



West Virginia

Cohort 6, Funding Period 2014–2019

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Grantee Overview

West Virginia Project LAUNCH's pilot community is located on the West Side of the state capital, Charleston. Charleston's West Side neighborhood was specifically chosen for Project LAUNCH because of its history of poor mental health outcomes and at-risk populations. West Virginia LAUNCH seeks to improve coordination across child-serving systems, build infrastructure, and increase access to high-quality prevention and wellness promotion services.

Project Milestones

All [Project LAUNCH](#) grantees implement five promotion and prevention strategies intended to increase access to preventive care and to support the social and emotional well-being of infants, young children, and their families. In West Virginia LAUNCH, these five strategies are implemented through the following activities:

- **Screening and Assessment:** Begun in early 2013 through the [Office of Maternal, Child, and Family Health](#) (OMCFH), the [West Virginia Help Me Grow](#) (HMG) referral program seeks to increase both awareness of the importance of developmental screenings and the number of completed screenings. With the support of LAUNCH, West Virginia HMG now works to identify children at risk for behavioral health issues using the [Ages and Stages Questionnaire®](#) (ASQ3™) and the [Ages & Stages Questionnaires®: Social-Emotional®](#) (ASQ:SE™). Additionally, HMG serves as a centralized point of communication and referral, facilitating networking between parents and child health care providers, collecting data, and disseminating information about community Home Visiting programs. To increase awareness about HMG, coordinators conduct presentations for various stakeholders, including early childhood education providers, medical practitioners, and parents.
- **Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation:** West Virginia LAUNCH implements the [Positive Behavioral Support \(PBS\) Pyramid](#) model in child care centers in Charleston serving children ages birth to 6 years. Three trainings on the PBS Pyramid model have allowed one West Side center to begin its implementation, supported by monthly meetings of the Pyramid leadership team. To support home visitors and to increase awareness, education, and understanding of maternal mental health, West Virginia LAUNCH hosts a maternal mental health workgroup. Facilitated conversations seek to identify the community's mental health needs in order to expand access to resources and create effective community-based models for supporting mental health and wellness. Further information about community need was collected through two focus groups with parents in the West Side. In addition, in conjunction with the [West Virginia Infant/Toddler](#)

[Mental Health Association](#), West Virginia Project LAUNCH hosted the Great Beginnings Conference, which focused on supporting early development in the state.

- **Integrating Behavioral Health into Primary Care:** Working with the medical community is of particular importance in West Virginia, as the state has one of the nation’s highest rates of drug addicted babies and families affected by substance abuse. With this goal in mind, West Virginia LAUNCH established relationships with medical providers in the community to strategize about effective ways to integrate behavioral health into primary care settings. LAUNCH staff facilitated conversation about maternal mental health by organizing two meetings, during which more than 50 people discussed how to improve maternal wellness, including the possibility of a statewide coalition.
- **Enhancing Home Visiting:** West Virginia LAUNCH works to promote the [Parents as Teachers](#) (PAT) model for Home Visiting and parent education. This evidence-based model seeks to promote optimal early development by supporting and engaging parents and is designed for families before a child’s birth through age 5. In collaboration with the Charleston Family Resource Center, West Virginia LAUNCH provided PAT services in the West Side and established an advisory board to ensure sufficient resources are available to provide high-quality services.
- **Family Strengthening:** Training stakeholders who interact with families over the first few years of a child’s life constitutes the core of family strengthening work for West Virginia LAUNCH. To date, 48 stakeholders, including Head Start teachers, childcare providers, and home visitors, have been trained in [Triple P Positive Parenting](#). West Virginia LAUNCH has also worked with multiple organizations, including the [Partnership of African American Churches](#) and [Strengthening Families West Virginia](#) to provide trainings on the Positive Culture Framework and the Strengthening Families Framework, respectively. The latter training was held by certified “Bringing Protective Factors to Life in Your Work” trainers and included four days of in-depth training on specific protective factors. These trainings brought together stakeholders from a variety of interconnected sectors, including early care and education, child welfare, mental health, medicine, and housing. West Virginia LAUNCH also printed and distributed a [Center for the Study of Social Policy](#) brochure to facilitate trainings across the state, including to [West Virginia Birth to Three](#).

Systems Integration

Project LAUNCH is intended to improve coordination and collaboration across systems that serve young children and their families. West Virginia LAUNCH developed relationships with multiple community and state partners to train care providers and other stakeholders on best practices and evidence-based models. These programmatic and training partnerships include the state OMCFH, the West Virginia Infant/Toddler Mental Health Association, the Charleston Family Resource Center, and Strengthening Families West Virginia. Collaborating with organizations at the local and state level and with both private and government organizations allows West Virginia LAUNCH to sustain support to children, families, and professionals. In addition, the establishment of groups such as the maternal mental health workgroup allows various stakeholders to provide input on specific community needs.

West Virginia’s focus on preventing substance abuse is supported through collaboration with community organizations such as [Kanawha Communities That Care](#) and the Partnership of African American Churches. The Partnership hosted a training on “Too Good For Drugs,” a universal prevention program designed to eliminate risk factors and enhance protective factors related to alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use. Project LAUNCH staff attended this training to further their expertise and improve their ability to support West Side families.

Vignette

“For decades, I have worked on the West Side to help families and young children, and though all work is important, I have come to realize that so much more change can be made when a team is collaboratively working together. I have learned so much about the community picture as a whole. Our community has needs I personally had never even realized existed before. I'm so excited about all the work and positive growth Project LAUNCH has made by bringing people and agencies together. The future looks very bright again for us!”

—Child Care Director for Zion Child Development Center

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