



W.Va. Chosen for National Pilot School Mental Health Project

CHARLESTON, W.Va. – West Virginia has been chosen by the National Assembly on School Based Health Care as the pilot state for its School Mental Health Capacity Building Training Initiative. The project will provide training and ongoing technical assistance to provide and expand quality school mental health services statewide.

West Virginia was chosen from among 10 states because of its capacity and potential for advancing school mental health efforts, said Laura Hurwitz, director of school mental health at the National Assembly on School Based Health Care (NASBHC).

“So many children go without proper medical care, including mental health services, because their parents, through no fault of their own, cannot afford insurance needed to cover such expenses,” said state Superintendent Steve Paine. “We are honored that West Virginia has been recognized for its efforts to help children in this arena. If we want children to be successful in school, we first must make sure they are emotionally healthy.”

The West Virginia Department of Education (WVDE) is working in conjunction with the Bureau for Behavioral Health and Health Facilities, the Bureau for Public Health, The School Health Technical Assistance Center at Marshall University, the School Based Health Assembly, and Legal Aid of West Virginia’s Family Advocacy, Support and Training (FAST) program.

“It is clear from the accomplishments that West Virginia has already made in school mental health that not only are they well positioned to make significant gains from the initiative but that NASBHC will learn from their accomplishments,” Hurwitz said. “It is our intention to integrate the knowledge and experience of West Virginia into our future capacity building activities for other states.”

Melanie Purkey, director of the WVDE’s Office of Healthy Schools, said the project will enhance current collaborations between the Department of Education and the Children’s Division of the Bureau for Behavioral Health.

“We are very excited to have been selected for this project and are looking forward to learning from the trainers and working with others in the state to address this very critical need,” Purkey said.

The School Mental Health Capacity Building Partnership is part of a national initiative made possible through a five-year cooperative agreement between NASBHC and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Division of Adolescent and School Health. Additional support for the initiative is provided by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

For more information, contact the Office of Communications at (304) 558-2699.