

MCF

maryland coalition of families



FY2020 Annual Report

Dear Friends,

I look back on the past year with pride and gratitude. It was quite a year... a year when MCF delivered on its mission to support families, notwithstanding the challenges of the pandemic during the last quarter of the year; and a year when the commitment of the MCF community and our many partners to families was inspiring to behold.

MCF connected with, supported and empowered more families than ever—2,528—with the greatest increase amongst families with a child involved with the state’s juvenile services system and families with a loved one with a substance use disorder. We continued to diversify in terms of the caregivers who received our support, with us supporting more non-parent caregivers—spouses, grandparents, adult children and siblings—and more Spanish-speaking families.

MCF strengthened our partnerships with child-serving systems and behavioral health partners. We began a collaboration with the state’s child welfare system (Department of Human Services) to bring family voice into its practice improvement initiative, and received funding from the state’s Opioid Operational Command Center as part of the state’s efforts to reduce opioid overdoses and deaths.

The COVID-19 pandemic created many challenges for MCF. We bore witness to the impact of the

pandemic, both through our work with families, and as a work community of families with loved ones with behavioral health challenges. Thanks to the dedication and ingenuity of our staff, and their experience providing support by telephone/email/text before the pandemic, we were able to quickly shift our operations to a virtual platform and incorporate pandemic-related content into our program work.

During this year, we made a commitment to strengthen the organization in the areas of diversity, equity and inclusion, and dedicate ourselves to address racism, more fully understand the impact of racial trauma and promote healing. Consistent with MCF’s vision of a stigma-free society that promotes wellness, we believe in the dignity of every individual and respect the unique experience of families. This strengthens our work community and the work we do with others.

I end with a heartfelt Thank You to our staff, our board of directors, our funders and partners, and most of all, to the families across the state who honor us by inviting us into their lives on behalf of their loved ones with behavioral health needs.



Jane Plapinger
Executive Director

Board of Directors *as of June 30, 2020*

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Photo taken June 2019



Serving Families with Compassion and Empathy

In Baltimore city and every county throughout Maryland, families with behavioral health needs connected with and were supported by a trained MCF Family Peer Support Specialist (FPSS).

USING OUR LIVED EXPERIENCE

Every FPSS is a parent or caregiver of a loved one with a mental health, substance use or problem gambling issue or a parent of a child involved with the juvenile services or child welfare system.

This personal connection and the non-judgmental family peer support and services navigation they received enabled these families to access needed services and resources and effectively address their challenges. Equally important, the families we serve report that, with the help of our staff, they are better able to advocate and care for their loved ones and themselves. They also report feeling a decreased sense of isolation after working with someone who “has walked in their shoes.”

SUPPORTING FAMILIES IN MYRIAD WAYS

During this year, 2,528 Maryland families received support from MCF family peer support specialists. Thanks to the commitment of our many funding partners, MCF provided these services at no cost to the families.

In addition to receiving individualized support, 1,463 parents, caregivers and other family members connected with others facing similar issues by participating in more than 500 face-to-face and virtual events hosted by MCF for those living in communities across the state. These included 66 distinct support groups that met monthly and 13 social and recreational family events. We also offered 70 local and statewide trainings for families. These were designed to build awareness of substance use disorders and problem gambling, promote skill-building for effective communications and teach positive parenting techniques. Trainings also focused on teaching families to work effectively and collaboratively with schools and agencies.

RESPONDING DURING THE PANDEMIC

During the last quarter of this year, due to COVID-19 restrictions, MCF shifted all these activities to virtual formats and helped families engage with programs and services in a new way. We found that for some families, the virtual model removed barriers to participation, including transportation and the need for childcare. To serve the emerging needs of families, we incorporated pandemic-related content and resources into our one-on-one work with families, and our support groups and trainings.

Tailoring Support for Every Family

Our individualized approach meets each family where they are, lets them take the lead on how and when they want support and is responsive to their shifting needs and preferences.

WHY DO FAMILIES COME TO MCF?

Among those seeking help with mental health issues:

- 41% requested assistance accessing mental health treatment and resources
- 32% were referred by child-serving agencies to access more support for their families
- 15% indicated school problems as the primary reason for seeking help

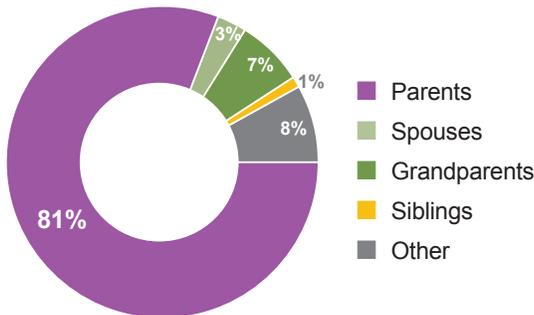
Among those seeking help with substance use issues:

- 69% sought connection to substance use treatment and resources
- 10% wanted support related to family involvement with the Department of Juvenile Services as well as substance use
- 9% were seeking mental health treatment and resources

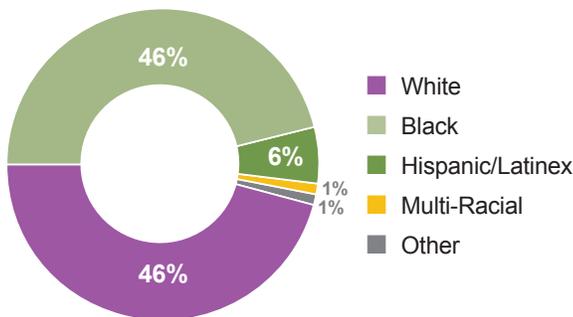
Family safety, grief support, help with navigating systems, and involvement with state and local agencies are among the other reasons that families reached out for MCF family peer support. Co-occurring disorders and multi-system involvement were fairly common for families seeking support.

WHO DOES MCF SUPPORT?

Parents and Other Family Members – While parents and other primary caregivers of young people continued to represent the majority of family members served, 19% of the individuals that came to MCF for support this year were grandparents, siblings, spouses and others who cared for someone with behavioral health challenges.



Families Who are Racially and Ethnically Diverse – MCF worked to reach into communities throughout the state to support families of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds. This year, equal numbers of Black families and white families were served (46% in each category), and six percent identified as Hispanic/Latinx.

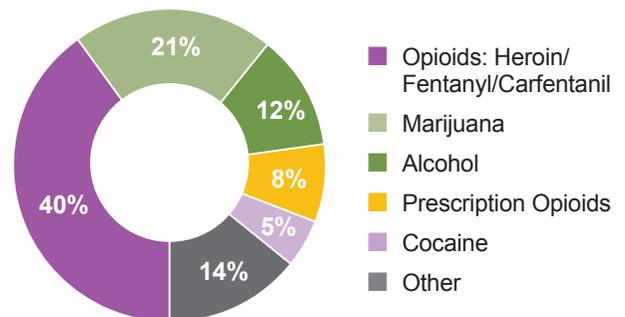


Parents/Caregivers of Children with Mental Health Challenges – More than 1,750 families received support for their children’s mental health issues this year. The average age of the children was 12 years old and ages ranged from infants to age 19. While a behavioral health diagnosis is not required to receive support from MCF, a diagnosis was reported to MCF for 83% of those receiving support for mental health issues. From more than 65 different diagnoses reported, the most common were:

- **71% Impulse control and conduct disorders** including attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and oppositional defiant disorder (ODD)

- **39% Mood disorders** including depression, mood dysregulation disorders and bi-polar disorders
- **24% Anxiety disorders** including obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) and generalized anxiety disorder
- **14% Autism spectrum disorder**
- **10% Trauma related disorders** including post-traumatic stress disorder

Loved Ones of Those with Substance Use Disorder – Among the more than 740 families receiving family peer support for substance use disorder, 66% were parents and 34% were other loved ones including spouses, adult children, grandparents and siblings. The average age of the person struggling with substance use was 27 years old and ages ranged from 13 to 72. Family peer support services helped to facilitate 157 treatment admissions for substance use recovery. Opioids (heroin/fentanyl/carfentanil) were the primary substance used, followed by marijuana and alcohol.



“I came to MCF because I was worried about my 19-year-old brother, who was using marijuana almost daily. The FPSS gave me ideas about how to open up a conversation and, for the first time, my brother and I were able to be honest with each other. Now, with the help of this FPSS, we are working as a team to support his recovery.”

Sister of a young man struggling with a substance use disorder

Loved Ones of Those with Gambling Problems –

During this year, 15 families received family peer support specifically for problem gambling. Of those, 60% were parents and 33% were the spouse or partner of someone struggling with problem gambling. The average age of the loved one struggling with problem gambling was 34 years old and ages ranged from 17 to 60. Awareness building, education and reducing stigma about problem gambling have been primary areas of focus for this program. With the widespread use of video and online gaming in general and the marked increase observed during the pandemic, MCF responded with specialized education around this topic for families and providers.

Parents/Caregivers of Those Involved with the Juvenile Services System –

In a pilot program in five Maryland jurisdictions, MCF partnered with the Department of Juvenile Services (DJS) and provided family peer support to 339 families this year. A referral to juvenile services is a very difficult situation for families and can create or deepen family turmoil. Our FPSS staff helped families navigate the courts and access community services and resources, with the goal of helping families eventually step out of the system. During the pandemic, MCF partnered with DJS to facilitate live online conversations with family members to understand how they were being impacted and to answer their questions. Moreover, on an ongoing basis, MCF staff provided DJS with the family perspective, sometimes specific to the families in a particular jurisdiction, so that the system and services could be more responsive to family needs.

“The Department of Juvenile Services relies on our partnership with Maryland Coalition for Families. When COVID-19 hit, they quickly shifted and found creative ways to engage with our families and support them. They truly are a mission-critical service for families.”

**Kara Aanenson,
DJS Director of Resources**

Building Family Leadership

Parents and caregivers of school-age children with mental health challenges learned to better support their child’s success in school and to be more effective leaders in their communities through MCF’s 17th annual Family Leadership Institute. This 60-hour, six-weekend intensive training experience brought together parents and caregivers from Baltimore city and 10 counties across the state.

Additionally, MCF hosted two-day Family Leadership Retreats to promote leadership development amongst parents and caregivers in Central Maryland and in Western Maryland.

A total of 63 parents and caregivers graduated from these programs with greater knowledge, leadership skills and connections to other parents and caregivers.

“I learned how to deal with my son’s outbursts, how to work with his school better, and how to advocate in a positive way when his needs weren’t being met. Just as important, I now have a community of other parents who understand what I’m going through. We lean on and support each other.”

2020 Family Leadership Institute graduate

Young Adults Supporting Each Other

Through Taking Flight, MCF’s statewide youth and young adult advisory council, young people fostered leadership skills and worked to reduce stigma around behavioral health issues.

Taking Flight team members offered panel presentations for teens and young adults, virtual “meet ups” for group support and used a texting platform to offer individual support to young adults with mental health challenges. During COVID-19, programming was increased and diversified to address several new

challenges faced by young adults including social isolation, unemployment, housing, and increased anxiety and depression. A total of 465 young people (18–26 years old) engaged with MCF’s youth engagement specialists through these opportunities.

Raising Family Voices

MCF families made connections and shared their experiences at the local and state levels to improve services in mental health, substance use, and other systems that serve families with behavioral health needs.

SHARING FAMILY PERSPECTIVES

Throughout the year, MCF family peer support specialists participated in 652 meetings with 117 different committees and boards at the state and local levels to share the voice of families with policy-makers and to support and advocate for families.

Through a project funded by the Maryland Department of Human Services, Social Services Administration (SSA), MCF continued to support nine family members who had lived experience with the child welfare system. Serving as caregiver advisors, they participated in SSA’s practice improvement initiative. They participated in committees and workgroups where they shared their personal experiences and made recommendations that will inform policy regarding child welfare in the state. The project also collaborated in development and delivery of curriculum to train child welfare staff on authentic partnership and engagement with families.

When families and the state agencies that serve them were impacted by the pandemic, we shared the experiences of families with key government partners by conducting ongoing focus groups with our family peer support team.

EDUCATING LEGISLATORS AND POLICY MAKERS

In February, 2020, MCF held its annual Family Day in Annapolis. This event brought families from across the state to Annapolis to meet with their legislators, share their stories, and advocate for improved behavioral health services. This year, 195 attendees participated in the day’s activities and visited a total of 70 legislative offices.

“I was so worried about meeting my delegate, but he was actually interested in my family’s experience and wanted to know how he could help. Because MCF had prepared me, I knew exactly what to tell him.”

Grandmother of child with mental health challenges

ADVOCATING FOR BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

During the 2020 Maryland Legislative Session, MCF participated in advocacy efforts that helped to:

- Increase payment rates for behavioral health providers.
- Pass the “Blueprint for Maryland’s Future” legislation (also known as the Kirwan Commission bill), which included comprehensive behavioral health services in schools. This bill was subsequently vetoed by Governor Hogan.

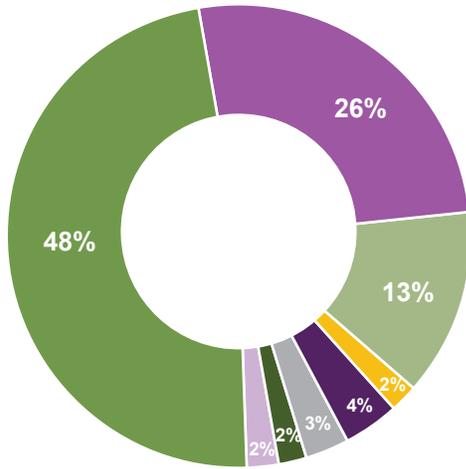
MCF families, staff and family peer support specialists also provided written and oral testimony on other proposed legislation relating to behavioral health including bills on insurance parity, crisis services for children and youth, and safe consumption facilities.

Raising Awareness

Children’s Mental Health – In the spring, MCF partnered with the Mental Health Association of Maryland to coordinate the 12th annual Children’s Mental Health Matters! Campaign. The Campaign was supported by the Maryland Department of Health’s Behavioral Health Administration, and Maryland’s First Lady, Yumi Hogan, served as the Campaign’s honorary chair. The Campaign recruited 799 schools and community organizations with representation from all 24 jurisdictions in the state. These “Champions” worked to raise awareness of the importance of children’s mental health.

Maryland’s Good Samaritan Law – 14,678 individuals were reached with information about Maryland’s Good Samaritan Law, which protects people assisting in an emergency overdose situation from arrest and prosecution for certain crimes related to possession and use of controlled substances and providing alcohol to minors.

FY2020 Grant Revenue



BY PROGRAM CATEGORY*

- Family Peer Support—Mental Health
- Family Peer Support—Substance Use & Problem Gambling
- Family Peer Support—Juvenile Services
- Family Peer Support—Child Welfare
- Family Engagement—Child Welfare
- Young Adult Programming
- Public Awareness
- Family Leadership Training

MCF's revenue totaled approximately \$4.98 million in Fiscal Year 2020 with grants accounting for 99% of this total. This chart represents this grant revenue broken down by program category.

*Administration is covered by program grants revenue.

Thank You to Our Funders

- Anne Arundel County Mental Health Agency, Inc.
- Baltimore City Department of Social Services
- Behavioral Health System Baltimore, Inc.
- Calvert County Health Department, Core Service Agency
- Caroline County Health Department
- Charles County Government
- Community Resource Development Partners
- Department of Juvenile Services
- Department of Human Services
- Dorchester County Public Schools
- Howard County Government
- Maryland Department of Health, Behavioral Health Administration
- Maryland State Department of Education
- Mid Shore Behavioral Health, Inc.
- Maryland Opioid Operational Command Center
- Prince George's County Health Department
- Queen Anne's County Community Partnerships for Children and Families, Local Management Board
- Salisbury University / Eastern Shore School Based Mental Health Committee
- University of Maryland, School of Social Work
- Washington County Mental Health Authority, Inc.

Remembering Ginger Rosela

In May the MCF community was saddened by the passing of Ginger Rosela, a beloved colleague and much-admired member of the MCF community. Ginger was a family peer support specialist, and one of five substance use family advocates who helped establish MCF's Substance Use Family Navigation Program in 2016.

Everyone who knew Ginger was touched by her energy, enthusiasm, honesty and humor. After the loss of her son, Jake, to an overdose in 2013, helping other families became Ginger's calling and her life's work. Ginger worked tirelessly and fiercely to ensure that every family she supported had opportunities for the "help they needed and deserved," a phrase she used frequently. She fervently believed that recovery was possible.

Being part of MCF enabled Ginger to broaden her work with families, and teach and inspire others to do this work. Ginger advocated for Maryland to enact the Good Samaritan Law and became one of the faces of the Naloxone Saves Lives Campaign. She played a powerful part in reducing stigma and educating the community on substance use.



Ginger will be missed by many—the families she worked with, the communities she impacted and the colleagues she supported. At MCF, we honor her memory every day by continuing and deepening our work on behalf of families with a loved one with a substance use disorder.

How You Can Support MCF

More than 2,900 families were served in some way by MCF last year. With your help, that connection—to encouragement, to hope, and to the help they need—can happen for many more families across the state. You can amplify MCF's impact by simply connecting others to this work.

MAKE A CONNECTION

- Parents and caregivers of young people with mental health issues; spouses, partners, siblings, parents and other loved ones who care about someone with substance use or gambling issues
- Potential employees seeking a career that offers purpose and meaning
- Potential donors
- Colleagues at your organization or in the community who care about behavioral health issues



Get Involved

SUBSCRIBE

Subscribe to MCF's newsletter and connect on social media to stay informed and inspired as well as to find resources for mental health, substance use, problem gambling, self-care, advocacy, training, support groups and more.

DONATE

Offer a financial gift to support MCF's services and advocacy for families coping with the daily challenges of caring for someone with behavioral health needs.

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