



Family Focus

Autism Awareness Month: Listening, Learning, and Supporting Every Unique Journey

April is Autism Awareness Month, a time not only to increase visibility, but also to deepen understanding, challenge misconceptions, and uplift the voices of families.

True awareness means listening to families' experiences, respecting their differences, and acknowledging an essential truth: no two people with autism are the same.



Combating Misinformation

There is still a great deal of misinformation surrounding autism. Outdated stereotypes and one-size-fits-all narratives can create barriers for individuals and families seeking understanding and support. Autism is not a single, uniform experience; it is a spectrum that encompasses a wide range of strengths, challenges, communication styles, and support needs.

Challenging these misconceptions starts with education, but more importantly, with listening to those who live it every day.



Support That Meets You Where You Are

Whether you are newly navigating a diagnosis, advocating within school systems, exploring services, or simply looking for someone who understands, we are here for you.

There is no "right" way to experience autism, and there is no single path forward. What matters is that you don't have to figure it out alone.

Moving From Awareness to Understanding

This Autism Awareness Month, we invite our community to go deeper. Take time to question assumptions, seek out authentic voices, and embrace the diversity within

the autism community.

We are here, ready to listen, to support, and to stand with you every step of the way.

Resource Spotlight: Pathfinders for Autism

Autism By Age

Pathfinders for Autism offers a helpful resource called “Autism by Age,” designed to guide families and caregivers through the different stages of life. By selecting the age group your loved one is in, you can explore a comprehensive list of services and supports tailored to that stage. Topics include healthcare and medical care, therapeutic interventions, assistive technology, education, social relationships, safety, funding and legal considerations, support groups and respite, and advocacy and self-advocacy.



This is a great resource because it organizes what can often feel like overwhelming information into one easy-to-navigate place. Instead of searching across multiple sites, families can quickly find relevant supports that match their current needs while also anticipating what may come next. It's especially useful for planning ahead, discovering new services, and feeling more confident about the options available at each stage of the journey.

[Explore This Resource](#)

Your Impact This Session



The legislative session has officially come to a close, marking the end of a busy period of advocacy and policy activity.

Throughout the session, we closely followed a number of bills impacting the families we serve. From mental health and substance use services to broader system improvements, these efforts play an important role in shaping access to care and support in our community.

We extend our sincere thanks to everyone who contributed their voices through surveys, shared experiences, and testimony. Your input plays a vital role in shaping advocacy efforts and ensuring that real experiences are reflected in policy discussions.

If you are interested in learning more about the outcomes of the bills we were tracking, including what passed, what did not, and what it means moving forward, we invite you to visit our website for a full recap.

[Visit our Website](#)

Peer Support for Young Adults

Peer support for young adults is gaining recognition as an essential service, especially as many navigate challenges related to mental health, substance use, and problem gambling. There is a growing need for support that is grounded in lived experience and genuine understanding.



At its core, peer support is about connection. It gives young adults the opportunity to talk with someone who has been through similar experiences, someone who can listen without judgment and relate in a real, meaningful way. This kind of support can help reduce isolation and create a sense of belonging during difficult times.

We offer several peer support programs tailored to young adults. These include a statewide program serving young adults across Maryland, a program specifically for young adults in Prince George's County, and a statewide peer support program focused on problem gambling. Our team includes young adults with lived experience who are here to listen, offer encouragement, and help connect individuals to helpful resources.

Visit our website to learn more about available programs and how to get connected.

[Learn More](#)

Purple Up Day

This month, we celebrated Purple Up Day on April 15th to show our commitment to standing alongside military families. Purple Up Day is a special opportunity to recognize the strength and resilience of military-connected children and their families, who often navigate unique challenges such as frequent moves, school transitions, and time apart from loved ones, especially when a loved one is experiencing behavioral health challenges.

By wearing purple, we stand in solidarity with these families and reaffirm our dedication to creating inclusive, understanding communities. Our goal is to make sure military families know they are not alone, that they have access to resources, meaningful connections, and support systems that help them thrive wherever they are.



Get Connected & Stay Informed!

Online and In-Person Support Groups

MCF offers many support groups to provide a safe space for you to learn, share and receive compassionate help. All are facilitated by trained Family Peer Support Specialists who have dealt with similar challenges in their own families. Groups are free for all participants and held on different days of the week and different times of day. Find one or more that can work for you and join us soon!

[Find a Support Group](#)

Workshops, Trainings, & Other Events

MCF offers a wide range of events, trainings and workshops for families who have a loved one with mental health, substance use or problem gambling challenges. Events are held in communities across the state or virtually and are offered at no cost to participants. Visit our website to learn more!

[Past and Upcoming Events](#)

Employment Opportunities

We have employment opportunities that might be perfect for you or someone you know! We currently have openings in many areas of the State. Please check our website for a complete list of openings.

- Family Peer Support Specialist (Bilingual) - Substance Use (Must live in Baltimore)
- Family Peer Support Specialist - Substance Use (Must live in Baltimore)

[Employment Opportunities](#)

We're here because we've been there too



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