

DHHR's Amy Lawson Booth Appointed Safe at Home Project Director

Following the retirement of Lisa McMullen in April 2018, West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources (DHHR), Bureau for Children and Families Deputy Commissioner Amy Lawson Booth has been appointed Project Director for Safe at Home West Virginia.

"Thousands of lives have been impacted by this revolutionary child welfare program," said Amy. "I am honored to have the opportunity to continue the partnerships that are successfully serving our families and children through Safe at Home West Virginia."

Through DHHR's Bureau for Children and Families' collaboration with courts, schools, behavioral health providers, residential providers, state and local lawmakers and community leaders, the program has led to many stories of success among youth and families. As of June 25, 2018, 2,070 youth have been referred to Safe at Home West Virginia. Of those, 77 have returned to West Virginia from out-of-state residential placement; 1,511 have been prevented from entering placement; and 29 have returned to their community from shelter placement.

With the support of several sub workgroups, the Bureau for Children and Families internal Safe at Home Sustainability Team will continue developing the continuation and expansion of Safe at Home West Virginia to the appropriate children and families, with the focus population of youth 12-17, until the IV-E waiver Demonstration Project ends in October 2019.

To learn more, visit <http://safe.wvdhhr.org>.

From Safe at Home to Adoption

Submitted by Children's Home Society of West Virginia, Local Coordinating Agency

A & B* are sisters who were referred to Safe at Home West Virginia Facilitator Cynthia. The teenagers went into foster care following a tragedy and additional CPS concerns. Cynthia worked closely with the DHHR worker and was able to quickly establish rapport with the girls, the foster mother and even the family dog.

While the history and losses were challenging, the people involved were willing and capable of addressing the issues and working on a resolution as the court system played out. Cynthia coordinated services and interacted with the DHHR worker, who was available in person and via phone. The foster family, DHHR worker and Cynthia communicated constantly to address successes and concerns.



When Cynthia took the girls out to eat at Applebee's, they told her they had never been to a restaurant with cloth napkins and a waiter. Cynthia was touched at the girls' excitement. It was a learning experience for all of

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From Safe at Home to Adoption *continued*

them. Cynthia followed up with A's high school and B's middle school to address their academic, social and adjustment issues. She also took them to Pottery Place to further their artistic talents.

After several months and much success, Cynthia took another position, and Bryson was hired as a Safe at Home Facilitator. The transition was smooth thanks to the groundwork Cynthia established and Bryson's ability to step in. Having appreciative accepting clients, a supportive foster care situation and DHHR support contributed to the success. Bryson set the girls up with horseback riding lessons as an incentive.

Because of the success and progress, the case has moved to an adoption worker from DHHR. Like any family, there have been some rough spots, but overall the case has been highly successful for everyone involved. Despite the challenges, these two teens are well on their way to adoption thanks to some very caring foster parents, DHHR, the court system and Safe at Home.

**Names left out for privacy of Safe at Home youth.*

A Family Plus Three

Submitted by Children's Home Society of West Virginia, Local Coordinating Agency

X, Y and Z* came into the system primarily because of family issues. X was on probation and Z was in placement when Safe at Home West Virginia became involved, with Safe at Home Facilitator Jessica assigned to the case.



X had a close friend from school whose mother was willing to work with her. The mother accepted X and Y into her home that already had four members. Jessica worked closely with the two girls and the family, establishing excellent rapport. Jessica was a sounding board for the two clients, the mother and X's friend. She worked with the school system, court system and DHHR to strengthen the support system.

Jessica got the girls into boxing lessons, arts and crafts, and other activities to promote bonding and individual self-esteem. She also linked them with therapy and tutoring. Other Safe at

Home staff helped Jessica provide transportation for tutoring, activities and medical appointments. After several months, Z came out of placement and joined her sisters in the home.

There were predictable setbacks that went beyond traditional challenges. Seven people in a small house could be a challenge for any family. Sometimes one or more of the seven needed space. Jessica and DHHR (CPS and Youth Services) were always available to assist.

On a Saturday, a car hit a tree and the tree took out the family's powerlines, which destroyed the breaker box. They were suddenly displaced from their home on a rainy night. They immediately notified Jessica, and her supervisor was able to drive to the hotel where they went and assist with the rooms. Safe at Home helped pay to get the electric fixed, which allowed the family to move back into their home a few days later.

Whenever tensions increased in the home, Jessica worked on solutions including respite and crisis intervention. Storage issues have been addressed because of the space issues. The Safe at Home Therapist is providing in-home services. A team effort has helped bring a great deal of success to this non-traditional Safe at Home family.

**Names left out for privacy of Safe at Home youth.*

