

Safe at Home Continues to Help Children and Families

By Lisa McMullen, Project Director, Safe at Home West Virginia

In the two years since Safe at Home was launched, 1,120 youth have been referred to the innovative program for services. As of September 2017, 672 youth have been prevented from entering residential placement; 167 have returned to their communities from in-state residential placement; 57 have returned to West Virginia from out-of-state residential placement; and 15 have returned to their community from shelter placements.

The continued success of Safe at Home and the impact that it is making is something that can be celebrated by every partner in the Safe at Home network. Through your continued dedication to the well-being of West Virginia's children, we are making a difference in the lives of hundreds of children and their families across the state.

In order to continue serving youth through Safe at Home, we have initiated sustainability planning. We have high hopes for the future and believe that this project is revolutionizing the child welfare system in West Virginia.

Safe at Home Teams Illustrate Individualized Family Support

Based on the National Wraparound Initiative model, Safe at Home West Virginia is strongly rooted in family engagement and engaging community support to provide services individually designed to meet the complex needs of children and families. It is imperative that families feel safe and supported through a plan developed specifically for them. With this in mind, Local Coordinating Agencies hire wraparound facilitators responsible for coordinating the individualized services identified for each youth and their family in their homes.



Photo submitted by Probation Officer Amy Sadler

It is often said that a picture tells a thousand words. That is the case for this photo, which illustrates the Wraparound Model at work through Safe at Home. Six cars are parked at one home to meet with a family receiving Safe at Home West Virginia support. This team of people cares deeply about the success of this family, and is ultimately striving to make a lasting difference so that the child can lead a safe, healthy and successful life in his/her home community.

Multi-agency Back to School Pool Party Celebrates Safe at Home

By Wayne Bailey, Safe at Home Supervisor, Children's Home Society of West Virginia

This summer, Safe at Home West Virginia team members, including staff from DHHR, Local Coordinating Agencies, and the Courts brought together an eclectic mix of youth, families and community members with a pool party celebrating the people we serve. There was a DJ, face painting, backpacks loaded with extras, food, drinks, desserts, a corn hole tournament, a bouncy house, paper bracelets, balloon art, door prizes, access to a pool and a lot of smiles and laughter.



The well-attended event was a positive reflection on everyone, but the success was most clearly seen in the relaxed, happy and appropriate behavior of the youth. People were comfortable in the welcoming atmosphere. A few shy youth were acknowledged and encouraged by the people who set up the event. Staff joined in until their clients met new friends and blended into the happy crowd.

Logistics and weather are always challenges, but there was enough structure combined with flexibility to assure the team effort would prove successful. Staff found common ground with peers from other agencies, old friendships were rekindled and new connections were developed. The organizers and leaders were part of the solution and the youth shined.

Brainstorming, scheduling transportation, providing the people and props to make the event all came together. While there are always lessons to be learned and tweaks to be made, this day will be a tough act to follow. Seldom does an event look and feel this good from start to finish.

Mother's Testimony Highlights Impact of Safe at Home

By Safe at Home West Virginia Mother

My daughter was placed in a residential placement on June 10, 2016, due to absences from school from surgeries and illnesses. She lost her father in 2009, so I am all she has left. Her being put in placement was difficult on us all. I felt so alone until towards the end of her six months when I met Ashley from the Safe at Home program. She was like an angel that was placed in our lives. She has helped us so much with the transition of my daughter coming home. The experience opened our eyes to many resources that I never knew were available. There were times I would just have break downs because I missed my baby girl and Ashley would listen and also talk to me. She has went more than an extra mile to see us through the difficult times. This program has been our saving grace and I'm honored to have been a part of it.

**Letter modified to protect client privacy.*

