

Karen's Corner



May 4-8, 2015, is Public Service Recognition Week, an opportune time for us to celebrate the hard work of many dedicated federal, state, county and city employees, and especially members of the DHHR team.

When I think of the Department, I think of a group of compassionate people with diverse skills and knowledge joining together for the greater good of our wonderful state. I think this is demonstrated through the number of programs and partnerships we have through all five bureaus, as well as our Office of Inspector General. We are continually innovating to find new and better ways to serve West Virginia residents and I know this would not be possible without the flexibility and commitment of our leaders and employees.

I am so proud of the workforce I am privileged to lead. We oftentimes receive notices about the outstanding service provided to our constituents in our many offices and health facilities, and you should be proud of the assistance you provide on a daily basis. Whether you work in customer service or behind the scene, your job is important to the Department's mission.

Voltaire once said, "Appreciation is a wonderful thing. It makes what is excellent in others belong to us as well." Consider these words and take time to not only recognize your importance, but acknowledge the greatness of your co-workers as well. We are all in this together, and that is what makes us a team.

Let's be sure to make this week not only a week of recognition, but a time that encourages an ongoing spirit of strength and unity across all our offices. TOGETHER, we are helping improve the lives of all West Virginians.

DHHR Leaders Join Federal Partners in Discussion on Substance Use in Pregnancy

On April 28, DHHR Cabinet Secretary Karen L. Bowling and Bureau for Behavioral Health and Health Facilities Division on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Director Kathy Paxton joined Sharon Amatetti and Kathleen Nardinni, Federal Project Officers from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration and other partners to discuss preventing substance use in pregnancy and promoting consistent interventions as part of the Collaborative Planning Summit.

The event, hosted by the National Center on Substance Abuse and Child Welfare, served as an opportunity for further collaboration and increase collective impact among public and private partners including physicians, insurance and treatment providers, and Bureaus of Behavioral Health, Children and Families and Medical Services in an effort to reduce the harmful effects of substance abuse/dependence, improve pregnancy outcomes and enhance the long term health and development of children.

During the meeting, Secretary Bowling touched on initiatives of the Governor's Advisory Council on Substance Abuse, which have led to the overall decrease in misuse of prescription drugs and improvement of community norms. She also announced the launch of the Sobriety Treatment and Recovery Team (START) pilot project, a joint initiative between DHHR's Bureau for Children and Families and Bureau for Behavioral Health and Health Facilities, which aims to reduce out-of-home placements and improve child and family outcomes through the development of family teams that are assigned to families when a child is identified as having been born substance exposed.

"Opportunities like this enable us to continue the dialogue on substance abuse prevention and treatment," said DHHR Cabinet Secretary Karen L. Bowling. "We are excited about the improvements that have been made so far and are thankful for the support of all our partners on the federal, state and local levels."



DHHR's Kathy Paxton, Director for Division on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse

New Task Force Seeks to Revolutionize West Virginia's Public Health System



Leading the way for positive change, the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources' Bureau for Public Health (BPH) hosted its first Public Health Impact Task Force meeting on Wednesday, April 29, 2015.

The meeting was held in South Charleston, where representatives from BPH, local health departments, private and public partner organizations and policy makers gathered in the effort to redefine the mission of public health in the state. DHHR Cabinet Secretary Karen L. Bowling kicked off the discussion with an emphasis on the importance of the newly formed task force.

"West Virginia's public health system has to be in a position where we are not trying to just survive, but instead to thrive and see real change to our health outcomes," said Bowling. "This task force has the ultimate responsibility to the citizens of West Virginia to do what's right for their health, their children's health and their grandchildren's health."

State Health Officer and Commissioner for the Bureau for Public Health Dr. Rahul Gupta spoke about the challenges and future of public health and Deputy Secretary Jeremiah Samples touched on the need to maximize current resources.

Meetings are likely to be held every three weeks, with the next meeting scheduled for May 13.

DHHR's Bureau for Public Health hosts "Take our Daughters and Sons to Work Day"

On Thursday, April 23, 2015, DHHR's Bureau for Public Health hosted the annual "Take Our Sons and Daughters to Work Day" for hands-on learning.

Around 50 children participated in the program, which focused on topics including food borne illness and chronic disease prevention. Participants also learned about threat preparedness, oral health, insects and disease and nutrition.



Children learned about bugs and their diseases with BPH Entomologist Eric Dotseth.



BPH Nutritionists Jamie Chapman and Laura Casto shared information on the Women's, Infants and Children (WIC) Program.