

2022

IMPACT REPORT



Strengthening

MARYLAND FAMILIES

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“As I reflect on the past year, ‘Determined’ is the word that comes to mind.”

Maryland families persevered through many challenges. Our staff, board members, and families continued to push forward together and make a great impact. I couldn't be prouder of the incredible work of MCF.”

LAURA KIMMEL
President, MCF Board of Directors



Founded in 1999, Maryland Coalition of Families is dedicated to connecting, supporting and empowering families with loved ones who are experiencing behavioral health challenges.

We also advocate to improve services and systems that impact individuals with behavioral health challenges and to reduce stigma related to behavioral health.



Our Foundation

Family Peer Support

When someone you love has a behavioral health issue, it can be life-changing to hear from and talk with someone who has gone through similar experiences. Through our support, we help families feel less isolated and alone. We help them to become their own advocates. We help them build confidence in their own abilities and give them a vision for a better future. We help families by:



Providing connections to resources, treatment options and other services



Collaborating with other agencies



Teaching self-care and resiliency



Helping with goal setting and creating action plans

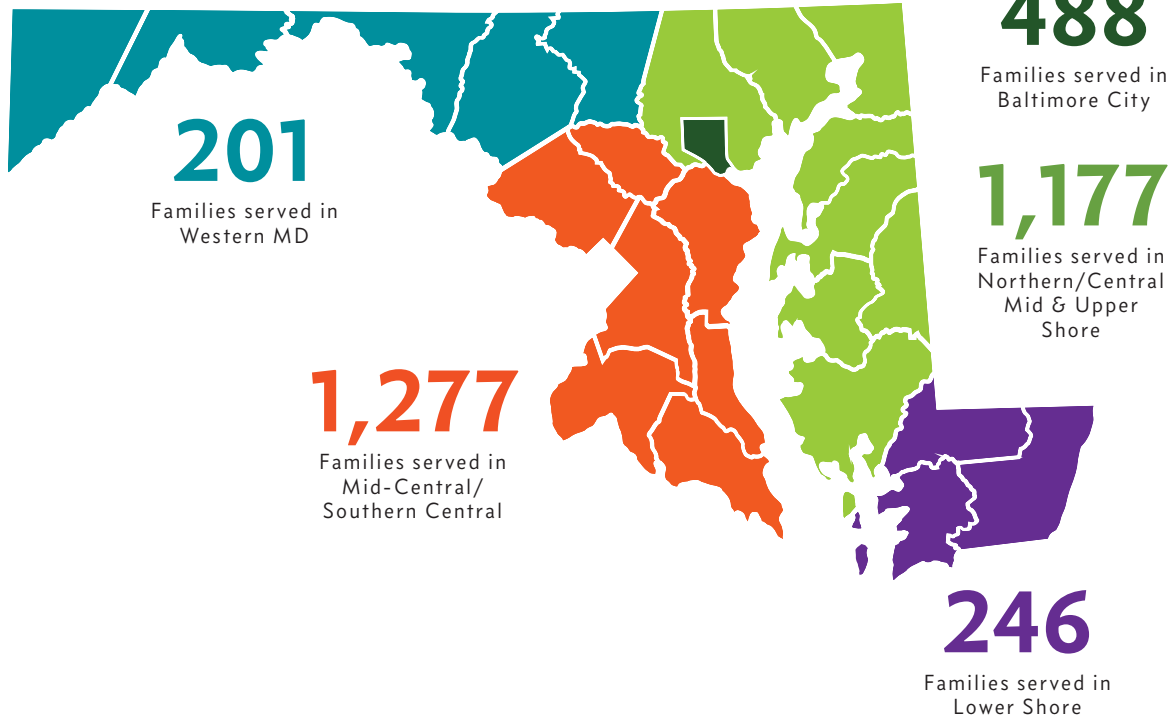


Offering workshops, trainings and support groups

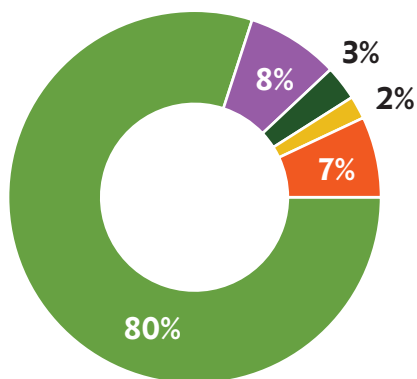


Our Impact

Fiscal Year 2022

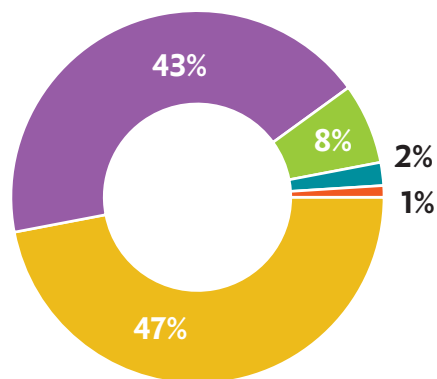


Families Served
by Caregiver Role



- Parents
- Grandparents
- Spouses
- Siblings
- Other Kinship Providers

Families Served by Race



- White
- Black
- Hispanic/Latinx
- Other
- Multi-Racial



**“I am
incredibly
humbled
and proud
to join the
Maryland
Coalition
of Families
team.**

As I reflect on moving forward, ‘Strengthen’ is the word that stands out. It is an active word that to me reflects stability, wellness, renewal, and excitement that we can pass on to the Maryland families we serve.”

CHRISTI GREEN
Executive Director



15,540

Individuals learned about Maryland’s Good Samaritan law, which protects people assisting in an emergency overdose situation from arrest and prosecution for certain crimes



3,465

Families received individualized support for child and adult mental health, addictions to substances or gambling, or involvement with the Department of Juvenile Services



623

Support groups and educational workshops provided opportunities for family members to learn and connect



143

Substance use treatment admissions were facilitated with support from our staff



55

Families became better advocates for their child through Family Leadership Training



Rebecca: One Mom Realizes Her Dreams

In 2018, Rebecca T. was a military mom on her own with three sons, trying to stay afloat. With her husband deployed, Rebecca faced single parenting in a new area with no family support nearby. Her youngest son was less than a year old, and her middle son, aged two, had already been diagnosed with autism. Feeling stressed and alone, she happened to see an MCF brochure at her daycare and made the call. That call connected her with Angie McRae, a Family Peer Support Specialist.

The first time Angie visited Rebecca's home, she jumped right in to help. "Angie listened to me vent while she helped me wash my dishes," Rebecca recalls. "I really appreciated someone listening to me." An accomplished Navy veteran and former government safety officer, Rebecca felt overwhelmed with the responsibilities of single parenthood, especially when it came to the needs of her son with autism.

Angie immediately set about finding ways to reduce Rebecca's stress. "My first thought was, 'How can I help Rebecca create a realistic lifestyle?' My focus was making things more manageable for her so she could focus on her kids and be the best mom she could be."

Knowing the importance of self-care, Angie helped Rebecca find time for much-needed outlets, including an MCF vision board workshop that Angie hosted. In this workshop, participants create a vision board of words and images that help them picture their goals and dreams. "That workshop helped me realize that I really wanted to start my own business," Rebecca recalls. "I knew that would be the best way to express my creativity while having the flexibility to give my kids the care they needed."

As she formulated her plans, Rebecca began to suspect that her youngest son also had autism. "Having been through this with my middle son, I knew the signs, I knew what to look for," she said. "Angie was right there with me through the process of getting a diagnosis."

It turned out that Rebecca was right—her youngest also was on the spectrum. With this news, Angie quickly mobilized to connect Rebecca with support services in her community. "Angie hooked me up with local programs for special needs kids, and even helped me get therapy equipment for my boys," Rebecca said. "She helped me work on Autism Waivers. Angie did whatever she could to help me find answers, at a time when I didn't even know the right questions! She really threw me a lifeline when I was handling all of this by myself."

Now, four years later, Rebecca's life is very different. She's a full-time student, runs a small business from her home, and homeschools her two youngest children. Her sons receive speech and occupational therapy remotely. She's still busy—but now she feels able to handle it all. "I still struggle with making time for myself, but I have so much joy. And I have a great support system! My husband and my whole family are so thankful to Angie and to MCF."

Angie is not the least bit surprised at all Rebecca has accomplished. "I knew she could do it. Rebecca is one of those moms who gives 1,000 percent. She just needed someone to help her see her own potential."





Children's Mental Health Matters! Campaign

For the 14th year, Maryland Coalition of Families was proud to work alongside the Mental Health Association of Maryland to coordinate this annual campaign dedicated to raising awareness of mental health and substance use challenges in youth, decreasing stigma surrounding mental health, and supporting school and community Champions in local communities throughout Maryland.

Each year the Campaign invites Maryland schools, non-profits, businesses and others to come together and participate as a Champion for children's mental health by sharing resources and supports with families. In doing so, these organizations join a vibrant network of like-minded leaders who are committed to doing their part to improve children's well-being. As a result, families benefit by receiving resources, tools and activities that provide learning opportunities and ways to normalize talking with their children about mental health and well-being. This year, 388 schools and 147 community organizations from all over Maryland participated in the Campaign, reaching more than 225,000 students.

Once again, Maryland Coalition of Families was pleased to sponsor the annual Children's Mental Health Matters! poster design contest. With support from their art teachers, students at Maryland's non-public special education facilities created designs that inspire others or help fight stigma surrounding mental health.

This year's winning design was created by a group of four students from Phillips School—Laurel: Theo, Christian, Jack and Terrell. Their piece was entitled "Freedom Through Expression."

Leading the Way to Improved Crisis Services for Maryland Families

This year, Maryland Coalition of Families volunteered to lead efforts to bring the voices of families with young people to the work of improving crisis services in Maryland. In October, MCF surveyed Maryland families on their utilization of crisis services for their child under the age of 21. Responses from 173 families provided rich information about their reasons for accessing crisis services, the type of crisis services they preferred to use, their desired outcome when they reached out for crisis services, and what an ideal crisis services system would look like to them.

Following completion of the survey, in November we brought families together for a series of six focus groups across the state to hone in on the details of their experiences. With the data gained from the survey and focus groups, MCF's Director of Public Policy, Ann Geddes, authored a report entitled "Listening and Learning from Families: Crisis Services and the Experiences of Families Caring for Children and Youth with Behavioral Health Needs" that was shared with the Behavioral Health Administration of the Maryland Department of Health, which is engaged in building a statewide crisis services system for children and youth.

A few key findings of the research:

- The most common reason that families reached out for crisis services was because their child was experiencing "out of control behavior."
- Many families preferred mobile crisis services to law enforcement response or emergency departments.
- Families often hoped that their child's crisis could be resolved in the home, rather than result in a hospital admission.
- Significantly, 39% of families reported that they had used crisis services on four or more occasions in the last three years, suggesting that current behavioral health services for children are often inadequate.

Throughout the year, Ann continued to work toward improving Maryland's crisis response system and reported on the findings of the survey and focus groups.

"Having the perspective of families who use crisis services is so essential to developing an effective system that meets the needs of our communities," Ann said. "MCF is pleased to bring family voice to such an important project."





Denise: **Rising by Lifting Others**

When your child has a drug addiction, the light at the end of the tunnel can be a long time coming. Denise C. is familiar with this reality: her 29-year-old daughter, Courtney*, has struggled with addiction since she was 15 years old. Through the years of ups and downs, Denise never felt like she had someone to talk with who could relate to her experiences. Then, four years ago, she met Amy Young.

"I met Amy through a support group called Parents Affected by Addiction (PABA)," Denise recalled. At that time, my daughter was very heavily into her addiction, and I was pretty much at my wit's end. I knew I needed to do something to help myself. The group was just what I needed--it was so helpful to learn that there are other people in this world who are in the same boat. Amy told me that she worked for an organization called Maryland Coalition of Families, and she could help me with my situation."

Denise discovered that Amy was a wealth of knowledge when it came to local resources. "Amy knew everything that was available in my community to support me as a parent, as well as ways to help my daughter," Denise explained. "Amy connected me to resources for financial assistance, rehab options, law enforcement...even things outside of addiction issues. I had a friend whose child was missing, and Amy even had resources for that situation."

As a Family Peer Support Specialist, Amy knows the importance of setting boundaries when it comes to family members with addiction--something she's helped Denise to do for herself. "Despite everything, my daughter and I are very close," Denise explained. "But I've learned to set boundaries to protect myself. I am careful not to enable my daughter's addiction. I can now say 'no' when I need to. And I've learned that I deserve to have a happy life."

In the last few years, Denise has seen Courtney have periods of sobriety and then relapse again, a painful cycle of hope and disappointment. "She recently had almost a year of being drug free," Denise said. "She got a job, got a car, got her life back in order. Everything was going great. Then she went back to her boyfriend, and everything changed. As a parent, it's so heartbreaking."

"One of the things Amy recommended was to get a therapist for my own mental health support," said Denise. "I did that, and it has been a huge help. Amy is just so encouraging. She gives me different books to read, sends me inspirational quotes, tells me about speakers she has heard that I should listen to. All of it helps keep me going."

As Denise's Family Peer Support Specialist, Amy feels good about the progress that Denise has made through their work together. "Denise is such a strong woman," Amy said. "She accepts that it's okay for her to be okay, even if her daughter is not. As parents, it takes a long time to get to that point."

Today, Denise encourages other parents in the PABA support group, who have children in different stages of addiction. "Denise has even helped me when I'm having a bad day," Amy said. "And that's a sign of growth. Regardless of what's going on in her personal circumstances, she gives to those around her. There's a saying we have in our support group—'We rise by lifting others.' Denise is a great example of that."

Legislative Advocacy:

Making Family Voices Heard in Annapolis

In 2022, Maryland Coalition of Families helped to draft and/or advocated for bills to:

- Eliminate the need for a Voluntary Placement Agreement (which involves temporarily relinquishing custody of a child to Social Services) for children who meet the medical necessity criteria for Residential Treatment Center level of care, but do not have a non-public school placement on their Individualized Education Plan (IEP). The bill passed.
- An omnibus behavioral health bill that sought to:
 - › Preserve and increase grant funding for community peer support networks for both substance use and mental health.
 - › Strengthen the Targeted Case Management and the 1915(i) programs, which provide intensive community-based services for children with mental health needs.
 - › Expand the number of Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics (CCBHCs) in the state.

Due to its substantial cost, the bill did not pass, but some components will be brought back in the 2023 legislative session as separate bills.

In addition, MCF submitted testimony in favor of a bill that would expand the protections of the Good Samaritan Law, which failed to pass, and a bill to end the practice of “balance billing,” which occurs when a person seeks behavioral health treatment outside of their insurance network because there were no in-network providers available. This bill did pass. In summary, MCF submitted testimony on dozens bills that would improve conditions for families with a loved one with behavioral health needs, the majority of which were successful.

Family Day in Annapolis

On February 2, Maryland Coalition of Families hosted Family Day in Annapolis, which was held virtually this year. This annual event brings together family members, mental health service providers and system partners to learn about important bills during the legislative session and hear about best practices when meeting with legislators. Afterward, participants engaged in pre-arranged virtual appointments with their legislators to share their stories and express their concerns. This year, 151 parents and caregivers from all over Maryland took part in the event.

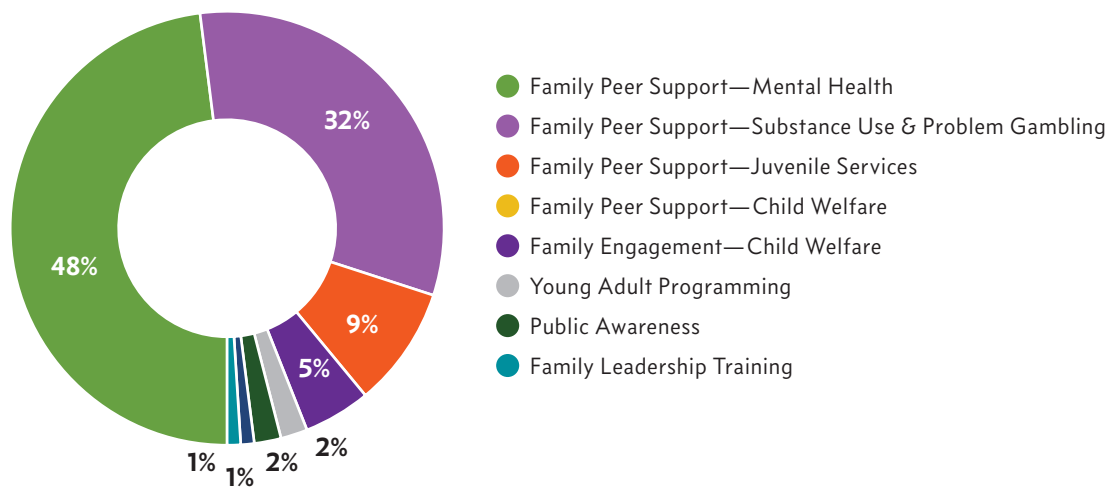


Grant Revenue

Fiscal Year 2022

MCF's revenue totaled approximately \$5.7 million in Fiscal Year 2022 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.*



Our Funders

Our deepest thanks to the agencies that support MCF's work:

Anne Arundel County Mental Health Agency (AACMHA)
Behavioral Health System Baltimore (BHSB)
Calvert County Core Service Agency (CSA)
Charles County Department of Community Services
Calvert County Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC)
Charles County Advocacy Council for Children, Youth, and Families (LMB)
Howard County Government
Howard County Health Department
Maryland Department of Health, Behavioral Health Administration
Maryland Department of Human Services
Maryland Department of Juvenile Services
Maryland State Department of Education
Opioid Operational Command Center
Prince George's County Health Department
Queen Anne's County Community Partnerships for Children & Families (LMB)
St. Mary's County Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC)



Family Peer Support: **An Inside Look with Lynn Cook**

Lynn Cook is a Family Peer Support Specialist who supports families with an adult loved one with mental health challenges. She has a family member with bi-polar disorder.

What do you find rewarding about being a family peer support specialist?

"When I'm able to connect someone with a resource, a service, or another person going through similar challenges, I feel such a sense of accomplishment. Sometimes I see a family member physically relax when they learn about something or someone who can help them get through the thing they're dealing with. That is such a powerful feeling for me. I did that. I brought a little bit of peace to someone just now. Extending a helping hand to another person who's struggling makes my life feel more meaningful."

What parts of your own story do you share with the families you support?

"I share anything I think would be helpful! I don't hold anything back if it's relevant. But I don't overshare either. I wait for the right moment, and if I think my experience would help them, or guide them, or open their minds to new ways of thinking, I share."

What do families who have a loved one with mental health concerns need the most—and how do you meet that need?

"Being an FPSS is all about creative problem solving! It seems every family needs something different. That's the beauty of peer support—we

tailor our service to the individual. By listening non-judgmentally, we find out what they need and then figure out how to help them get it."

What do you wish people understood about mental health issues?

"People with mental health issues are just like everyone else. They need to feel accepted. They need to feel heard. They need to feel loved."

If you could change one thing about the medical/treatment system for mental health, what would it be?

"I wish more providers were open to including families as part of the care team. Families know their loved ones better than anyone. Their insights and observations are valuable—critical even—to finding the right treatment."



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