

# W/B HIDTA Treatment and Prevention Spotlight

## The Martinsburg Initiative (TMI)



The Martinsburg Initiative (TMI) has served children and families in Berkeley, West Virginia since 2017. Funding from the Washington/Baltimore HIDTA helps TMI in their mission – to prevent substance use disorders, build strong families, and empower the Martinsburg community through police, school, community, health, and education partnerships. The goals of TMI are to:

1. Increase awareness of how to prevent substance use disorder through outreach, education, and training;
2. Identify, risk stratify, and offer interventions for individuals experiencing risk factors of trauma or substance misuse; and
3. Mitigate negative consequences resulting from substance misuse or trauma through community interventions.

Community partnerships are a pillar of TMI, with key organizations including the Martinsburg Police Department (MPD), Berkeley County Schools, Shepherd University, WVU Hospitals East Berkeley Medical Center, Recovery Resource Center, and the Boys and Girls Club. A broad range of prevention services are provided to the community through a staff of school-based social workers, police-based social workers, family and community outreach coordinators, mentors, and peer recovery support specialists. In addition, TMI operates Melody's HOME, a community cupboard that provides families in need with essential supplies such as food, clothing, school supplies, hygiene items, and baby care products, helping to address the root causes of poverty.

TMI addresses both prevention and treatment by offering after-school programs and mentoring that build resilience, while also providing screenings, referrals, and trauma trainings to connect families with needed supports. Through student coalitions and parenting programs, TMI empowers youth and caregivers to prevent substance misuse and heal from the impacts of trauma.

From December 2019 through June 2025, TMI has received almost 900 referrals, mentored 451 children, provided case management to over 1,000 families, and trained 2,797 educators. 11 TMI schools in the 2024 – 2025 school year received substance use prevention curriculum in classrooms. Significant improvements for students who received case management were demonstrated, including 45% improving their school attendance and 65% improving their grades in English and/or Math.

Remarkably, overdose deaths in the county have decreased 43% from 2023 to 2024. "In 2017, HIDTA was a foundational partner of TMI, and HIDTA technical support ensured the incredible work that we are doing today in our community. Our county is seeing a significant decline in overdose fatalities, and we believe that is the collective effort of our community organizations working together, including the prevention efforts of TMI. Our police, school, community, health, and education partnership serve as a community hub, and our collaborative efforts ensure the children and families that we support are thriving in spite of the trauma in their lives," Margaret Kursey, Director of Administration at TMI, stated.

While the program has seen continuous expansion over the years, developments in the Police Social Worker (PSW) program and youth coalitions stand out as highlights. A huge cultural shift has been seen within the police department. The Police Social Worker program offers vital support and alternatives to individuals facing mental health and social challenges. Officers can refer people in crisis directly to the PSW, who provides on-the-spot assessments, crisis intervention, safety planning, and connections to treatment, housing, and social services. PSWs also follow up with individuals and families to ensure needs are met and barriers to care are reduced.

The team is constantly busy with a rising number of referrals, and the program helps to take burden off police officers, who express their gratitude for having the resource available. One officer shared, “I’m glad we have social workers here to be able to refer people to the needed resources in the community.” Another added, “They are able to take some of the burden off of us when we are dealing with individuals that need mental health help and not a criminal matter.” In July 2025, an individual’s life was saved after a PSW recognized that a woman picked up on warrants was under the influence and in need of medical care. The PSW connected her to treatment, arranged transport, and even provided food while she waited. On the way to the hospital, the woman overdosed in the ambulance, but naloxone was administered in time to reverse the overdose—an intervention that may not have happened had the PSW not acted so quickly.

TMI is also proud to offer a Drug-Free<sup>WV</sup> Coalition for students. There are currently 7 active coalitions across Berkeley and Jefferson counties. These youth-led groups go beyond traditional prevention messaging by creating campaigns, school events, and workshops that empower their peers to make healthy choices. At Musselman High School, students organized Overdose Awareness Day, launched the #YouMatter Wall of Hope, and raised nearly \$760 for Melody’s HOME through a Penny Wars fundraiser. They were even spotlighted at the multi-state Spark Symposium for mobilizing more than 40 student advocates. Spring Mills High School’s coalition gathered over 1,600 I PROMISE pledges, trained 50 students and staff in naloxone administration, and hosted mindfulness workshops to support emotional wellness. Other coalitions, from North Middle School to Shepherd University, have brought prevention to life through creative events like karaoke sobriety challenges, kindness campaigns, and student-led wellness sessions. Together, these coalitions are redefining prevention as engaging, student-driven, and deeply connected to community well-being.



A strength of TMI is the way all of its work is interconnected. Police social workers coordinate closely with school social workers, and staff collaborate across schools, hospitals, and police departments. This integrated approach ensures continuity of care and understanding for each child and family, reducing the risk that someone slips through the cracks or that opportunities are missed due to gaps in communication. By working together, TMI supports children and families at every level of substance use risk—helping to prevent initiation, reduce the likelihood of misuse, and lessen the impact of trauma and adverse childhood experiences. The program is constantly evaluating its efforts through rigorous data collection and community conversations to expand in ways that make sense, to identify community needs, to enhance efforts, and to identify what is working.



Community members consistently describe TMI as more than a program—it is “extended family.” One caregiver, moved when a caseworker made her daughter a quilt from her late parents’ clothing, shared, “I just really appreciate it and am really grateful.” A grandmother reflected that the family support group “has helped [her family] communicate better and navigate difficult moments together.” Youth leaders echo these sentiments, with one coalition president noting, “Our coalition is making a difference in our school culture—bringing awareness not just to substance misuse in our generation, but to overall student well-being.” Together, these voices underscore the trust, gratitude, and life-changing impact that TMI inspires across the community.