

## Improving Child Welfare Statistics: Together, We Can

West Virginia child welfare statistics are troubling as the State has a long history of reliance on out-of-home care and one of the highest percentages of children placed in congregate care settings in the nation. In order to provide these youth and their families the opportunity for **safe, successful and healthy** lives, the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources (DHHR) is launching a demonstration program with a competitive federal waiver from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children.

On October 15, Governor Earl Ray Tomblin announced the Department's project, Safe at Home West Virginia, which will allow the Bureau for Children and Families to have more flexibility in delivering services to children and their families. The Safe at Home project is expected to launch by the end of 2015 in Berkeley, Boone, Cabell, Jefferson, Kanawha, Lincoln, Logan, Mason, Morgan, Putnam and Wayne counties and will focus on youth ages 12-17 currently in or at-risk of entering congregate placements.

With a goal of developing a model that can be replicated, DHHR will work with partners over the next year to design the implementation. Through collaboration with courts, schools, behavioral health providers, residential providers and others, this program will revolutionize the child welfare system by increasing the number of children in a loving environment and assist our state in focusing on preventing child abuse, neglect and the re-entry of children into foster care.

I am proud of my team lead by BCF Commissioner Nancy Exline for their hard work in getting the approval for the IV-E waiver. We will be enlisting others as we move through the implementation period as it will take public and private organizations to innovate and develop a shared commitment to transform the way we serve children and families. I have great confidence in the people of West Virginia, which includes all of you in our vast network. We come to this field to make a better West Virginia, to fill the needs that are unmet, to care for those who need assistance or a helping hand, and to provide safety for our citizens. Together, we can, and will, do great things!



Karen L. Bowling, Cabinet Secretary

## What is Safe at Home West Virginia?



In fall 2014, West Virginia received a federal waiver to support Safe at Home West Virginia, a demonstration project to strengthen and support families through reducing the number of children receiving services in out-of-home care facilities. Governor Earl Ray Tomblin announced the award of a federal Title IV-E Waiver to the Bureau for Children and Families (BCF) by the Administration for Children and Families, Children's Bureau, on October 15, 2014. The Title IV-E Waiver is not additional money; it is a capped allocation of dollars that would have normally been claimed under IV-E.

Governor Tomblin explained that Safe at Home will provide the opportunity to continue efforts to improve and enhance our state's child welfare system: "It's no secret our state's future lies with our children. By identifying ways to deliver key in-home programming for our state's at-risk kids, we can ensure they are receiving important services in an environment where they feel comfortable and safe, which will help them become productive adults."

*continued*

## WHAT IS SAFE AT HOME WEST VIRGINIA, *continued*

BCF Commissioner Nancy Exline said, “Research shows that children do better in their home environments and the Safe at Home demonstration project aims to provide children with the opportunity to be safe, successful and healthy in their community settings.” The Department’s goals with the Safe at Home program are to ensure youth remain in their home communities whenever safely possible; to reduce reliance on foster care/congregate care; and to prevent re-entries into congregate care/institutional placements (non-family settings). Congregate care facilities may house many youth and often include a treatment component. Safe at Home will also work to reduce the number of children in placements out-of-state and step-down youth in congregate care, and to reunify these children with their families and home communities.

“I am excited about the opportunity to work closely with our partners to provide services that will allow children to be served at the right time and in the right place,” said Cabinet Secretary Karen L. Bowling. “This will improve the overall ability of the Department of Health and Human Resources to create a stable environment for our children and families.”

Safe at Home will start in the eight counties in BCF Region II (Mason, Putnam, Kanawha, Cabell, Lincoln, Boone, Wayne and Logan) and also in Berkeley, Jefferson, and Morgan Counties in Region III. The program will initially focus on youth ages 12-17 years in congregate care locations in and out-of-state by utilizing a “wraparound” model of service provision.

“Wraparound” is a planning process that helps to make sure children and youth grow up in their homes and communities. With help from one or more facilitators, key players in the child or youth’s family work together, coordinate activities, and blend perspectives of the family’s situation. The Department will develop community services specifically targeted at youth’s needs, while also being comprehensive to the needs of the family. Each service itself will be tailored or “individualized” to the particular treatment need.

West Virginia is one of ten states to receive a federal waiver in 2014. 31 states and jurisdictions have been granted a waiver since the Administration for Children and Families, Children’s Bureau started awarding waivers. Each state/jurisdiction is focusing on a different aspect of child welfare.

## Measuring Success by Results



As the Safe at Home West Virginia project is rolled out, DHHR will assess the success of its efforts with a result-based accountability (RBA) system. This new and disciplined way of thinking aims to help improve the lives of children, youth, families and the community as a whole.

RBA uses a data-driven decision-making process to help communities and organizations take action to solve identified problems. It is a simple, common sense framework that everyone can understand. RBA starts with ends and works backward, towards means.

Using RBA to guide the program means three core questions will inform the process: How much did we do? How well did we do it? Is anyone better off? Success is measured not simply by compliance to rules and regulations, but by the real life impacts, or results, of the work completed.

RBA is an integral part of Safe at Home West Virginia. A key component of Safe at Home is the evaluation of the program regarding processes, outcomes, and cost. Some of the desired results for Safe at Home include a reduction in the reliance on congregate care placements, reduced reentry into these placements, and maintaining youth in their home communities whenever safely possible.

The success of Safe at Home West Virginia will be determined by the impact on these measures as well as others. BCF is in the process of developing a scorecard showing current performance on these measures, as well as others related to the safety, permanency, and well-being of children and youth in West Virginia, which will be on [www.wvdhhr.org/bcf/safe](http://www.wvdhhr.org/bcf/safe) in early 2015. With the support of partners, RBA will ultimately guide Safe at Home as it helps West Virginia youth and families grow stronger, healthier, and more successful.

