



**STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN RESOURCES**

Bill J. Crouch
Cabinet Secretary

**Bureau for Children and Families
Commissioner's Office
350 Capitol Street, Room 730
Charleston, West Virginia 25301-3711
Telephone: (304) 558-0628 Fax: (304) 558-4194**

Linda M. Watts
Commissioner

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To the Members of the Citizen's Review Panel:

Thank you for your commitment to ensuring that West Virginia families receive the best services Child Welfare has to offer. We realize you volunteer your time to complete this service. We have reviewed your recommendations and offer the following responses.

1. Services should be integrated between the Bureau for Behavioral Health and the Bureau of Children and Families for foster children, grandparents as caregivers, and substance abuse treatment and prevention. To the panel's knowledge, this is currently a topic of interest between both bureaus. The Bureau of Children and Families has a great deal of movement to make.

The Bureau for Children and Families has been working with the Bureau for Behavioral Health for almost three years now to develop a Plan of Safe Care policy that allows the Drug Free Mom's and Babies Programs to develop and monitor plans of safe care for infants born affected by drugs but there's no reason to suspect abuse or neglect. This is an on-going effort.

The two Bureaus have also worked together to develop the Family-based residential programs that allow substance abusing parents to have their children placed in treatment facilities with them under Title IV-E Family Prevention grants.

2. Cross Bureau collaboration also needs to occur to encourage and develop best practice training for all entities and partners involved in child welfare cases (i.e. evidence-based practices and therapies for SUD, trauma informed care, medication assisted treatment, and mental health first aid). Our courts, especially, are ruling in ways that conflict with current best practices and current

practices continue to traumatize youth and are harmful to the reunification and permanency of children with their families.

With the Implementation of the Managed Care Organization, the Bureau for Children and Families, Bureau for Behavioral Health and Bureau for Medical Services are working together to develop a seamless transition between services offered for eligible families.

3. Stigma training should be provided to all entities involved in the child welfare continuum.

Mary Aldred Crouch of WV Association of Alcohol and Drug Abuse Counselors (WVAADC) and Dr. Berry of West Virginia University (WVU) completed training for Child Protective Services workers. There was also a presentation at a CIP conference by Dr. Berry which included Judges, attorneys and child welfare staff.

4. Current childcare policies restrict a family's ability to be successful and should be considered as part of the child welfare continuum of care, specifically when substance use disorder is identified in a family assessment

Beginning February 1, 2020, the WV DHHR BCF Division of Early Care and Education implemented the Supplemental Child Care Assistance Program (SCCAP). The primary goal of SCCAP is to provide alternative payment options for West Virginia's vulnerable population who would not normally qualify for federal childcare subsidy funds. The Division provides an alternative path to serving clients who are eligible for State Opioid Response (SOR) and Jobs and Hope funding, both projects implemented to meet the unique needs of individuals participating in substance use disorder recovery.

The state's Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) agencies serve as a control point for entry into the new Supplemental Child Care Assistance Program. Any parent participating in either the SOR or Jobs and Hope program who wishes to request childcare services may apply by contacting the local CCR&R agency. The applicant, or parent/head of household, must have custody of the child(ren) or reside with the child(ren).

The CCR&R agency is responsible for taking applications and determining eligibility for Supplemental Child Care Assistance Program participation. The CCR&R staff conducts a face to face interview and the parent applies for eligibility determination. Any client participating in the SOR and Jobs and Hope activities will first be screened for CCDF eligibility under current childcare policy eligibility rules. Clients not eligible for CCDF funded assistance will then be reviewed for eligibility in the Supplemental Child Care Assistance Program.

State Opioid Response clients can receive assistance for three (3) consecutive months. SOR clients can renew their assistance in their third month. Jobs and

Hope clients can receive assistance for six (6) consecutive months. Jobs and Hope clients can renew their assistance in their sixth month.

5. Stigma training would also be helpful when addressing or managing cases involving drug exposed infants. This would ensure foster families and respite homes would be adequately trained, supported, and prepared for the needs of these children without the color of stigma that may exist when these children are referred to a family.

The Dr. Berry presentation was also recorded and should be available from the court.

<https://wvumedicine.org/find-a-doctor/doctor-details/?id=624>

6. A new CRP coordinator be hired.

A new CRP coordinator was hired in November 2019.

Again, thank you for your commitment to the children and families of our state.

Linda Watts, Commissioner