

DHHR's Safe at Home WV Project Continues to Progress

Karen L. Bowling, Cabinet Secretary of the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources



2015 was a year of many new partnerships and accomplishments for the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources, one of which was the implementation of Safe at Home West Virginia. On October 1, 2015, our Bureau for Children and Families rolled out phase one of this innovative demonstration project in Berkeley, Boone, Cabell, Jefferson, Kanawha, Lincoln, Logan, Mason, Morgan, Putnam and Wayne counties.

We are already seeing improvement when it comes to reducing the state's reliance on in-state and out-of-state group care for youth ages 12-17. As of January 14, we have made 85 referrals to Safe at Home for wraparound services. So far, eight youth have returned to West Virginia; 10 have moved back to their home communities from in-state residential placements; and 30 have been prevented from entering residential placements.

Youth involved in Safe at Home are being served through the wraparound model, a planning process that helps ensure youth grow up in their homes and communities when safely possible. With help from a wraparound facilitator, key players in the child or youth's family work together, coordinate activities, and blend perspectives of the family's situation.

In order to provide the best opportunity for success for both the youth and their loved ones, Safe at Home emphasizes family engagement. During the wraparound process, family teams, groups of people chosen by the family and connected to them through natural, community and formal support relationships, develop and implement the family's plan and work toward the family's vision by monitoring their progress.

Since this is a new program, we are diligently monitoring feedback and progress when it comes to those youth referred to Safe at Home. Our staff continues to meet with Local Coordinating Agencies, which are tasked with hiring wraparound facilitators and providing services or securing them from other sources. Safe at Home is also being evaluated by a third party group to help us understand what changes we need to make as we expand.

We are excited about the next phase of our demonstration project, expected to launch this summer. We are working to educate our staff and partners in the phase two areas with continued informational meetings and trainings. Phase two includes 24 counties: Barbour, Brooke, Grant, Greenbrier, Hampshire, Hancock, Hardy, Harrison, Lewis, Marion, Mercer, Mineral, Monongalia, Monroe, Nicholas, Ohio, Pendleton, Pocahontas, Preston, Randolph, Summers, Taylor, Tucker and Upshur.

I appreciate each of you for your continued support as we strive to provide all children the opportunity to live safe, healthy and successful lives right here in West Virginia. To learn more, visit <http://www.dhhr.wv.gov/bcf/Services/Pages/Safe-At-Home-West-Virginia.aspx>, and email SafeatHome@wv.gov to subscribe to our weekly e-blasts.

Success with Safe at Home: Children's Home Society of West Virginia

Mary White, COO for the Children's Home Society of West Virginia

A Cabell County youth participant in Safe at Home West Virginia receiving wraparound services through Children's Home Society left in-state residential care on November 6 and returned home to live with his mother and sister. Prior to his return, our Wraparound Facilitator met with the youth's mother to assist with the return home. The Wraparound Facilitator helped fulfill basic needs including food, clothing, and phone service. Phone service was a priority so that a high level of contact could be maintained and to assure access should a crisis arise; contact has been made nearly every day with the youth and his mother since his return.

The youth was immediately enrolled in school and the Wraparound Facilitator advocated that he not be in a contained classroom for all of his classes due to a diagnosis of ADHD. The Wraparound Facilitator and the school worked together so his core classes are contained and his non-core classes are not. This has been a good fit.

The youth gets weekly therapy locally and his mother receives individual and family therapy from a Children's Home

continues

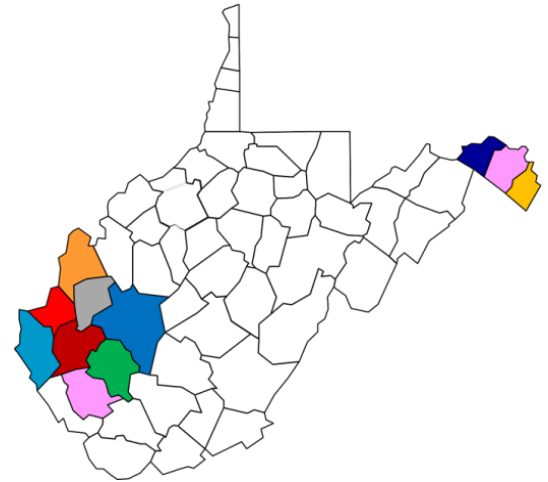
Success, continued

Society licensed counselor. The youth and his Wraparound Facilitator looked at several afterschool extracurricular activities and the youth decided to try boxing. After the trial week, he enrolled and now attends practices with his mother on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday evenings. His mother reports that she loves watching him excel and learn from his coaches. The youth states that he really likes it and that the coaches keep him motivated: “He can do anything if he works hard at it.”

On a recent drive home from a school meeting, the youth asked the Wraparound Facilitator if the family team was always going to be in his life. Initially, the Wraparound Facilitator was concerned that the youth was trying to say that he didn't want to have others (non-family) in his life, and explained that as soon as he and his mom didn't need them anymore they would no longer be directly involved. The youth quickly clarified and said, “No, I was just worried you might not be there if mom or I should need you.” Holding back tears, the Wraparound Facilitator smiled and said, “We will always be here no matter what.” The youth was happy to know he had someone to count on.

During the first week of December, the youth, mother and sister celebrated one month of being a family again. The Wraparound Facilitator and youth decided that everyone would go bowling and celebrate with pizza and cake.

The Wraparound Facilitator also assisted the mother with Christmas to help the family celebrate at home together. Christmas for this family was provided by Children's Home Society's donors and local community support.



Cabell is one of Safe at Home's 11 phase one counties.

Working Together to Help West Virginia's Families: a Wraparound Facilitator's Perspective

Tina Abbott, Facilitator for the National Youth Advocate Program



As a Wraparound Facilitator with the National Youth Advocate Program, a local coordinating agency for the Safe at Home West Virginia demonstration project, I have learned the importance of collaboration. In most cases, the families we help have had a long-time relationship with a DHHR case worker. Once the DHHR case worker introduces Safe at Home to the family, they introduce the facilitator to the family and the youth that will be “wrapped” around with services. In most cases, the family trusts, depends on and values their DHHR case worker. The case workers are the main link between the facilitator and the family.

I have also learned how we can make Safe at Home work for families. I am actively working with eight families, all with different circumstances. Some are financially stable, and some are not. Some have natural supports, while others have none. Their intellectual abilities differ as do their mental health diagnoses. We, as facilitators, can help them find solutions to the barriers that limit their success, such as access to resources for budgeting, literacy,

parenting and making healthy meals on a budget. In addition, there is also free weatherization for families who own their home.

I enjoy working with this program, my shared families, DHHR and providers. I am learning as I go just as everyone else is. I have found support in my fellow facilitators and youth services workers. In my eight active families, two youth have already gone home and are doing well and I have another youth going home this month. The other youth are in their home communities, and we are working to prevent them from being placed outside of the home. This is definitely a journey I plan to stay on and hope you will, too.

