Hello everyone! I hope you are all doing well!

As the Director of WV Birth to Three I have been in this position since 1992. That’s a long time really! I have seen a lot of change and have seen much dedication from service professionals across West Virginia. I am always so proud of the work that is being done to support children and families. I want to thank you for your commitment!

We are starting our newsletter this month – looking forward to sharing information with everyone. Do you have ideas about what you would like to see included? If so, please let us know – and we will try our best to have it included in future issues.

Thanks again – and well wishes to you all!
MEET THE WVBTT STATE TEAM

JO NEAL - I have been with WVBTT since 2014 and have served in a few different capacities (Office Assistant & Secretary) before becoming the current Office Manager in the State Office. In my current role, I oversee the processing of invoices, claims, Assistive Technology requests, Interpreter requests amongst many other day-to-day tasks that keep the office running smoothly. One of my favorite things about working for WVBTT is the wonderful team that has been assembled here at the State Office. I also enjoy being able to help those out in the field serving our children. In my spare time, I enjoy a great DIY project and running.

SUSAN RISPRESS, Technical Assistance Specialist - Regions 6 and 7. I have worked in the Office of Maternal, Child and Family Health for 15 years come October. Twelve of those years have been with Birth to Three. As a Technical Assistance Specialist I provide support, guidance and training for the southern regions of WV. I am proud of my team! I enjoy creating, developing and repurposing our WVBTT information by adding a new twist on how we communicate to others as a program. I may have assisted you with a hearing aid or transmitter request. I may have just answered a simple question for you. I guess you could say that I am a “Jill of all trades.” I enjoy my job! I like helping others and putting my best foot forward in all that I do. Outside of work, I sing, play with my grand babies and spend time with my “adopted” WV family.

WHO ARE YOU PEOPLE?

Hello! I am REGINA (MEL) WOODCOCK, MA, IMH-E, the Policy Specialist/CSPD Coordinator for WV Birth to Three. In my role, I provide oversight for the design and implementation of professional development opportunities and the development of state policy and procedure. I have a Master’s Degree in Early Childhood Special Education and I am endorsed by the WV Infant Toddler Mental Health Association at the Policy level. Before coming to the state office, I worked as a Developmental Specialist, Preschool Special Needs Teacher, Head Start Mental Health Consultant and as an administrator for a regional early intervention program. Over the last 30 years I have provided training at the regional, state and national level on evidenced-based early intervention practices. I am also a member of several state level committees focusing on professional development, including the WV Infant Toddler Mental Health Association, the Early Childhood Advisory PD committee, the WV Association on Positive Behavior Support and the WVBTT Social Emotional Leadership team. When not at work, I spend my free time, weaving, knitting, going hiking, doing Tai Chi and meditation.

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Stephanie O’Dell - I am the epidemiologist and data manager for WV Birth to Three. I came to the program 3 years ago when applying for an epidemiologist job with the Office of Maternal Child and Family Health. Birth to Three was my program of choice when asked which program I would be most interested in. My role in Birth to Three is to provide data management for our data system and analyze program data for program improvement initiatives. I also provide required annual data reports to the Federal Department of Education and am the contact person for any data requests or data questions.

Roger Sockman - I’m Roger Sockman the Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Coordinator. I monitor the performance and conduct audits of WV BTT providers, process disenrollment letters, receive and manage complaints to WV BTT, and process overrides for providers. Prior to joining WVBTT, I worked as an Economic Service Worker for DHHR in Dunbar, WV.

A proud graduate of Marshall University, I worked for various state agencies in Florida prior to moving back to West Virginia. My work experiences include public information, marketing, communications, a training instructor, a TV documentary producer, public records specialist, and I worked as a Risk and Crisis Communications coordinator. One unusual job that I had while living in Florida was as a walking Lotto ball (#26) in a parade in Tallahassee! I’ve also worked part time as a radio sports reporter for Florida State and the Jacksonville Jaguars.

In my spare time, I am an avid sports fan, rooting for Marshall University, Florida State University, and the Tampa Bay Buccaneers and I love to play amateur softball and volleyball. I’ve even picked up a part time gig with the WV Power this summer. I’m also the answer to a sports trivia question: “Who was the right-front tire changer on Indy car #16 at the 1987 Indianapolis 500?” I am married to my lovely wife Rita Ann and I have a daughter, Ellen Ann, is a doctor at Ruby Memorial Hospital in Morgantown.

Hi everyone! My name is Lauren Moore and I am the Technical Assistant for Regions 1 and 2. As a TA, it is my role to provide administrative coordination and complex technical assistance to the RAU and it’s staff, providers, service coordinators, and any person interested in providing services for Birth to Three. In addition to my everyday responsibilities, I represent the Birth to Three System on many strategic state level interagency workgroups. I am one of our state trainers, and you will often find me presenting or working behind the scenes on the many webinars we offer.

I was first introduced to WVBTT when my son needed services and I totally fell in love with the program. When an opportunity presented itself to use my educational background and work for the program that changed our lives, I jumped at it and have never looked back. Prior to being the TA, I spent five years as an Ongoing Service Coordinator in our system. This experience has been beneficial in my current role as a TA as I have firsthand experience on what it is like to work in the field and in the homes, utilizing all the materials and resources WVBTT provides for us.

I received my bachelor’s degree in Elementary Education from Wheeling Jesuit University and have a master’s degree in Rehabilitation Counseling from West Virginia University. I reside in Harrison County with my husband and our three children. In my free time, I coach a local swim team.

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My name is **Jessica Dempsey** and I live in Beckley, WV. I graduated from Marshall University in 2009 with a bachelor’s degree in Communication Disorders and in 2012 with a master’s degree in Special Education - Autism. I obtained a graduate certificate in Behavior Analysis from University of North Texas’ distance learning program and became a Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) in 2016. I have 11 years of experience working with individuals and families affected by autism.

In 2018, I moved to Ripley, WV and became an independent practitioner with the WV Birth to Three program as a BCBA, working with families in Jackson, Wood, Mason, Putnam, and Kanawha counties. I then moved to Beckley, WV in 2019 and worked with families in Raleigh, Fayette, Wyoming, Boone, and Kanawha counties. In March of 2021, I became the **Technical Assistance Specialist for Regions 3 & 4** of WV Birth to Three (WVBTT). I am so pleased to be in a position where I can assist other practitioners and professionals in WVBTT using my own insight and experience as a former practitioner in the field.

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**Connie Armistead, WVBTT Temp** - I became a state employee in February 2007, accepting a position as receptionist for OMCFH. Annette Brown, then assistant to the HHR Director, suggested I apply for the secretary vacancy in BTT. So in October I became a member of the team. I loved working that position. As the “go to” person for many aspects of the routine office work, I had personal contact not only with the BTT staff but with RAU staff, practitioners, vendors and the public. The most time consuming duty I had was assisting Mel and Sheila, not with actual training, but with all that went into preparing for a face-to-face training class. I arranged the location, sent out emails to those registered, made the training binders, worked with the trainers, sent out training certificates, and kept training records.

In October 2015 I made the hard decision to retire. Honestly, when Monday morning came I didn’t miss going to work but I sure did miss my co-workers. After nearly a year, I came back as a ‘part-time’ employee, assisting with basic clerical work that had accumulated. Now I assist Jo with work that a secretary would normally do, using my knowledge and experience the best I can. Working BTT is quite different than when I started. Today most everything we did manually is now done through the internet! The one thing that has not changed is the work environment and the feeling of being a part of the team – truly a work family.

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**When did you last...?**

- **Visit the WV Birth to Three website?** Information is updated weekly! Information on trainings, updated forms, technical assistance bulletins, news on outside trainings and opportunities for your families, and resources can all be found on the WVBTT website. What new changes have you noticed this year?

- **Update your Service Directory?** Service coordinators and licensed/non-licensed practitioners must update service directory information **every 90 days**. When your directory is outdated you run the risk of not being shown to potential families. Have you shared your availability recently?
STOP! I want to get off!!

Anyone else feel this way!! Just when you think it’s over, another dip and then a drop on this ride we call life. Whether it be our personal life or work life...there are just some days that you want to scream!! This change, that change, mask, no mask, face-to-face, virtual or how about both!

No matter your role we all have had to make changes that concerned us, worried us, made us uncomfortable or just didn’t make any sense at all! Just when you think you have the hang of it...dang it, it changes again!

Keep in mind that we are all on this ride together. Sometimes as a team we may not see “eye-to-eye” but we have the same common goal in mind. It’s about the children and families that we serve. As we all know...it’s not the “going through” that keeps each of us...it’s the “outcome.”

Susan Rispress, TA Specialist
Regions 6 and 7

If you have something that you would like to see included in the newsletter, please let us know. You may share that information with your TA Specialist or contact Susan Rispress directly at susan.k.rispress@wv.gov

UPCOMING EVENTS

SEPTEMBER

STATE OFFICE CLOSED - September 6, 2021
WVBTT Training Schedule - September 2021
9/15 - WVEICC - 9:30am - 3:30pm
9/20 - 9/21 - Social Emotional Institute
9/21 - Skillbuilders Conference (OSCs) virtual
9/23-9/24 - Great Beginnings

OCTOBER

WVBTT Training Schedule - October 2021
10/1 - Lunch n Learn - WV ABLE - Noon to 1pm
10/7 - Lunch n Learn - Food Insecurity in WV and the Positive Impact of WV WIC - Noon to 1pm
10/8 - Self Care Lecture Series - 1pm - 3pm
10/27 - Lunch n Learn - Supplemental Security Income (SSI) - Noon - 1pm