

Hello, my name is Jamie Griffin, and I live in Takoma Park, MD. I have three children, and my middle child, Sophia, has suffered with depression, anxiety, suicidal ideations and self-harm.

A very helpful and important program Sophia and I were in a couple years ago was wraparound from JSSA (Jewish Social Services Agency), and I am testifying to support House Bill 322 to keep this program funded.

The beginning of Sophia's 8th grade year started with a lot of new challenges, and our family was overwhelmed with what to do, and underwhelmed with good options that seemed safe and effective for a 13-year-old. We found a therapist but that seemed to go nowhere. Sophia changed schools and struggled to articulate their feelings. We spent over a year searching for better options before finding an IOP (Intensive Outpatient Program) that then referred us to JSSA (Jewish Social Services Agency). The outpatient program helped Sophia start to find their voice, but knew that integrating the changes Sophia had made was pivotal to their recovery. This program was uniquely able to support both Sophia and I to work together in previously unexplored ways. We had both been doing a bit of work on ourselves, but had yet to come together and discuss real life situations and how to work together to solve those issues. We both carried around the trauma that can often happen within a family due to mental illness. We were able to create strategies to start building trust in ourselves and each other.

Talk therapy is generally recommended, whether personal or family, as the way back to a healthy relationship with self and others. And I do believe in its merit, but there are several things about this program that make it special:

1. We were able to talk about our issues without being pathologized, and we were part of organic, curious conversations about new ways to look at things or change a reaction/pattern.
2. Problems that came up were worked on systematically, and reworked until a resolution could be achieved. This included referrals and suggestions for continued healing.
3. We had a group supporting us. We met once a week with our team leader, Miatta (me-yah-da), and a mentor, Mary. I was able to connect with Mary in between sessions if I had any issues. There were also trained professionals behind the scenes who would meet with Miatta and Mary monthly where unresolved concerns could be discussed and addressed.
4. During the height of the pandemic we were struggling with more than just emotional issues, but monetary issues as well. Wraparound was free and they had many connections to other programs for the unemployed, underemployed or underpaid, and I was able to get this computer I am writing on right now through one such program.
5. We were able to work the program until we were ready to leave. Sophia and I spent about a year and outgrew wraparound, which is this program at its best.

Sophia is now almost 18, and is a senior who has just finished the CAP program at Blair and intends to take a gap year exploring their love of music and traveling. They have spent many

years growing and learning and have become very wise. I am looking forward to sending Miatta and Mary Sophia's graduation picture.

In supporting a child with mental illness, there is never one quick fix, but many important steps along the way. JSSA was such a step for us, to begin building a safe relational field so that other, important steps could be taken. Without the support of JSSA I know it would have taken longer to repair our relationship and learn to work together. In the life of someone who is suffering, this can be the difference between life and death. Being supported and having a plan made all the difference. Please support HB 322 so many more families in Maryland can access wraparound.