



DECEMBER

2021

Issue 3



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SAMHSA GLS Youth Suicide Prevention Grant in
PA





DATES TO REMEMBER

December is National Stress-Free Family Holidays Month

December 1: World AIDS Day

December 1: Washington Health System Light Up Night at 5:30 at hospital front entrance

December 3: International Day of Persons with Disabilities

December 3: Washington Salvation Army Sweater Sing A Long at 6:30

December 10: Human Rights Day

December 10: DAS (Diversion and Acute Stabilization) 101 Training Q&A with MHY. [Register Here](#)

December 19: Snow Sister and Friend at the Snowman Trail at Washington Crown Center Mall starting at 3pm



SafeSecureKids.org provides free resources to adults on teaching children about respect for their bodies and boundaries. In addition, the SPHS Care Center STARRS Program offers provided training for pre-K through 12th students, caregivers, and school staff.

STARRS Prevention Staff can be reached at 724-229-5007



FAMILY SUPPORT PARTNERS



How Can the Parent Alliance Help the Families You Serve?

Family Support Partners (FSP's) can deliver peer to peer support to the families you serve who are caring for children and young adults (up to age 26) with identified or suspected social, emotional, behavioral, or mental health challenges. This is inclusive of learning and attention issues, as well as substance use disorders.

Our Family Support Partners are just that, partners. They are highly trained parents who have raised or are raising a child with challenges that may mirror the ones your families may also be encountering. Family Support Partners will walk with them on their journey until they feel ready to walk on their own.

Services are:
FREE & CONFIDENTIAL

To Refer a Family to Us for Service:

- Have them call us at 888-273-2361
- Have them reach us online [HERE](#)
- Have them book "A Time to Talk" on our website [here](#). This will allow them to select a time that works for their schedule.

Check out our [Be Supported Page](#) for more information.

What can an FSP help with?

Connect

The families you serve are not alone. We can help connect them with other families in their area or across the state.

Support

Our Family Support Partners (FSPs) follow the family's lead and embrace the challenges they choose to address by offering a partnership of support. They're in charge. FSPs can also be a great ally to send families to if you have a waiting list to get them support as soon as possible.

Navigate

We can provide guidance to help the families you serve to find the services in their area that their child/family needs.

Educate

Through educational resources, we help the families you serve successfully problem-solve and build skills in managing the systems put in place for their child.

Training

We provide training for families, providers, and communities from a family point of view. We utilize trainers with experience and an understanding of the challenges families are facing. We also offer personalized training for providers, to learn more about this email us at contact@paparentandfamilyalliance.org.

Advocate

When the family is ready, we'll be here to help them build or enhance their advocacy skills. These skills will support their child and others like them in their community and across the state.

RESOURCES FOR FAMILIES AND PROVIDERS

Southwestern Pennsylvania

Human Services, Inc.

(SPHS)

PROVIDER SPOTLIGHT:

More than fifty-five years ago, a group of Mon Valley citizens joined together to develop an organized, collaborative network for the delivery of health and human services. After many transitions, a multi-corporate system consisting of Southwestern Pennsylvania Human Services, Inc. (SPHS) and eight affiliate corporations evolved. Today, SPHS provides the full range of management/administrative services and central oversight to a comprehensive health and human service provider system, which allows the affiliates to concentrate their energies on direct service delivery throughout the Southwestern Pennsylvania.

Through this partnership, SPHS and its affiliates conduct strategic planning, develop programs, and provide human services in Butler, Fayette, Greene, Washington and Westmoreland counties, serving over 70,000 people annually throughout 60 service locations while employing more than 1,000 professional, clinical, and support personnel.

SPHS serves individuals of all ages across the region. In Washington County, we offer mental health case management and treatment; crisis services, psychiatric and social rehabilitation, substance abuse treatment; Center of Excellence for Opioid Use Disorder; developmental disabilities care; aging services; childcare; sexual assault victims services; day programming; residential care; and homeless and housing assistance.

Individuals can reach SPHS through any of their offices. Contact information is available on our website www.sphs.org. Please visit our social media, Facebook @sphsinc and Instagram @sphs_inc

Blended Case Management Service's mission is to provide services for targeted children, adolescents and adults who requires assistance in accessing and coordinating community resources and services. This past fiscal year the BCM program provided services to 450 Washington County individuals.

Service Areas:

Mental Health Case Management and Treatment

Substance Abuse Case Management and Treatment

Developmental Disabilities Care

Day Programming

Residential Care

Homeless and Housing Assistance

Crisis Services



The **CARE Center** provides a variety of services in Washington County. These services include both mental health and substance abuse treatment services; crisis intervention and residential services; Assertive Community Treatment Team (ACT); and specialized housing support services. During the fiscal year of 2020-2021, the CARE Center provided services to 1,757 Washington county individuals in mental health outpatient services. The Center of Excellence served 729 individuals in Washington County totaling 7,500 face to face encounters. The STTARS Program celebrated the 20th anniversary of Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM) with community partners by coming together to raise awareness of sexual assault, harassment, and abuse.

Connect Inc. offers Emergency Shelter and various supportive housing and rental assistance programs throughout Washington County. During the 2020-2021 year, our Housing Programs served a total of 198 people in Permanent Supportive Housing, 110 individuals in Rapid Rehousing and our Emergency Shelter provided shelter for a total of 78 individuals. Our Afterschool and Summer Programming provided 268 middle and elementary school students with STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts, and math) enrichment, academic learning opportunities, and social development in the following school districts: Bentworth, Beth Center and Charleroi.

Department of Human Services (DHS) had a successful turnout at the **Monongahela Child Learning Center** on Thursday, October 28. It was an evening filled with accents of the fall season and hints of Halloween décor handmade by our very own little artists. Staff at the center decided on the name "The Autumn Art Show", and family members of our youth attended on site to signify their support and to view the children's creations. The kids took pride in showing off their artwork to their families. Our little ones were especially enthralled with unstructured time they had to interact with staff.

Several individuals residing in our **Developmental Residential Programs** were transported down to Riverside Horizons Therapeutic Activity Center (TAC) to celebrate "Friendsgiving", our version of a pre-Thanksgiving dinner, alongside other community members. Staff prepared plentiful amounts of your traditional holiday food including platefuls of turkey, mashed potatoes, stuffing, gravy, a sweet potato dish, green beans, rolls, and homemade desserts! Many of the individuals had several helpings of their favorite Friendsgiving foods until they outright admitted to being "full". Afterwards the entire group decided it wasn't too early to commence with some Christmas caroling. 'Tis the season!

SPHS CARE Center-Washington

75 E Maiden St #100

Washington, PA 15301

SPHS Behavioral Health-Monessen

2 Eastgate Avenue

Monessen, PA 15062

Crisis Intervention Services

1-877-225-3567

852 B Henderson Avenue

Washington, PA 15301



MERRY, HAPPY, MINDFUL: SELF-CARE DURING THE HOLIDAYS

Written by Rose Milani, Project Director, SAMHSA GLS Youth Suicide Prevention Grant in PA

With December comes thoughts and planning for holiday parties, gifts, decorations, etc. These can feel exciting, but also overwhelming, especially in light of the ways the pandemic has and is still impacting our lives, our jobs, and ourselves. Even if we do have the capacity to plan and be joy filled during this season, it is a busy time, which usually means that self-care falls off our radar and we put it on hold, perhaps thinking it can wait to be part of our New Year's resolutions. At which point, we may feel that the holiday season flew by, without a moment to be aware and present.

Another reason that self-awareness and self-care is difficult this time of year is related to expectations we have for ourselves or that others have for the ways holidays "need" to be celebrated. We may be at engagements where it is hard to relate to people and we may not feel like we can be ourselves. Not to mention that the holidays are all about thinking about and caring for others, something that many of us do day in and day out and taking time to be cared for may seem like it's a luxury. However, even in the midst of caring for others, we are allowed to take care of our needs. Below are some ways to be proactive about mindful self-care during the holidays.

Take a Holiday "Break"

One thing we've been hearing during the pandemic is that it can be helpful for our mental health to turn off the news, social media, etc., to give ourselves a needed break. This can also be applied to the holidays. It's ok to take an evening, a day, etc., to not think about all we hope to accomplish. We can make a point to not listen to holiday music, take a social media hiatus, or go for a walk in the woods where we are not inundated with holiday information. It would also be important to communicate with those close to you that you are taking this break. This is not the time for your kids to utter their wish list, or for your colleague to talk with you about the holiday party. Once you are ready to reengage, you can let people know.

Making a List, Checking it twice

Whatever holiday we may celebrate this time of year, it is filled with lists – food prep lists, grocery lists, holiday card or annual family letter mailing lists, gift lists, even a list of our lists. What about a list of what we feel we may want or need during this season? It doesn't have to be a physical list, but it can be useful to take some time to reflect and be honest with ourselves about what is important to us during this time. Are we really hoping we can enjoy some focused family time, or perhaps it's a hope that someone else will host a particular gathering this year?



Whatever it may be, it's really easy to take on responsibilities and expectations automatically, and then feel taken advantage of or ignored later on. But if we can take some time and reflect on these things, it can help to carve out the space we need to make them happen. The hope or need may not be met, but by taking time to reflect, we are aware of the need, and of communicating that need to those around us.

Preparations

Even as we are preparing for the holidays, it can be helpful to take some time to prepare ourselves for what we may encounter. We may be familiar with the term stress inoculation, and this can be a useful concept to consider this time of year. Particularly the concepts of being mindful of what we may be walking into at a particular event. What has happened in the past that has been hard or difficult about this particular situation? Think about the various stressors that you may encounter and how you may handle it. What if someone asks a question you'd rather not answer or brings up a topic you don't want to discuss? You may want to come prepared with a statement such as "I realize you are asking because you care about me, but I'd rather not talk about it". It can also be helpful to discuss the various scenarios with someone you trust, who knows you and can offer support.

Light a Candle

The holidays can bring up memories of loved ones who are no longer with us, and it can be hard to know how to process feelings about this during the holidays. Particularly, when others around us may be happy and celebrating. It's ok to take time to process the loss of loved ones, and even bring them close this time of year. Perhaps this includes lighting a candle while you engage in an activity which represents their presence with you or starting a new tradition to honor their memory. Maybe you invite others into this tradition or practice as well, to connect, reflect, and be mindful together.

Kindness and Compassion

We know that no matter how much we prepare or reflect, things will not all work out the way we planned. We may be mindful, prepared, even rested, and still something will not turn out the way we hoped. This is the time for self-compassion. We are taught and strive to be gentle and kind to others, only to be hard and judgmental on ourselves. It can be helpful in these situations to think, if my closest friend was in this situation, made this mistake, or had this outcome, how would I respond to them? Would I berate them for not being "good enough" or would I want them to know how important they are, how valuable they are, are that it's ok? Then, apply that to yourself. It can be an incredibly powerful tool when you need it most.

I truly hope that these are helpful as you prepare for and experience this holiday season. They are certainly not exhaustive but can be a starting place. Above all, give yourself permission for some mindful self-care.

