



Family Focus

5 Reasons Mental Health Awareness Month Matters for Children and Families

We support children's mental health all year long, but May is a special opportunity to join communities across the country in reducing stigma, sharing resources, and encouraging conversations that help children and families feel seen, supported, and connected.

1. Mental health is part of a child's overall well-being

A child's mental health affects how they learn, build relationships, manage emotions, and handle everyday challenges.

2. Early support can make a lasting difference

Recognizing signs of stress, anxiety, or other mental health challenges early allows families and caregivers to respond with care and connect children to helpful support.

3. Strong support systems help children thrive

When caregivers, schools, and communities work together, children often experience better outcomes at home, in school, and in everyday life.

4. Conversations reduce stigma

Open, honest discussions about mental health help children and families know they are not alone and that asking for help is a sign of strength.

5. Connection matters

This Mental Health Awareness Month, we encourage families to seek connection, support, and understanding while continuing to build environments where children and families can thrive.

Check out our upcoming events and join us in supporting children's mental health and family well-being throughout May and beyond!



[Visit our Events Page](#)

Get Involved in Advocacy Through Local Boards and Commissions

Interested in advocacy? One of the most impactful ways to make your voice heard is by joining a local board or commission in your jurisdiction.

These groups play an important role in shaping policies, guiding services, and ensuring that community voices are represented in decision-making processes.

Boards and commissions may focus on topics such as mental health, disability advocacy, children, youth, and families, though the specific opportunities vary depending on your jurisdiction. Serving on one of these boards is a meaningful way to share your lived experience, contribute to system-level change, and help improve services for others in your community.

If you are interested in getting involved, we encourage you to explore the opportunities available in your area. Visit our website to view a curated list of boards and commissions, along with direct links to apply.

Your perspective matters, and your voice can help shape stronger, more responsive systems for everyone.



[Explore The List](#)

A Youth Perspective on Family Peer Support



If you follow us on social media, you've likely seen the family success stories we share, real stories from real families who have received family peer support through our work. These stories note the challenges families face and the impact that connection and support can have.

This month, we shared something a little different and especially meaningful: a story from the perspective of a young person impacted by family peer support. We don't often get the opportunity to hear directly from young people about this work, so we were grateful to hear from them.

As they shared, *"My experience working with and around MCF has shown me just how deeply their work impacts the youth in our community. Through both witnessing their support and navigating my own mental health journey, I've felt that impact personally."*

They also reflected on how those experiences shaped their future: *"Those experiences have inspired me to pursue a career in therapy, so I can be there for future generations as they face their own struggles. I want to offer the same kind of*

understanding, guidance, and support that I've seen MCF provide to families and youth."

Hearing this perspective is a powerful reminder that family peer support helps caregivers feel more supported and confident, so they can help their loved ones thrive.

Give Today and Help a Family Find Their Way

If you've ever tried to find mental health support for your child, you know how overwhelming it can feel.

So many options. So many dead ends. So much time spent just trying to figure out where to start. For many families, it can feel like navigating a maze without a map.

You can help make that path clearer.

Please consider making a donation today to support families navigating their child's mental health journey.

Your support helps connect families to trained Family Peer Support Specialists, caregivers who have lived experience and truly understand what others are going through. They help families make sense of the system, identify the right services, and move forward with greater confidence and less confusion.

With the right support, families don't have to figure it out alone. Family Peer Support Specialists help cut through the uncertainty and guide caregivers toward meaningful, timely care.

Even a small gift can make a real difference by helping to:

- Reduce the time families spend in crisis
- Increase access to the right care
- Support caregivers who are doing everything they can

Together, we can help ensure families feel supported, informed, and never alone as they navigate their child's mental health journey.

[Give Today](#)



Know the Difference: When to Call 988 vs. 911

In a moment of crisis, knowing which number to call can make all the difference. While 911 connects people to emergency services for immediate threats to safety or medical emergencies, 988 provides support for mental health, substance use, and emotional crises. Understanding when to use each service helps ensure individuals and families receive the right kind of help as quickly as possible.

To learn more about the differences between 988 and 911, including examples of when to call each line, please review the attached resource from Substance Abuse



and Mental Health Services Administration. It offers clear guidance to help individuals and families feel informed and prepared when support is needed.

988 vs. 911

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



www.mdcoalition.org



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