusive relationship?" Below are 9 suggestions to consider.

1. Have the Domestic Violence (DV) crisis line in your phone: 304.340.3549 or 800.681.8663.
2. Remember our DV crisis chat is on the first page of our website at [ywcacharleston.org](http://ywcacharleston.org).
3. Wear purple to show your support for survivors of domestic violence.  
#whydoyouwearpurple
4. Men: – BE AN ALLY. DV isn't a women's issue it's a human issue.
5. Don't ignore it. If you see or hear an argument, call the police. You could save a life.
6. Share the word and help raise awareness. Tell friends and family what it has to offer. If your club, class, or workplace needs a learning event, call me at 304.340.3554
7. Know the signs. Examples include:
  - Keeping someone away from friends and family
  - Controlling the money, who they see, where they go, or where and when they work.
  - Monitoring their phone, computer, and GPS
  - Threatening someone or their family, friends, or pets
  - Shaming them
  - Accusing them of cheating
  - Refusing to use or sabotaging birth control.
8. Listen. It's difficult for those experiencing domestic violence to involve others. If a friend confides in you, listen without judgment, and ask how you can help.
9. Educate kids about violence and how they can help. Promote healthy relationships and let them know they can come to you if they ever encounter trouble.

Again, thank you for allowing me to share the amazing work we do with you.

**Julie Britton Haden, Director, YWCA of Charleston Resolve Family Abuse Program**

To search for domestic violence providers by county: <http://wvcadv.org/partners/>

### *A PARENT'S STORY*

My daughter, Ahleeyah suffers from anxiety. She had a traumatic experience in a school setting, and it was difficult for her to function at an in-person school. She was homeschooled for a long time. When Ahleeyah had her outbursts, I reached out to the wraparound service. Her wraparound worker understood Ahleeyah's needs and helped in any way possible to help Ahleeyah achieve her goals. Ahleeyah begged us to allow her to attend in-person school. She was brave. She felt confident. I feel as though the service was a contributing factor to Ahleeyah's step towards an in-person session. I would recommend the wraparound service to parents because it provides a safe space for children to find the needed help. The workers are well-trained to handle the challenging cases as well. We saw our worker not just a worker, but more of a friend.

Portia Smith



[This Photo](#) by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY-NC-ND](#)

## STATEWIDE FAMILY ADVISORY BOARD

The mission of the Pleasants County Family Resource Network (FRN) is to support and strengthen children and families in our community by promoting inter-agency collaboration to provide programs and services based on local needs.

When asked to become a member of the West Virginia Statewide Family Advisory Board, I wasn't quite sure what to expect, but it has proven to be a great joy to watch as this group promotes state-level family engagement and the inclusion of parents in decision making processes.

I have always been an advocate for positive parenting and family engagement. These aspects are central to the promotion of a child's healthy development...physically, mentally, emotionally, etc.

Positive family relationships are built on quality time together, communications, teamwork, and overall appreciation for each other.

The Statewide Family Advisory Board works together to improve the livelihood of families around the state. We learn of system improvements based upon a "community" of experiences. We work together to generate ideas on how to provide better care for all families in West Virginia.

The "mantra" for this group could well be, "Parents/Families are the experts on what does and doesn't work well!" Truly, families helping families to make West Virginia a better place for everyone is a definite priority for the advisory board.

At our meetings, we learn of evidence-based practices that engage families, educators, and community. By enhancing the health and academic achievement of our youth, we can help model life-long learning and a greater enthusiasm for education.

It is also rewarding for me to see parents on the Board, advocating for improved learning experiences for their children.

The Advisory Board invites a community of educators and health providers to participate in our meetings. They share best practices and resources. Most importantly, everyone feels comfortable to ask questions and actively engage in the conversations.

*(Continued on next page.)*

Diverse communities participate from across the state. I love to hear our parents advocating for improved learning experiences for their children.

My time on this Statewide Family Advisory Board has proven very beneficial. From health tips, learning activities, shared resources, parent information and support. I am very proud to be a partner with the group!

Family engagement efforts are more vital than ever in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic we have been experiencing. With revisions to how education is delivered, it is even more critical that we all work **TOGETHER** to help make WV a better place for each and every family!!

**TEAM: Together Everyone Achieves More!!**

Debbie Thompson, FRN Director  
Pleasants County  
213 Second Street  
St. Marys, West Virginia 26170  
304-684-3962  
[debbiethompson2187@gmail.com](mailto:debbiethompson2187@gmail.com)



\*Note: For additional information or if you would like to join this group, click on the link under Family Resources under State Family Advisory Board.



- Children’s Mobile [Crisis](#)
- HELP 4 [WV](#)
- Children’s Crisis & Referral [Line](#)
- Children’s [Wraparound](#)
- Family [Coordinators](#)
- State Family Advisory [Board](#)
- Office of Children, Youth and [Families](#)
- Coalition Against Domestic [Violence](#)

Click on the links for more information about these resources.