

# every voice matters



## 2011-2012 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE FAST ADVISORY COMMITTEE

### FAST Advisory Committee Drives Change, Supports Family & Youth Momentum in WV

The goal of Family Advocacy, Support & Training (FAST) is to develop a statewide parent and youth support network that will empower families of children and youth with behavioral and mental health needs to participate in planning, management, and evaluation of their child's treatment and service needs, and to drive meaningful improvements in child-serving systems.

FAST is a program of Legal Aid of West Virginia (LAWV), a non-profit organization that provides a wide range of advocacy services throughout West Virginia. LAWV operates statewide, providing services through a network of 12 legal offices. FAST is staffed by a knowledgeable and passionate team housed at eight LAWV locations across West Virginia. FAST staff include four regional Parent Coordinators, two Attorneys, a statewide Youth Coordinator, and a Family Advocate, who provide multiple services for families.



"It was a relief to have help for our daughter. For two years we shuffled papers. Then FAST helped, and everything changed."

- **627 youth received legal representation and advocacy**
- **FAST recovered over \$200,000** for WV youth and families among cases closed
- Due process resolutions resulted in **positive systemic impacts**, including county-wide training for school administrators & staff
- **In its 5-year history, FAST served 1,997 unduplicated families, advocating on a total of 2407 issues**



"They understood and listened to what I had to say and made me feel like there is hope for children with special needs."

- FAST hosted **15 parent support group meetings with 56 participants**
- Parent perspective, family support and follow-up in **30 Regional Clinical Review team meetings** of WV System of Care
- Reviewed **national peer support models** & made recommendations for statewide implementation
- FAST selected as 1 of 6 organizations for WV pilot of "Circle of Parents" national network of parent-led self-help groups



"Thank you for sending someone out to finally give me the opportunity to voice my opinion. I hope it will make a difference."

- **Increased voice of youth** through facilitated focus groups in Cabell, Greenbrier, Hardy, Mason, Jackson and Putnam counties on **residential treatment, foster care and dropout issues**
- **Over 1,000 youth participated in focus groups in 2 years**
- Expanded **Statewide Youth Council to 37 individuals**.
- Established the **West Virginia Youth M.O.V.E.** chapter in affiliation with Youth M.O.V.E. National
- Youth Council assisted WV Department of Education with **RiseUp West Virginia** dropout prevention initiative



"All teachers & principals need this training for student & school benefits."

"Among one of the best trainings I have attended."

- Staff and volunteers provided **38 trainings/presentations to nearly 700 professional and family participants**
- **Training topics** include Family/Youth Engagement, Special Education Policy, Truancy, Positive Behavioral Supports, Transitioning to Adulthood, FAST Care Notebook & Pathways to Partnerships
- Outreach and education through **Parenting Perspectives newsletter, FAST Facebook Page** and **eight statewide and community events**

**2012 Family Advocacy,  
Support & Training (FAST)  
Advisory Committee**

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WV DIVISION OF JUVENILE SERVICES

Linda Watts  
WEST VIRGINIA SYSTEM OF CARE

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Betsy Peterson  
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Nancy Price  
PARENT REPRESENTATIVE

Gary Keen  
WV BUREAU FOR CHILDREN & FAMILIES

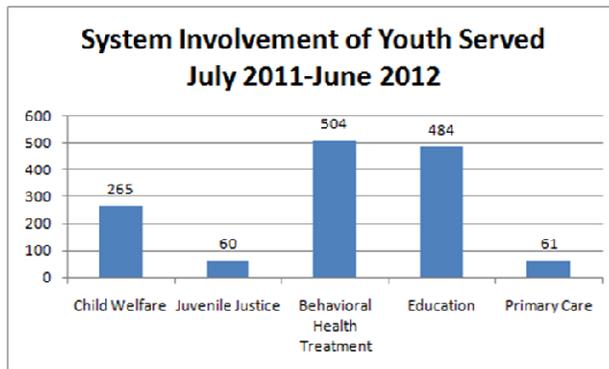
Tammy Pearson, Evaluator  
JOAN C. EDWARDS SCHOOL OF MEDICINE,  
MARSHALL UNIVERSITY

**Why it matters:**

In many ways, West Virginia is at the forefront among states in developing a statewide, **family-driven** and **youth-guided** voice representing children and youth with significant mental health needs and their families.

This means families of children tackling these challenges have a primary decision-making role in the policies and procedures governing care for children in their communities. This means young people today are more empowered to make decisions about their own lives and to influence policies governing care in the behavioral health, child welfare, education, primary care and juvenile justice systems for all youth in their community and state.

The FAST Advisory Committee partners with Mountain State Parent, Children & Adolescent Network (MSPCAN), Family Leadership First, and the West Virginia System of Care to unify the voices of families and youth when addressing mental health-related policy, planning and advocacy.



It matters because positive, meaningful changes are starting to happen in West Virginia. In the few short years since the FAST Advisory Committee was formed, a comprehensive statewide plan to improve and expand the children's service delivery system has relied on the real-life experience of parents, caregivers and youth—who now literally have a seat at the table with service providers and policy leaders, to make the state's family-, child- and youth-serving systems more responsive, efficient and effective for **all** families.



**For additional information or to request services, please contact our intake specialist (toll-free):**

**1-866-255-4370**

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