

# START

## Buncombe County's Sobriety Treatment and Recovery Team Model Overview



# NATIONAL START MODEL OVERVIEW

Sobriety Treatment and Recovery Teams (START) is a complex child welfare service delivery model that has been shown, when implemented with fidelity, to improve outcomes for children and families affected by parental substance use and child maltreatment. The model uses a variety of strategies to promote collaboration and systems-level change within and between child welfare agencies, substance use and mental health treatment providers, the judicial system, and other family-serving entities.

## GOALS OF START

- Ensure child safety and well-being
- Prevent and/or decrease out-of-home placements
- Increase parental recovery
- Increase parenting capacity and family stability
- Reduce repeat maltreatment
- Improve system capacity for addressing parental substance use and child maltreatment



## START embeds effective strategies:

- ★ Built on a foundation of collaboration among multiple health, social service, and court partners
- ★ Employs a powerful dyad between peer recovery support specialist, called a family mentor, and a child welfare caseworker to help families
- ★ Family mentors have “lived” child welfare and recovery experience; they help parents navigate the health, social service and court systems
- ★ START worker and family mentor dyad share a capped caseload allowing them to provide intensive case management and weekly home visits
- ★ Shared decision making with families and agency partners at critical decision points
- ★ Intensive recovery supports to build parental capacity and recovery skills
- ★ Rigorous program evaluation and use of data for continuous quality improvement



# Buncombe County Implementation

July 2017

- Implemented with three dyads

February 2020

- Grew to five dyads after receiving federal grant funds for expansion

2020 to 2022

- Continued to serve families through global pandemic despite safety and staffing barriers

2022

- As only NC jurisdiction with a START program, asked to support expansion plans

February 2023

- Became the 2nd jurisdiction in the country to complete the national certification process



# Buncombe County Outcomes

- 146 Families have completed START services
- 67% of closed START cases had at least one parent reaching their recovery goals at case closure
- 72% of children involved were either never removed from their parents or were reunified with their parents prior to case closure
- Received “Exceeded” Rating in all 11 areas of Certification Process



# References

- Young, N., Boles, S., & Otero, C. (2007). Parental substance use disorders and child maltreatment: Overlap, gaps, and opportunities. *Child Maltreatment*, 12, 137–149
- Huebner, R.A., Willauer, T., and Posze, L. (2012). The impact of Sobriety Treatment and Recovery Teams (START) on family outcomes. *Families in Society*, 93(3), 196-203.
- NCACW (2017). The Use of Peers and Recovery Specialists in Child Welfare Settings.
- Huebner, R.A., Willauer, T., and Posze, L. (2012). The impact of Sobriety Treatment and Recovery Teams (START) on family outcomes. *Families in Society*, 93(3), 196-203.
- Huebner, R.A., Willauer, T., Posze, L., Hall, M.T., & Oliver, J. (2015). Application of the evaluation framework for program improvement of START, *Journal of Public Child Welfare*, 9(1), 42-64.
- Huebner, et al., The impact of START, 196-203.
- Huebner, R.A., Hall, M.T., Walton, M., Willauer, T., & Posze, L. (2021) *The Sobriety Treatment and Recovery Teams Program for Families with Parental Substance Use: Comparison of Child Welfare Outcomes through 12-months Post-Intervention*. In review.
- Huebner, et al., The impact of START, 196-203.

