



Family Focus

Start the School Year Feeling Supported

As summer winds down and a new school year approaches, we hope you've had opportunities to slow down, spend time with your family, and recharge for the year ahead.

A new school year can also bring questions, especially when it comes to making sure your child has the support they need at school. Please keep us in mind if you need support navigating an IEP, 504 Plan, or other accommodations for your child. We're here to support you, help you understand your options, and connect you with resources that can help.



[Request Services Now](#)

Small Conversations, Stronger Connections

When you're caring for a child with behavioral health challenges, you may spend a lot of time focused on what needs to happen next: getting through the morning, making it to school, managing a difficult behavior, getting to an appointment, or figuring out what support your child needs. When life gets busy, it can be easy to miss the smaller signs that your child or adolescent may be feeling overwhelmed.

And if your child has difficulty communicating how they are feeling, simply asking, "How are you feeling?" may not always lead to a meaningful conversation. Instead, try asking questions that are more specific and give them different ways to express what they're experiencing.

Here are some alternatives that may help create space for your child to open up:



- What has felt hard lately?
- What has been going well?
- What helps you feel calm or comfortable?
- What do you need more of right now? (or less of?)

The goal isn't to solve every problem or have all the answers. Creating opportunities for open, judgment-free communication is a good place to start.

Is It Stress or Something More?



Stress is a normal part of growing up. Changes at school, challenges with friends, family changes, or other difficult experiences can affect how children and adolescents feel and behave. Sometimes, those reactions are temporary and improve as the stressor passes. Other times, changes in mood or behavior may be a sign that a child needs additional support.

So how can caregivers know when to pay closer attention?

A child experiencing stress may be more irritable, emotional, worried, tired, or frustrated than usual. They may have difficulty concentrating, need more reassurance, or experience temporary changes in sleep or appetite.

It may be time to seek additional support when these changes persist, become more intense, or begin interfering with everyday life, such as school, relationships, family activities, or routines. You may also notice your child withdrawing from others, losing interest in things they usually enjoy, or having difficulty managing emotions or behaviors in ways that are different from their usual patterns.

Check out the articles below for helpful information and practical tips to help children build and use healthy coping skills.

[Identifying Signs of Stress](#)

[Coping Skills for Kids](#)

Resource Rewind: "Getting to Know My Child" Tip Sheet

One of the best back-to-school strategies? Help your child's teacher get to know them from day one.

Download this easy, family-created tip sheet to share your child's strengths, needs, and support strategies. A little communication can make a big difference.

By providing teachers with key insights about your child, you set the stage for a year full of growth, understanding, and success.



Share the sheet today and help ensure your child's needs are met from the very start!

[Download the Tip Sheet](#)

Let's Connect More Families to Support



Hello, Community Partners! If you work with families who could benefit from family peer support, we'd love to connect with you!

We are available to provide a brief presentation about our services, how family peer support can help caregivers, and how families can connect with us. We're also happy to answer any questions you or your team may have.

Interested in learning more? Reach out to us to schedule a presentation or conversation. We'd love the opportunity to connect and help make sure the families you serve know that support is available.

[Contact Us](#)

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.

- Youth Engagement Specialist (Must Live in PG County)
- Family Coordinator - Mental Health (Must Live in PG County)
- Family Peer Support Specialist - Mental Health (Must Live in Allegany County)
- Family Peer Support Specialist - Mental Health (Must Live in Somerset County)
- Family Peer Support Specialist - Mental Health (Must Live in Worcester County)
- Family Peer Support Specialist - Substance Use (Must Live in Baltimore City)

Employment Opportunities

We're here because we've been there too



www.mdcoalition.org



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