

Education of Children in Out-of-Home Care Advisory Committee

Annual Report

2017

The *Education of Children in Out-of-Home Care Advisory Committee* focused on the following major objectives during 2017: (1) Increase Educational Participation in Multi-Disciplinary Treatment Teams; (2) Implement the Foster Care Provisions of the Every Student Succeeds Act; (3) Expand Statewide Transitional Services; and (4) Monitor the Education Programs of Children Placed Out-of-State.

Increase Educational Participation in Multi-Disciplinary Teams (MDTs)

Participation by a school official at MDT meetings in child abuse and neglect cases and juvenile delinquency cases is required by West Virginia law (WV Codes 49-4-405; 49-4-406; and 49-2-907). Inconsistent practices across West Virginia have resulted in the absence of educational officials at some multi-disciplinary team meetings. In response to this issue, the Advisory Committee formed a task group that partnered with the Judiciary's Court Improvement Program (CIP). The task group was chaired by Cammie Chapman, Director of Children's Services, Supreme Court of Appeals of WV. The task group developed materials to increase the awareness of the importance of education's participation in MDT meetings including a joint letter to key school officials from the State Superintendent of Schools, Secretary of DHHR and the Supreme Court of Appeals of WV. The task group also developed tools to facilitate educator participation in MDT meetings including a checklist, guidance document, brochure and model report format. Implementation of these activities was initiated by a training of school administrators on January 25, 2018.

Implement the Foster Care Provisions of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

The Advisory Committee continues to support and advise WVDE and DHHR in (1) the development of a joint data system to report on the educational status and achievement of children in the foster care system and (2) policies, procedures and agreements to ensure school stability. The completion of these activities are required under the new federal law.

During 2017, the Department of Education and the Department of Health and Human Resources issued a joint guidance document for county school districts and local and regional health and human resource staff entitled: [Educational Stability for Homeless Children and Children in Foster Care](#). The document provides answer to questions regarding the implementation of the federal law and provides guidance on working cooperatively to achieve school stability for children in out-of-home care.

Expand Statewide Transitional Services

Over the past year and a half, the West Virginia Department of Education (WVDE), Office of Diversion and Transition Programs (ODTP) has increased the number of Transition Specialists employed around the state to 18, reduced the territory they cover, and expanded their role with Local Education Agencies (LEAs).

ODTP transition staff serve students who face unique educational challenges because they are placed in facilities out of their home for adjudicated and status related offenses, mental health services, or specialized medical needs. They work closely with these students to ensure, once they leave a placement,

they are able to enroll in public school or higher education, complete their high school graduation track (e.g. Diploma, Option Pathway, or TASC) and help develop the necessary skills for employment. Transition Specialists assist schools in understanding all of the educational options available to best meet the student's needs. Additionally, transition staff work preventatively with LEAs to assist with other students in the county at risk of placement in a facility outside their home. This collaborative work is specific to the county's needs for their students.

Attached is a map outlining the most updated transition map and staff contact information.

Monitor the Educational Programs of Children Placed Out-of-State

During 2017 WVDE Advisory Committee members from the Office of Federal Programs and Office of Diversion and Transition, in conjunction with DHHR staff, monitored the education programs of West Virginia children placed in five out-of-state facilities. The facilities monitored were:

- Grafton School, Winchester, VA
- Bellefaire JCB, Cleveland, OH
- Abraxas Academy, Morgantown, PA
- The Bradley Center, Pittsburgh, PA
- Alabama Clinical Schools, Birmingham, AL

A summary of the monitoring findings may be obtained from Sheila Paitsel, Assistant Director, Office of Federal Programs, WVDE.

Goals for 2018

At its January 2018 meeting the Advisory Committee established the following goals for the year: (1) Increase educational participation in MDT meetings through implementation of the task group's initiatives; (2) Development of an educational resource manual for judicial personnel; and (3) Increase awareness of transitional programs and services.