

Focus on
Juvenile Justice in WV



Parenting **PERSPECTIVES**



*A Publication of the
West Virginia Bureau for Behavioral Health and Health Facilities
Winter • 2010 • Volume 18, Number 2*



Winter, 2010

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Parenting PERSPECTIVES

This newsletter is published by the West Virginia Bureau for Behavioral Health and Health Facilities for parents of children and adolescents.

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Parenting Perspectives is published in part with funds from the West Virginia Division of Children’s Mental Health and the West Virginia Division on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse. Partial support is provided with SAPT block grant funds through the Division of Alcoholism and Drug Abuse. All material submitted for publication must be signed. *Parenting Perspectives* reserves the right to refuse submissions and to edit submissions selected for publication.



First Place - Best Magazine, 1997

On the cover: Levi Anthony, one-year-old son of Micah and Shan Anthony of Morgantown. Levi is the grandson of Jeni Forester and John Oughton of Morgantown and Bob and Judy Anthony of Eleanor, WV.



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Winter Activities For the Birds!!!

Simple plastic milk cartons can help you, and the birds, enjoy the winter weather!

Materials you will need:

Empty Plastic Milk Cartons (gallon size is best for feeders)
Sharp Knife (parents required) 12" dowel stick Rope to hang cartons



Clean out the milk cartons well. Once cleaned, rinse the cartons out with really hot water... parents should be here so you don't burn yourself on the hot water! Clean the lid to the milk carton too... then place the lid back on the carton.

Bird Houses - Once the cartons are totally dry... take the sharp knife and cut a circle in the carton. You can use the gallon milk cartons and the half gallon milk cartons for the bird houses. Make the hole about 1 inch to 1 1/2 inches round... birds like holes that fit their size. Check your area for the birds that live by your house. Smaller birds like small holes... that way they are safe from large birds coming into their home.



You can put little bits of torn up clean cloth, or paper in the carton to help the birds start their nest.

Put a little hole near the hole for the bird's door... then put another little hole on the other side of the plastic milk carton. Push the dowel stick through the 2 small holes. This will be the perch where the birds will land when they arrive home. Birds like some place to set their feet before entering their house.

Now you are ready to find that perfect spot in your backyard to hang your bird house! Hang it in an area where you will be able to watch the birds as they come and go.

Bird Feeders - Take a sharp knife and cut a large opening on the side of the plastic milk carton. You want this to be large enough so you can easily add bird seed. The birds will sit on the edge... and even jump inside to get at the bird seed. If you'd like, you could add dowel sticks as described above for the bird house to give them extra room to land. The area on the top of the carton will help to keep the snow off most of the bird seed.

When you are finished making your bird house and/or feeder... it is time to ask mom and dad to help you hang them outside in a tree. If you do not have trees in your yard, you can hang them from your fence... or another area of your yard. A great place is near a window so you can watch from indoors.



Another option for feeders... If you have a deck or a fence with posts higher than the rails, take old pie tins and, using a nail, punch small holes in the bottom of the pie tin. (not too many holes, and not really large holes... these holes are only there to drain rain water from pans). Next, center the pan on the rail and nail to post in two places (to avoid the pan moving around). Fill with bird seed and enjoy the party!

From Loraine Wauer-Ferus at BillyBear4Kids.com



Helping Families Find Their Way Through the Juvenile Justice Maze

by Debi Gillespie, MSW

The Juvenile Justice System in WV is an incredibly complicated system. There is so much gray area as to who has jurisdiction of youth in the juvenile justice system.

The court and county probation departments have legal authority and define rules of conduct to be compliant with the court. The youth could be placed in temporary state's custody in either the Department of Health and Human Resources (DHHR) or the Division of Juvenile Services (DJS). Everyone has their own policies and there are discrepancies in how each county office does things. It is very confusing for the system partners (probation, DHHR, DJS) so I can only imagine how confusing it is for family members.

Parents need to make sure they develop a relationship with the child's probation officer. Provide whatever information is needed and be available for phone calls or meetings when requested. Also, parents need to talk to their child's DHHR worker and/or their DJS case manager. Caseloads are high and some youths have many needs to be addressed within the facility. It is important for family members to call to check on their child if placed in an out of home placement. We love when family members are involved in their child's care and want to visit when in a facility. We will do whatever we can to help you maintain contact with your child.

It is important for parents to be positive when talking with their child. It is very helpful when youth are encouraged to follow the rules and stay out of trouble. We want their placement to be productive and to go smoothly for the youth. We want them to move through the juvenile justice system successfully and return to their home community to apply the skills they have learned. In many cases, youth remain in facilities or in state's

custody longer due to their own non-compliant behavior. If the youth is required to complete a program, they have to do so before they can move on. The more they are willing to participate in the program and complete their treatment goals, the faster they will be allowed to return to their families.

For more information go to
[http://www.wvdjs.state.wv.us/Home/
tabid/36/Default.aspx](http://www.wvdjs.state.wv.us/Home/tabid/36/Default.aspx)

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WV's Juvenile Justice System

“A Comprehensive Plan to Establish a Unified System”

The West Virginia Division of Juvenile Services was created in 1997 with passage of House Bill (HB) 2680 by the West Virginia Legislature. The Division is designated to serve the needs of West Virginia's juvenile justice system under one umbrella, including the responsibility for operating and maintaining pre-dispositional detention centers and juvenile correctional centers.

House Bill 2680 required that the Division of Juvenile Services (DJS) develop a comprehensive plan to establish a unified system for social and rehabilitative programming and treatment of juveniles in both types of centers, and a comprehensive plan for regional detention centers and programs.

It also created a partnership between DHHR and Juvenile Services for planning and establishing balanced and comprehensive programming for juveniles and their families, including prevention and early intervention strategies.

Detention Centers

The mission of the Detention Centers is to ensure safe, secure facilities with sufficient space for pre-dispositional youth, with quality services and progressive programming to achieve positive outcomes for detention residents.

Detention Centers are short term facilities meant to house youth in the care and custody of the Division of Juvenile Services who are pre-adjudicatory or are going through the juvenile court process. In our continuum of care, the Division of Juvenile Services has two levels of structure and security to meet this need.

Staff Secured Facilities

As stated in Chapter 49 of the West Virginia Code,

Child Welfare, staff secure facilities "means any public or private residential facility characterized by staff restrictions of the movements and activities of individuals held in lawful custody in such facility and which limits its residents' access to the surrounding community, but is not characterized by construction fixtures designed to physically restrict the movements and activities of residents."

The staff secure concept is new to West Virginia in regards to the Juvenile Justice population needing structured residential care during the court process. Throughout the country alternatives to detention have been utilized for over thirty years, placing youth awaiting the court process in the community, in their own homes or in staff secure shelters.

The Division of Juvenile Services operation of "staff secure" facilities furthers the continuum of care goal. The staff secure facilities fit between emergency shelter care facilities and hardware secure detention facilities. These staff secure facilities are housed in strategically located areas throughout the state to maximize efficiency in their use.

Each facility is designed to house adolescents who are in need of out of home placement because remaining in the home would be contrary to the welfare of the youth. Placement in the staff secured facilities is based on risk and functionality assessment. This facility is considered a short term placement offering assessments, screenings, and service planning.

All staff secure facilities adhere to the following: The basic premise of the staff secure facility is that emphasis is placed on staffing and programming design much more than locks and other hardware which are typical of the hardware secure facility.



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Intensive supervision is provided by trained staff and by maximizing programming, the staff secure facility is designed to be better able to meet the needs of the youth at each and every moment during the day.

The State Board of Education, Office of Institutional Education, will provide a full day of academic services to every youth. Individual and group counseling will be provided daily as well as organized therapeutic recreational programming.

Every youth will participate in a battery of assessments which will follow the state plan for assessments (Hopefully through the "CAPS" Program being developed by the DHHR).

The facility case manager coordinates in-house and community services for the youth in care, as well as ensures that a multi-disciplinary team is scheduled so that treatment planning is completed efficiently.

Our three Staff Secure Facilities are: Robert Shell Juvenile Center, Gene Spadaro Juvenile Center, and the Vicki Douglas Juvenile Center. All offer the services listed above as well as some programs unique to their facilities.

Hardware Secure Detention

The Division of Juvenile Services currently has six hardware-secure detention centers. Detention Centers are facilities for juveniles who have been charged with committing a crime that would be punishable by incarceration, if committed by an adult. The individuals are housed in our detention centers, a secure environment, as they continue through the juvenile justice court process.

Services offered in our detention centers mirror those offered in all DJS facilities: individual and group counseling based on high risk needs as identified by the Youthful Level of Service/Case

Management Inventory (Y-LS/CMI).

Other assessments are administered if needed based on results of the Y-LS/CMI. From this information a Service Plan is created with measurable goals and objectives.

Case Management services are provided to every youth, as well as medical and psychiatric services as needed. A Therapeutic Recreation Program is an integral part of the treatment process. The Department of Education, OIEP, offers a full day of academic services. Youth can work on middle/high school credit or Pre-GED work. Some youth may take the GED while in placement.

Families are able to visit every weekend with their resident and have access to facility counselors. This encourages the family to continue their involvement in their child's treatment program.

The DJS hardware secure detention centers are placed regionally across the state to provide this service as close to home as possible to enable families to stay involved and supportive for youth attending court hearings and probation appointments.

Our hardware secure detention centers are: Northern Regional Juvenile Center, J.M. "Chick" Buckbee Juvenile Center, Donald R. Kuhn Juvenile Diagnostic & Detention Center, Sam Perdue Juvenile Center, James H. "Tiger" Morton Juvenile Center, and Lorrie Yeager Jr. Juvenile Center.

Correctional Facilities

The Division of Juvenile Services operates two juvenile correctional facilities which are responsible for the placement and care of adjudicated and post-dispositional youth. Correctional centers are designed long-term secure facilities which have the capacity to serve juveniles between the ages of twelve and twenty-one years of age.



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The WV Industrial Home for Youth, the state's only maximum-security juvenile correctional facility, can house approximately 140 male and 30 female residents.

The Kenneth "Honey" Rubenstein Center is designated as a minimum-security juvenile correctional facility. This "state-of-the-art" facility provides the opportunity for a new vision of juvenile justice in West Virginia. The Kenneth "Honey" Rubenstein Juvenile Center will house the Governor's Adolescent Leadership Academy (GALA). The GALA program takes the positive concepts of military regimentation and leadership, combining them with a cognitive therapeutic approach assisting youth in decision making, behavior management and other initiatives to promote positive productive citizenship.

One of the most distinguishing characteristics of the Leadership Academy is the premise of maintaining respect for oneself and others. Each day begins with physical training and cadence drills along with personal space and appearance inspections. The cadets walk in cadence to meals, academic classes, work assignments and other on-campus activities. The program emphasizes dressing for success and respect. Take pride in our educational and vocational programs.

The West Virginia Office of Institutional Education provides excellent academic and vocational programs including all the core courses that are offered in the regular high school programs throughout the state. Special Education students receive a curriculum based on their specific needs as identified in the IEP (Individual Education Plan). We presently offer vocational certification in welding and building construction trades and hope to soon establish certified vocational programs in business education and automotive repair.

Youth development and leadership is a process

that prepares young people to meet the challenges of adolescence and adulthood through a coordinated, progressive series of activities and experiences to help them become socially, morally, emotionally, physically and cognitively competent. Young people are taught skills related to leadership development, decision-making, citizenship and community service while practicing social and coping skills eventually having the ability to become independent. They learn to analyze and develop their own strengths and goals while identifying challenges and ways to overcome these barriers in themselves and in the outside world.

The Leadership Academy utilizes three master's level therapists as the clinical leaders for a treatment team consisting of a therapist, a case manager and two correctional counselors along with the direct care correctional officer staff. Each cadet will participate in three to five intensive therapy groups weekly and will receive at least one individual therapy session twice monthly. The therapists will supervise our Counselor II's and Counselor I's as they provide weekly individual and group life skills opportunities.

The core aspects of the Leadership Academy focus on role modeling, teamwork, communication, high expectations, high accountability and responsibility along with development of healthy relationships in an all-inclusive program. We emphasize and teach the skills of effective communication as a core of every activity or therapeutic intervention. We are building a low and high "Ropes" course on grounds which will be the key component of the experiential/adventure education element of the program. In addition, we make available opportunities for youth to hike, fish, camp, and participate in other challenging activities.

Diagnostic Centers

The Division of Juvenile Services operates two

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60 day diagnostic centers available for West Virginia's adjudicated youth. The Northern WV Youth Diagnostic Center is located in Salem, WV. It was recently re-designated as a 15 bed, hardware secure diagnostic center for adjudicated males. The Donald R. Kuhn Juvenile Diagnostic & Detention Center offers 38 co-ed diagnostic beds.

The diagnostic program was created for the purpose of providing temporary residential 24-hour care and evaluation for youth placed away from their parents/guardians and home because, in the ruling of the court, remaining in their homes would be contrary to the welfare of the child. Every resident has been adjudicated delinquent and court ordered into the custody of the Division of Juvenile Services for the purpose of conducting a comprehensive diagnostic evaluation to determine his or her individual service needs. This comprehensive packet is sent to the Circuit Court Judge to assist in decisions of disposition and placement/service needs.

Community Based Services

Through a continuum of services the division of community based services, provides assessment, youth reporting centers and intensive case management/aftercare for youthful offenders. Additional supervision is offered to youth and families in their home communities to increase success. Our professionals work in conjunction with local resources to develop a strength-based plan to support success for our youth.

As youth enter into our care, staff conduct a needs assessment to identify their specific treatment needs. The Division combines efforts with Placing Agencies, Education Professionals, Families, and the youth to ensure the proper level of services. Based on the information gathered, an

individual service plan will be developed.

Juvenile Intervention and Assessment Team

The Juvenile Intervention & Assessment Team (JIAT) serves youth involved or at risk of being further involved in the Juvenile Justice System. The team is designed to improve prevention and intervention services for delinquent, at risk youth and their families. The JIAT provides immediate comprehensive assessments in order to determine the youth's risk of re-offending in addition to determining the need for services. The program is implemented by a team of professionals that are on call or accessible to the court system, Monday through Friday, 9:00am to 5:00pm. The team develops and provides clinical recommendations that assist the courts with dispositional planning in an effort to provide appropriate treatment for youth.

Youth Reporting Centers

Youth Reporting Centers are community based, nonresidential, intermediate sanction strategies, as well as an intervention program that provides consequences to youthful offenders at risk of out-of-home placement and/or part of their reintegration into the community from placement. The program is created to hold court involved and court diverted youth accountable for their deviant/criminal behavior in a controlled, intense treatment environment while they continue their education and take part in services designed to meet their individual needs. With an in-home treatment program provided to families experiencing difficulty and the use of the WV's Juvenile Justice System skills and talents of professional and a paraprofessional staff out-of-home placement may be awarded. This program is a child based, family-centered model of care which incorporates



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And Where to Go For Answers...

What Your Child's Lawyer Can and Cannot Tell You...

by Jodie K. R. Gardill, Esq.

If you have a school age child diagnosed with either behavior or emotional disorders and /or learning disabilities, there is a chance that your child could become involved in West Virginia's juvenile justice system.

The Southern Poverty Law Center reports that 7 of every 10 children in the juvenile justice system

nationwide have some kind of educational disability (ED). Children with ED are, in fact, three times more likely than their

peers to be arrested before leaving school. This article will endeavor to help you know what you can expect when you communicate with your child's attorney, and where you can go to find answers about the process of juvenile adjudication as it pertains to your child.

All attorneys that practice in the State of West Virginia are subject to the rules of professional conduct. When representing a client attorneys are subject to the rule of confidentiality which states, "Rule 1.6. Confidentiality of information. (a) A lawyer shall not reveal information relating to representation of a client unless the client consents after consultation, except for disclosures that are implicitly authorized in order to carry out the representation."

West Virginia Rules of Professional Conduct

What this means is a lawyer is bound by the

same attorney-client privilege and duty of confidentiality to a juvenile client as to an adult client. It does not matter who pays the fee, nor does it matter that the meeting may have been set up by the parent. Whatever a person divulges to his or her attorney is confidential and between the two of them. The lawyer's obligation is to the client whose

representation he or she has undertaken. Ethical rules prevent the lawyer from sharing that information absent the

"There is no parent-child privilege like there is a privilege between spouses. Yes, that means that a prosecutor could legally force you to offer testimony against your child."

consent of the client.

Although this process is something that is happening to your whole family, you child's lawyer only represents your child, not your family. Your child's attorney is obligated to safeguard his or her information and secrets from parents and guardians. Interviews should be conducted outside the presence of the parents. Parents also have no right to inspect the files of their child's lawyer or review his or her notes or discovery without their child's expressed consent. This is not an attorney's way of keeping secrets from you, it is he or she following their ethical obligations. Furthermore, it's also a good idea to ask the parents to refrain from asking the child details about the interview because it could compromise the attorney-client privilege.

A client can waive the attorney-client privilege and authorize disclosures to third parties. But that carries a risk -- the prosecutor could then call the

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What Your Child's Lawyer Can and Cannot Tell You

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third party to the stand to testify about the statements made to the lawyer. There is no parent-child privilege like there is a privilege between spouses. Yes, that means that a prosecutor could legally force you to offer testimony against your child. Right about now you may be thinking that the point of this article is to inform you that you can not be involved in your child's juvenile case. That is not the case. Hopefully, this article will help you to understand the ethical considerations faced by your child's attorney so that both can communicate in a way to maximize the benefits to your child's case.

As previously stated, interviews with your child should be conducted without your presence. However, this does not mean that your child's attorney should refuse to meet with you. While an attorney can not share confidential facts of the case with you, he or she can and should tell you what to expect about the process overall and prior to each hearing so that you may properly prepare yourself and your child.

Unfortunately, all attorneys are not created equally. A majority of attorneys who represent juveniles are more than happy to meet with parents and keep them updated throughout their child's case. Sometimes though your child may be represented by an attorney who feels that Rule 1.6 prevents him or her from having ANY communication with the parents, if this is the case here are some other places you can go for information. Make at least one more civil attempt to meet with the attorney and ask them to explain the process of juvenile adjudication to you. If they are unwilling to meet with you, you have some other options.

- Talk to your child and ask him or her if they are comfortable with their attorney and if they

understand what is happening, if your child does not understand what is going on you may ask the Court for another attorney to be appointed to your child.

- If you feel that the attorney is communicating well with your child but his or her disability is making it difficult for them to understand the court process you may ask for a Guardian Ad Litem to be appointed by the Court. A Guardian Ad Litem has a separate duty from the juvenile defense attorney and will be able to work more closely with you as a parent.

- You are always free to hire an attorney to represent you as the parent in the process.
- Finally, you are also free to contact the prosecuting attorney's office. Both the prosecutor and the juvenile probation officer will be able to give you information on the process of the case. Please remember that this is the office that is prosecuting your child, please do not give them any information that they can use to incriminate your child, again you CAN be called as a witness against your child.

Jodie K. R. Gardill, Esq. is the associate director of Behavioral Health Advocacy Legal Aid of WV.

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intensive therapeutic workers involvement with all family members and significant others. In many cases this will prevent the out-of-home placement of children or reduce the length of stay in our secure facilities.

From Debi Gillespie and the WV Division of Juvenile Services website, found at <http://www.wvdjs.state.wv.us/Home/OverviewMain>

“Although this process is something that is happening to your whole family, your child’s lawyer only represents your child, not your family.”

Parenting PERSPECTIVES

Family Advocacy, Support, and Training Program Listening to West Virginia Youth

by Ryan Ramey

For the past two years, Legal Aid of West Virginia has taken an initiative through the Family Advocacy, Support, and Training (FAST) program to increase the youth voice around the state. We are doing this in different ways, including Youth Focus Groups, Youth Support Groups, and our newest initiative: The Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP) for Youth. I would like to share some of what we have been doing, responses we have heard, and what our goals are to continue increasing and strengthening the youth voice.

I have been fortunate enough to hold several Youth Focus Groups in the southern part of the state. These focus groups are geared to give youth the opportunity to voice their opinions and ideas in three areas: education, the community, and issues youth are facing today.

It is amazing what youth will say when given the opportunity to speak. When they are told that “this is your opportunity to voice your opinions and ideas,” they are really excited and take advantage. I hope you find their feedback interesting and inspiring.

We ask them several questions about their schools including what they see schools are doing, as well as what they feel schools could do to improve youth academic performance. Youth are saying that they do see schools making an effort to increase tutoring programs. They also suggest ideas like incentives, more group work, more classroom discussion, and better visual aids in the classroom.

Some have even shared that “teachers act like they don’t care about student performance,” “teachers get mad if students ask too many questions,” and “teachers cannot control their classroom.” Some have reported that teachers need to “stop using

labels,” and “recognize that some students come from a bad environment.” I thought this one was an interesting and powerful statement. Do we sometimes forget to look beneath the surface?

One youth stated “talk to students, observe students’ behavior and habits, pay

attention to learn more about them, and get to know students’ personalities.” They even suggested “opportunities for more projects.” What I find interesting is that most of their suggestions, and these are only a few, are easy to put into practice.

We also gather information about their communities and what they see happening as far as positive services and environments, as well as what ideas they have to improve their communities. They mention different organizations like the Boys and Girls Club, YMCA, and the YWCA. Also mentioned are things like church programs, after school programs, pools, and some recreation centers. As for improvement, one thing mentioned was public transportation. Youth say programs are out there, but they can’t get to them. Not only can some of them not get to a recreation or community center,



“Some (students) have reported that teachers need to stop using labels, and recognize that some students come from a bad environment.”

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but they can't afford to get in.

I met with a group in Putnam County and they suggested more community centers. All of the kids agreed they would like to have a place to go after school. I mentioned the YMCA, but they said "It costs money to get in." They even suggested that if places could accept canned food for the needy instead of cash. That absolutely amazed me. They just said that they can't afford to get in to some of these places, but would still like to do something to help others and have a place to go.

I really liked this next suggestion made by a youth in the Juvenile Justice system too. "Improve city parks. Better parks have a family atmosphere and people will not do drugs there. If a park is run down, it becomes a prime area for drug use." BMX parks, skate parks, boxing gyms, teen dance clubs, and more community sport activities were also mentioned. Bottom line is this: these youth just want a safe place to go and have fun.

We also focus on what kind of issues youth are facing today. Where would they go if they needed help with a personal issue, what would be helpful, and what keeps youth from seeking help? As far as what issues they face, sex, drugs, and alcohol are high on the list. In one group I asked how many have seen drugs in their school. Nearly every hand was raised. Also mentioned was peer pressure, racism, bullying, and stress in school. Parents are also a popular answer. For example, some have said "parents do not set rules and boundaries," "if parents are using, they do not provide support necessary for kids to stop using," and "lack of parent involvement." I'm

happy to say that the FAST program offers several support groups for parents as well as trainings to help in these kinds of areas. When asked about where they would go for support, we have heard a long list of ideas. Some say school personnel, friends, family, and pastors. Some youth say the complete opposite and that they would not trust these kinds of supporters. Others even said that they would just deal with it themselves, punch stuff, and even use fighting as an outlet. Could

this be why we have so many youth in trouble today; they have no support system? Some have said that real-life examples and survivor stories would be helpful. They want someone they can relate to. I was really curious to hear answers as to why youth won't seek help. I have heard things like "wait too long," "do not know how to seek help," or "where to go for help." Others said "parents use too," "embarrassment," "fear of consequences," "stigma," or "don't want to change." Perhaps if youth had a stronger support

system, then many of these issues would resolve themselves. Amazingly enough, when talking with youth who have faced a lot already at their young age, many of them would like to be given the opportunity to be that support system for someone else. They want to share their stories, their struggles, and their successes with other youth. Empowerment is a great thing. FAST has done just that.

We have listened to the youth and after the focus groups, we continue with youth support groups. Here youth are given the opportunity to be a peer support for each other. We have had

*"Improve city parks.
Better parks have a family
atmosphere and people will
not do drugs there.
If a park is run down, it
becomes a prime area
for drug use."*

FAST
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different groups involving topics such as emotions, feelings, and developmental assets. It is amazing how when one youth shares a story, and then another speaks up and relates to that situation with a story from their own life. All of a sudden, that youth who has felt alone, now has someone who can at least relate to what they are going through. A small glimmer of hope and understanding can go a long way and make a forever difference in that youth's life. Now I understand that some of these responses may be exaggerated by the youth, but the important thing to realize here is that even if they are exaggerated, this is how these youth feel. These statements are their words. I think that is something worth recognizing.

I also want to point out that the youth who participated in these groups are from a variety of backgrounds. Some groups have been held with local church youth groups, youth who are involved with the Juvenile Justice system, and youth with very different demographic backgrounds. We have not targeted a specific population, but made it a point to reach a variety of youth with different backgrounds and circumstances. The amazing thing is that for the most part, no matter their background or circumstance, the youth are saying the same things. Our focus and support groups provide us with a lot of information. Information of how we are meeting the needs of the youth, but also valuable information that points out where we as a community are lacking and letting our youth down. It is the goal of the FAST program to continue to conduct these focus groups all around

the state and give youth the opportunity to speak. However, we don't want to stop there. The feedback we are receiving has potential to make a big difference. We hope to take their ideas, suggestions, and comments to our state, local, and community leaders. It is our responsibility as a community to share this information and give their voice the opportunity to make a difference.

One way the FAST program has done just that is through our newest initiative: the Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP) for Youth.

WRAP is a curriculum that is strength-based and encourages youth to live well and stay well. It is a program that allows youth to write their own plan to stay well. It focuses on wellness tools (coping skills) and daily maintenance planning to ensure they take care of themselves daily to stay happy and healthy.

We also work to identify their personal triggers and develop an action plan for when these occur. Youth learn to recognize internal warning signs

that things are starting to get negative, or that they need to do something on their action plan to divert a crisis.

They also look at external warning signs of when things are starting to break down. Are they starting to cause trouble, are they using drugs, fighting, etc.? To keep from doing this, they create an action plan for just such an occasion. Should their action plans not work or if they just happen to go right into a crisis, we also work with them to create an individualized crisis plan. This is a plan for their supporters to follow. It is what the youth best feels would be beneficial to help them get out of a crisis.

“Youth learn to recognize internal warning signs that things are starting to get negative, or that they need to do something on their action plan to divert a crisis.”

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The great thing about WRAP for Youth is that not one piece of it is written by anybody other than the individual youth. It empowers the youth to take responsibility and develop a plan that would work best for them. Then they have the opportunity to share that plan with whomever they choose. These could be school teachers, parents, friends, doctors, and so on. This is just another example of how we are working to strengthen the youth voice.

One county has even recognized this initiative and taken steps to improve their schools.

A movement in Putnam County has recently sparked a partnership with Legal Aid of WV and the FAST program to provide WRAP to youth who are facing truancy issues. This is a partnership that is working with the Putnam County Magistrate Court Truancy Diversion Program and the Putnam County Board of Education. They have recognized the need to strengthen the youth voice and the potential to give youth the opportunity to say, through WRAP, how we can best help them.

Beginning in February, the FAST program will be holding month long WRAP groups with youth referred from the Magistrate Court. It's important to notice the initiative that is taking place here and it's found in the name of the program. It is diversion.

Putnam County has developed a program that instead of waiting too late with facing truancy issues, they are going to divert him or her

to the WRAP program if the youth agrees to participate. This program will give them the opportunity to figure out why they are in this truancy situation, and how to best resolve it. This program will run monthly groups through the end of the school year giving many youth the opportunity to have a voice and opportunity to make a change in their lives.

With the focus groups, support groups, and WRAP groups, FAST is working hard to strengthen the youth voice. Our goal is to continue to give youth the opportunities to speak, be heard, make a difference, and have a say in what happens in their own lives. After all, it is their actions of today that will shape the world of tomorrow. It's time we started listening to what they have to say, what they need to succeed, and how we can help them in their journey.

If you are interested in any of our programs or have questions, please feel free to call Legal Aid of WV and the FAST program at 1-866-255-4370.

*Ryan Ramey is the
Statewide Youth Coordinator
with the FAST program.*



“Putnam County has developed a program that instead of waiting until a young person is facing truancy issues, they are going to divert him or her to the WRAP program if the youth agrees to participate.”

Parenting PERSPECTIVES

Disruptive Disorders

“... a consistent pattern of defiance, disobedience, and hostility...”

Young people with disruptive disorders, including oppositional defiant disorder and conduct disorder, often come to the attention of the juvenile justice system because these disorders are characterized by antisocial behavior.

Children who develop the more serious conduct disorders often show signs of these disorders at an earlier age. Although it is common for a very young child to snatch something they want from another child, this kind of behavior may herald a more generally aggressive behavior and be the first sign of an emerging oppositional defiant or conduct disorder if it occurs by the ages of 4 or 5 and later. However, not every oppositional defiant child develops conduct disorder, and the difficult behaviors associated with these conditions often remit.

Oppositional defiant disorder (ODD) is diagnosed when a child displays a persistent or consistent pattern of defiance, disobedience, and hostility toward various authority figures including parents, teachers, and other adults.

ODD is characterized by such problem behaviors as persistent fighting and arguing, being touchy or easily annoyed, and deliberately annoying or being spiteful or vindictive to other people. Children with ODD may repeatedly lose their temper, argue with adults, deliberately refuse to comply with requests or rules of adults, blame others for their own mistakes, and be repeatedly angry and resentful. Stubbornness and testing of limits are common. These behaviors cause significant difficulties with family and friends and at school or work. Oppositional defiant disorder is sometimes a precursor of conduct disorder.

In different studies, estimates of the prevalence of ODD have ranged from 1 to 6

percent. Before puberty, the condition is more common in boys, but after puberty the rates in both genders are equal.

In preschool boys, high reactivity, difficulty being soothed, and high motor activity may indicate risk for the disorder.

Marital discord, disrupted child care with a succession of different caregivers, and inconsistent, unsupervised child-rearing may contribute to the condition.

Children or adolescents with *conduct disorder* behave aggressively by fighting, bullying, intimidating, physically assaulting, sexually coercing, and/or being cruel to people or animals. Vandalism with deliberate destruction of property, for example, setting fires or smashing windows, is common, as are theft; truancy; and early tobacco, alcohol, and substance use and abuse; and precocious sexual activity.

Girls with a conduct disorder are prone to running away from home and may become involved in prostitution. The behavior interferes with performance at school or work, so that individuals with this disorder rarely perform at the level predicted by their IQ or age. Their relationships with peers and adults are often poor. They have higher injury rates and are prone to school expulsion and problems with the law. Sexually transmitted diseases are common.

If they have been removed from home, they may have difficulty staying in an adoptive or foster family or group home, and this may further complicate their development. Rates of depression, suicidal thoughts, suicide attempts, and suicide itself are all higher in children diagnosed with a

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Disruptive Disorders

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conduct disorder.

The prevalence of conduct disorder in 9- to 17-year-olds in the community varies from 1 to 4 percent, depending on how the disorder is defined. The disorder appears to be more common in cities than in rural areas. Those with early onset have a worse prognosis and are at higher risk for adult antisocial personality disorder. Between a quarter and a half of highly antisocial children become antisocial adults.

The etiology of conduct disorder is not fully known. Studies of twins and adopted children suggest that conduct disorder has both biological (including genetic) and psychosocial components.

Social risk factors for conduct disorder include early maternal rejection, separation from parents with no adequate alternative caregiver available, early institutionalization, family neglect, abuse or violence, parents' psychiatric illness, parental marital discord, large family size, crowding, and poverty. These factors are thought to lead to a lack of attachment to the parents or to the family unit and eventually to lack of regard for the rules and rewards of society.

Physical risk factors for conduct disorder include neurological damage caused by birth complications or low birthweight, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, fearlessness and stimulation-seeking behavior, learning impairments, autonomic underarousal, and insensitivity to physical pain and punishment. A child with both social deprivation and any of these neurological conditions is most susceptible to conduct disorder.

Since many of the risk factors for conduct disorder emerge in the first years of life, intervention

must begin very early. Studies have shown a correlation between the behavior and attributes of 3-year-olds and the aggressive behavior of these children at ages 11 to 13. Training parents of high-risk children how to deal with the children's demands may help. Parents may need to be taught to reinforce appropriate behaviors and not harshly punish transgressing ones, and encouraged to find ways to increase the strength of the emotional ties

between parent and child. Working with high-risk children on social interaction and providing academic help to reduce rates of school failure can help prevent some of the negative educational consequences of conduct disorder.

Several psychosocial interventions can effectively reduce antisocial behavior in disruptive disorders. Two

specific treatments met criteria for *well-established* treatment and 10 for probably efficacious treatment. Two *well-established* treatments, both directed at training parents, succeeded in reducing problem behaviors.

The two treatments were a parent training program based on the manual *Living With Children* and a videotape modeling parent training. The first teaches parents to reward desirable behaviors and ignore or punish deviant behaviors, based on principles of operant conditioning. The second provides a series of videotapes covering parent-training lessons, after which a therapist leads a group discussion of the videotape lessons.

*Adapted from
Mental Health: A Report of the Surgeon General.*

“Those with early onset have a worse prognosis and are at higher risk for adult antisocial personality disorder.”

Parenting **PERSPECTIVES**

Mountaineer ChalleNGe Academy

Helping WV Teens Get Back on Track

by Kathy Lynn Tasker

“I can take care of myself!” teenagers cry as they struggle to in school. But can they? Do they have the ability to earn over one million dollars in their lifetime? If they haven’t completed your basic education either by obtaining your high school diploma or GED certificate, the answer is NO. Today, while we go about our lives, nearly 3000 students will drop out of high school. For many, this choice puts them at high risk for violence, drug use, teen pregnancy and unemployment. The Mountaineer ChalleNGe Academy can help them get back on track to a more successful and solid future. The Academy changes lives.

Since 1993 Mountaineer ChalleNGe Academy (MCA) has worked to mentor and train selected at risk youth, helping them to become contributing members of society at no direct cost to their families. Located at Camp Dawson, near Kingwood in Preston County, the MCA has graduated over 2100 Cadets. But there’s room at the Academy to help even more of WV’s struggling teens. Two classes are offered each year.

How does the program work? The ChalleNGe Program is a 17-month voluntary intervention program that helps at risk youth to return to high school, enter college, start a career or join the military.

The program is structured in a quasi-military format using techniques that have proven successful in building character and leadership in the armed services. Each cadet will spend 22 weeks living at the school and an entire year under the guidance of a mentor in their home community who has been screened and trained by the Academy.

To be accepted into the ChalleNGe Academy the young adults, male and female, must be between 16 and 19 years of age and be a resident of the state of

West Virginia.

New Cadets are expected to be free of illegal drugs at the time they enter the program, and drug testing insures that this is the case. Cadets must be at risk of academic failure or in danger of dropping out of their current school. They must also show that they are physically and mentally capable of completing the program, which includes physical

training, general education classes as well as job search and employment training. Finally, candidates for the Mountaineer ChalleNGe Academy must not be

under indictment for, or have been convicted of, any felony offense.

The Cadets at the Academy are a diverse group of young men and women. Their reasons for entering the school are diverse, and the goals they hope to achieve are varied. The common thread that binds them together is a strong desire to live a successful life, filled with pride, as they become valued members of their communities.

Education is an important part of life at the MCA, but the core curriculum goes far beyond reading, writing and arithmetic to encompass the “whole person”. To promote well rounded graduates, the Academy focuses on eight core components: Academic Excellence, Life Coping Skills, Job Skills, Health and Hygiene, Responsible Citizenship, Service to the Community, Leadership and Followership, and Physical Fitness.

Academic Excellence

Classroom studies are designed to enhance the cadet’s education skills and instill a desire to continue self-improvement throughout their lifetime. Studies include instruction in the 5 basic areas included on



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Mountaineer Challenge Academy

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the GED certificate test: math, science, social studies, language arts and literature. Cadets may also use their time to earn college credits through WVU. While all these opportunities are available, Cadets are not required to push themselves to these limits. In fact, it is not even necessary for Cadets to earn a GED to successfully complete the program. Success is not determined by comparing Cadets to one another. Instead, each student will set personal goals that are determined by their skill level and their desires upon completing the program. Here, success is determined by how hard a Cadet works toward achieving their personal goals, not by comparing them to someone else.



Participants in last year's graduation demonstrate a drill routine.

Life Coping Skills

Cadets explore their value structure and come to understand the attitudes that serve to motivate them as individuals, as members of the Academy, and as citizens. Each Cadet also develops a Life Plan which includes short and long term goals. Included in this area are classes and workshops on Healthy Relationships, Gender Stereotyping, Team Building, and Personal Finance.

Job Skills

Cadets develop the basic skills necessary to conduct a successful job search as their position in the community changes. These skills include how to complete a written resume, fill out an employment application and how to conduct themselves in an interview. Cadets also have the opportunity to earn certifications that may help them secure employment upon completion of the program, such as West

Virginia Food Handlers Certification, CPR Certification for Adult and Child, Basic First Aid, OSHA Basic Safety for General Industry or Hunter Safety Certification.

Health and Hygiene

It is important that each cadet understand the

positive correlation between good health and hygiene habits and life long mental, physical and emotional well being. Substance Abuse Prevention, Nutrition, and Sexual Responsibility are just a few of the topics covered.

Responsible Citizenship

Each Cadet will develop a better understanding of the

forces that work to make a community strong and supportive of its members, as well as the forces that work to disintegrate a community.

Service to the Community

Through community service Cadets will develop an understanding of the benefits gained through volunteer service. During the 22 week residential program Cadets will spend many hours volunteering for organizations such as Adopt a Highway, Salvation Army and American Red Cross.

Leadership and Followership

Each Cadet gains exposure to the traits of a good leader and the skills necessary to become a valued member of a group and of society.

Physical Fitness

Cadets participate in a program of physical

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Parenting PERSPECTIVES

Mountaineer ChalleNGe Academy

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fitness training which encourages a lifelong commitment to physical, mental and emotional well being. The goal of the fitness program is to see that each Cadet shows improvement in their personal fitness level during the 22 week stay.

The MCA may be an answer for parents and caregivers who feel that their child needs something different, a new start, or a different approach to learning. This program will challenge your child, help them define their goals, and finally, help them achieve their dreams. Nobody is claiming that this program will work for everyone; in fact the ChalleNGe Academy realizes that it won't. However, for many, the structure, discipline, teamwork and education that are fostered in the program will show Cadets a side of themselves they did not know existed. They will become leaders.

They will become achievers. They will learn that with hard work, anything is possible. And parents will watch as the boys and girls they dropped off become men and women of which they can be proud.

If the Mountaineer ChalleNGe Academy sounds like the place you've been looking for call toll free 1-800-529-7700. You may visit the website at www.wvchallenge.org to find the next orientation date or to download an application.



Don't miss this free opportunity.

*Kathy Lynn Tasker is Deputy Director,
Mountaineer ChalleNGe Academy.*

State Police Report Drug and Alcohol Arrests Increase

According to WV state police, 363 persons under age 18 were arrested for drug crimes out of the total 3,385 juvenile arrests made in FY 2005. This number had increased by 7.4% in 2007 to result in 390 juvenile drug crime arrests; the projected number of juveniles arrested for drug crimes in FY 2008 was 404. A similar increase was observed for alcohol crimes.

Four hundred twenty six and 561 persons under age 18 were arrested for alcohol crimes in FY 2005 and FY 2007, respectively; and the projected number of juvenile arrestees was 586 in FY 2008.

Apart from these direct drug and alcohol crime arrests, other arrests may be indirectly associated with drugs and alcohol.



MCA Helps Grandson Succeed

“We Are So Proud of Him”

by Rick and Linda Davis

When my wife and I first heard of the Mountaineer Challenge Academy from Gloria Shaffer of Legal Aid of West Virginia, we were dubious at best.

Our 18 year-old grandson, Ronald J. Wright, “Ronnie,” had been skipping school and was about to fail the 11th grade for the second time. Ronnie had lots of dreams, all far beyond his talents and abilities. We were, however, willing to support any program that offered him a chance for a better future.

Ronnie has always been an inquisitive youth, trying hard to please but usually falling short. Because of the family strife in his formative years, Ronnie lost the opportunity to garner important skills required to succeed in the educational system, namely reading and arithmetic. As Ronnie got older, we were told that he was dyslexic, which also had impeded his ability to learn and catch up with his grade level.

As time went on, he fell further and further behind.

Now at age 18, here was a program that claimed to be able to help Ronnie.

We were heartened when, after orientation, Ronnie was excited to start the program. The day came for Ronnie to start and all the family wished him luck and sent him off to Camp Dawson in Kingwood. We were all pensive. After a week word came to us from a family member that Ronnie had all he could take and wanted to leave the program and come home...“Right now! Don’t call, just come and get me!”

Boy, were we worried. No one chose to run to Kingwood and get him. By the end of week three,

the word was “I’m OK, I’ll get it, I’ll get through this!” Phew!

Now after completing the 22 week course, Ronnie has been totally transformed into a fine

confident young man with realistic goals and is well on his way to accomplishing them. We attended a wonderful military-style graduation complete with caps and gowns. To top it off, Ronnie was the left sentry of the color guard in the ceremony. We are so proud of him and thrilled that he is now on his way to a successful adulthood.



Ronnie has expressed that

this has been the best experience of his life and that he now understands the benefits of a disciplined, well-ordered life. He knows the pride of accomplishing the challenges with which he was presented at the academy. Ronnie said, “I miss the academy so much. I would love to go back, maybe someday as an instructor.”

We cannot thank enough the people who made this possible: Gloria Shaffer of Legal Aid of WV; Jeremiah Wentz, Ronnie’s mentor; Major General Allen Tackett, Adjutant general; WVNG; Hugh P. Dodson, director of MCA; and all the staff of MCA.

The Davis’ live in Elkins, WV

Parenting PERSPECTIVES

One Professional's Perspective

“.. an advocate for children and a support to their parents.”

by Gloria Shaffer

I am the Parent Coordinator of Region III with the FAST Project of Legal Aid of West Virginia. I usually describe myself as an “advocate for children and a support to their parents.”

I work with children who have mental and behavioral health disorders, ages 5-21, and their parents. In this position, I have had the opportunity of working with families who have encountered the juvenile justice system. It hasn't always been easy for these families to navigate this system, either because they don't have knowledge about how the system works, or if they do have knowledge, their experience isn't what they thought it would be, because they may have little or no control over what is happening to their child. That is where I come in.

One reason I enjoy helping families who have found themselves in this situation is that I used to be one of the people involved in taking children out of their parent's custody. My position at that time was Youth Service Worker at the DHHR (Department of Health and Human Resources). Persons in this position strive to keep children out of placement, trying to help them remain in their parent's custody, while addressing their behaviors in their home and community. Over time, because children's behaviors have worsened and caseloads have grown higher, children have increasingly been put into placement to address their behaviors. This could have happened because there weren't enough services to help keep the children safely in their homes and communities, or perhaps because the services were not working. Also, some

of the cases that are received by Youth Services are already going to juvenile court, so in that situation, you begin working with the family of the youth, then follow the orders of the judge in the court.

It can be a very overwhelming and demanding position to be in. Not that it doesn't have its rewards. It's rewarding to see a child who comes home and has benefitted from the program that he or she has been placed in, who has made the changes he or she needed

to make to remain safely in their community. Or a parent thanking you for getting their child the help that they needed makes it worthwhile. So, my knowledge of the system is very helpful when a family finds itself in “unchartered waters,” so to speak.

Another reason that I like helping families who have found themselves in this situation is that I feel that I can now make more of an effort to help keep these kids

with their families. As stated previously, a Youth Service Worker isn't always able to spend a lot of time working preventatively with youth either because their caseload is too high or because the case is already headed for juvenile court. You know the old phrase, “walk a mile in my shoes?” If you were to walk a mile in a Youth Service Worker's shoes, my guess is that you would tire quickly. My hat goes off to them: they work so hard trying to help youth correct their misbehaviors. There are many demands placed on them and any support or help I can give them I will gladly offer. (I would ask you to do the same).



Gloria Shaffer

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One Professional's Perspective

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Thank you to all the DHHR personnel I have had the pleasure of working with to help meet the needs of West Virginia's youth! I also have the opportunity of working with the WV System of Care, a state-wide entity whose mission is "to team up with agencies to circle families with support and keep kids with families." We work effectively as part of a team that is making system-wide change, one family at a time. One of the ways this is achieved is through the Regional Clinical Review, a team of clinicians, DHHR personnel, and parents, whose task it is to review cases of children in out-of-state placement, with the goal of returning them to West Virginia. The team also reviews cases of children who are headed for out-of-state placement, with the goal of meeting that child's needs within the State, if at all possible.

A recent approach to maintaining children in their community safely is the Community Based Team, which is being implemented within WV at this time. These services are made available to the youth, either to prevent him/her from going to placement, or to help keep the child in his home and community upon return from placement. Another way we work to achieve this mission of the WV System of Care is to conduct trainings across the State, educating attendees on subjects such as, "Family-Centered Practice" and "Our Town."

The Family-Centered Practice Training is a requirement of DHHR employees when they are first hired. These trainings help ensure that we as providers are "on the same page" with families. We want to make sure that we are allowing our families to drive the process in system involvement. To that end, we team up with other agencies as well: community agencies such as Family Resource

Networks and PERC's, mental health agencies and schools, and many others. Working as a team ensures that the best possible care is given to our families in the fastest available time frame, facilitating the success of that family.

You may be asking, "Aren't there times a child needs to be placed in residential placement?" I believe the answer to that question is, "yes." There are times that a youth's needs are more than can be met in his home and community, times when a youth's behaviors are of the nature that he/she cannot be maintained in their home and community safely. My efforts are to try every avenue possible to help keep youths in their home and community. When that is not possible, I will offer my

assistance to the family that is navigating this system from beginning to end. Also, in case you are not familiar with the juvenile justice system itself, a brief overview is as follows.

A youth whose behaviors are "out of control" can have a document, called a petition, filed on him/her with the juvenile court. These petitions can be filed by a child's parent, school officials, probation officers, prosecutors, or police officers. Status offense petitions are dismissed when a child turns 18, whether the child is in placement, probation, etc. Delinquent petitions can keep a youth in the juvenile court until he/she turns 21.

This petition can be for incorrigibility (out of his parent's control), truancy (excessive absence from school), or runaway (refusing to stay in his home). These offenses are termed, "status offenses" because they would not be punishable by jail time if the youth were an adult (not criminal). These are the "lesser" of the offenses in the juvenile justice

"We want to make sure that we are allowing our families to drive the process in system involvement."

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Parenting PERSPECTIVES

One Professional's Perspective

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system. Make no mistake, however. A child can be put into placement for such offenses. The other petitions that can be filed are those for offenses like marijuana possession, assault, battery, stealing, breaking and entering, etc. These are offenses that would be punishable with jail time if the youth were an adult (criminal). These offenses are called “delinquent offenses” and are the more serious of the two types of petitions. These petitions can be filed by a child’s parent, school officials, probation officers, prosecutors, or police officers. Status offense petitions are dismissed when a child turns 18, whether the child is in placement, probation, etc.

Delinquent petitions can keep a youth in the juvenile court until he/she turns 21.

Youth with delinquent offenses more often than not end up in placement to address their behaviors. I am fast finding out that different counties proceed differently with these petitions. For instance, it may be one county’s practice to place a youth on probation, sometimes called, “informal probation” to try to divert the youth from progressing any further in the justice system. In another county, this same youth may find himself with a court date and perhaps even in placement. Some youth are sent to juvenile detention centers. These are usually temporary placements for a youth involved in the juvenile court system. They can be temporary due to obtaining a diagnostic examination of the youth, to transporting the youth to another facility, to waiting for a placement to become available. They can also have long-term programs to address behaviors.

Youth in detention centers are in the custody of the Division of Juvenile Services, not DHHR. Placements have what are called “levels”. The

detention centers are Level 4 placements. Other placements that are not as restrictive as “prison” (and, in case you didn’t know, the youth in detention do where orange outfits, do wear chains in Court, do sleep in cells), are Level 3 placements. Level 2 follows as being less restrictive down to Level 1 being least restrictive. A child in Level 1 placement might be in a group home. Basically, once a youth enters the Juvenile Justice System, he or she needs to complete the tasks that are set before them, and complete them successfully, so that they can exit the system. These tasks can be anything from

completing a greatest personal success, probation term, or completing a placement. When juveniles are on probation, they have a series of requirements to meet, such as passing grades in school and regular attendance, not violating any laws, community service,

counseling, and checking in with the probation officer on a regular basis. If drugs were an issue, regular drug screens will also be implemented. When a youth is involved with the System, the family is involved with the constraints, a Youth Service Worker may not be able to act in a supportive role to the family when a youth is placed outside the home.

This is another way I can be of assistance to the family and the Youth Service Worker. Teaming up with agencies to circle families with support and keep kids with families is my job in a “nutshell.”

My advisement for families involved with the system or who think they will be in the future would be to first, talk with the Youth Service Worker in your case. Find out what preventative services there are in your area and try to implement

“Teaming up with agencies to circle families with support and keep kids with families is my job in a nutshell”

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Parenting PERSPECTIVES

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One Professional's Perspective

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as many as possible as a diversion for your youth (ex. Big Brothers/Big Sisters).

Second, get the help your child needs. If you feel that your child cannot be safely maintained in your home any longer, contact the Parent Coordinator in your case to see what possible temporary placements are available that would allow you to place your child while keeping him/her in your custody.

Third, if a petition is filed on your child, and you find yourself in juvenile court, cooperate with the court and with the DHHR. They do have the goals of safety, permanency, and well-being for your child. When your child comes through on the other side of being involved with the system, and his/her case is dismissed by the court, their case is sealed and can only be opened by order of the circuit court. It is as if the offense never happened. This is, unless the offense was delinquent in nature and the juvenile was convicted under the adult criminal jurisdiction of the circuit court. You are part of the MDT (multi-disciplinary treatment team) process that meets every 90 days to discuss your child's progress. Ask questions, state your concerns, and don't be afraid to politely address the Court in regards to your child. You can address the Judge verbally or in writing. Fourth, don't be afraid to advocate for your child! You are your child's greatest advocate! You may at times feel like you're alone and fighting a losing battle, but hang in there! There are supports around you, sometimes you just have to find them.

Don't forget that FAST is in every region of the state, so please call us to be a support for you. For additional information or to request services, please contact our intake specialist (toll-free):1-866-255-4370.

Gloria Shaffer lives in Elkins with her six children.