

Karen's Corner



October is a huge month for the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources. We implemented our Safe at Home West Virginia demonstration project in 11 counties across the state. This initiative gives youth ages 12-17 and their families the opportunity for safe, successful and healthy lives by providing wraparound services to children, family members, caregivers and foster parents to support them in developing and maintaining a stable and loving environment in their home community.

We have been working diligently over the last few months to prepare for this exciting new program. Our Bureau for Children and Families (BCF) awarded grants to licensed behavioral health agencies to act as local coordinating agencies to hire wraparound facilitators to provide high fidelity wraparound services in the 11 Phase 1 counties. We are so pleased with these agencies and their commitment to working with our staff in the target areas. They already have trained facilitators on board and we are encouraged by their commitment to the project.

August and September were dedicated to finalizing policies and procedures and other important materials like parent handbooks and provider requirements as well as training of BCF staff and wraparound facilitators. I am so proud of the staff in the Bureau for Children and Families for their dedication to training in preparation for our implementation and appreciate all their efforts.

Members of the community have also been involved in Regional Summits and Community Collaboratives, which include the voices of education, community service agencies, behavioral health and other community partners along with BCF. These groups have completed community needs assessments for the core wraparound services. The Collaboratives are using this information to determine what services must be developed within their communities.

I have witnessed coordination, collaboration and communication on so many levels as this entire effort has been a wonderful example of private/public partnerships. Our judiciary has also been involved and BCF teams will continue to meet with them to discuss Safe at Home and what it means to West Virginia's children and families. All of this work has led us to where we are today.

We have reviewed and identified cases in Berkeley, Boone, Cabell, Jefferson, Kanawha, Lincoln, Logan, Mason, Morgan, Putnam and Wayne counties for referral for the Safe at Home program, and will continue to do so as we move closer to serving children in the state's 55 counties. I appreciate everyone who has played a role in helping us launch Safe at Home West Virginia and am confident this program will set many on the path to a better quality of life. Whether you are a law maker, BCF team member, community leader or provider, as a supporter of Safe at Home, you are making a difference.

Behavioral Health Conference Draws Nearly 650 Participants

The Integrated Behavioral Health Conference, hosted by the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources (DHHR) and partners, brought together more than 600 medical professionals, substance abuse prevention specialists, educators, families and survivors. The conference took place Tuesday, September 22 through Thursday, September 24, 2015, at the Charleston Civic Center.

"Events like this are so important to our effort to address behavioral health issues prevalent in West Virginia and the entire nation," said DHHR Cabinet Secretary Karen L. Bowling. "This conference offered a unique opportunity for participants to engage with experts in the field, make important connections and gain valuable knowledge to take back to their organizations and communities."



One of many nationally-recognized keynote speakers at the conference, William Kellibrew, told his amazing story of trauma and resilience.

Nearly 100 plenary and workshop sessions were offered, including: integrating physical and behavioral health in community settings, canine and equine therapy across populations, motivational interviewing, youth-led prevention and recovery, cross-disability resilience methods for treating trauma, substance use and child welfare. Free family events open to the public, including a Recovery Celebration Concert with country music star Templeton Thompson, and a session on internet safety were also available to parents and students.



DHHR Cabinet Secretary Karen L. Bowling, kicks off the conference and welcomes participants.

Dr. Gupta Receives National Public Health Award



West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources Cabinet Secretary Karen L. Bowling is pleased to announce Dr. Rahul Gupta, Commissioner and State Health Officer for the Bureau for Public Health, will receive the 2015 Milton and Ruth Roemer Prize for Creative Local Public Health Work by the American Public Health Association (APHA).

Dr. Gupta was selected for the national award by his peers for his leadership and extraordinary vision in addressing local and regional public health problems through building collaborations.

“This is a tremendous honor for DHHR to have Dr. Rahul Gupta selected for this award, highlighting his professionalism, dedication and commitment to the health and well-being of the citizens of West Virginia,” said Bowling. “We are fortunate to have Dr. Gupta leading the charge for public health in West Virginia.”

The Milton and Ruth Roemer Prize is presented to a health officer of a county, city or other unit of local government, in recognition for outstanding creative and innovative public health work. The prize was endowed by two devoted members of APHA: Milton Roemer, MD, and Ruth Roemer, JD, both of whom envisioned an annual prize to honor a public health worker engaged in innovative public health service in their community.

“I am truly honored and humbled to have received this award from my peers across the country,” said Dr. Gupta. “This award is recognition of the excellent team that I have in Public Health that continues to impact communities throughout West Virginia. It has been my goal from day one to help transform our Public Health system into a model for the nation.”

Dr. Gupta will be presented with the award at the 2015 APHA’s 143rd Annual Meeting and Exposition November 3, 2015 in Chicago, Illinois.

Inaugural WV PREVENTION FIRST Awards Announced

The West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources, Bureau for Behavioral Health and Health Facilities, recently announced West Virginia PREVENTION FIRST awards for individuals and organizations with a proven track record of success in the field of prevention.

PREVENTION FIRST is a positive-action, community-based initiative funded by the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources, Bureau for Behavioral Health and Health Facilities, through a federal grant from the Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). The focus is to reward and recognize individuals, organizations and communities that are making extraordinary efforts to provide outstanding services and opportunities that support youth, family, and community.

Prevention is defined by SAMHSA as creating communities where individuals, families, schools, faith-based organizations, and workplaces take action to promote emotional health and reduce the likelihood of mental illness, substance abuse including tobacco, and suicide.

“These individuals and organizations have demonstrated their ability to strengthen community-based partnerships and have implemented effective programs and practices that are the first line of defense against behavioral health disorders,” said Kathy Paxton, Director of the DHHR’s Division on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse, Bureau for Behavioral Health and Health Facilities.

Prevention advocates in each of West Virginia’s 12 Partnerships for Success counties were given the opportunity to be nominated for the first annual PREVENTION FIRST awards. The 12 counties are: Berkeley, Brooke, Hancock, Harrison, Jefferson, McDowell, Mingo, Monongalia, Roane, Tyler, Wayne and Wyoming counties. Nominations were accepted in five categories: individual, community/county, school, faith-based organization, and business/agency.

The 2015 WV PREVENTION FIRST awards were presented at the West Virginia Integrated Behavioral Health Conference on September 22, 2015, by Vickie Jones, Commissioner for DHHR’s Bureau for Behavioral Health and Health Facilities, and John O’Donnell, Public Health Advisor for the SAMHSA’s Center for Substance Abuse Prevention.



Mateen Abdul-Aziz

Mary H. Weir Library

Bethany College

The United
Methodist Church

Boys & Girls Club of the
Eastern Panhandle

For information about the West Virginia PREVENTION FIRST Campaign, visit www.preventionfirstwv.org

Contact Us! Phone: 304-558-0684 Email: dhhrcommunications@wv.gov Online: www.dhhr.wv.gov

