



Family Focus

Suicide Prevention Awareness Month



This September, we focus on the urgent need for awareness and action around suicide prevention, especially when it comes to our children. It's a time to educate our community on how to recognize the signs of emotional distress in children, reach out for support, and create spaces where open conversations about mental health are not just encouraged, but normalized.

Children and teens are at a critical point in their mental health journey, and it's essential that we don't wait for crisis to strike before stepping in. Early intervention and support can make all the difference in preventing suicidal thoughts and behaviors. By coming together, we can raise awareness, reduce stigma, and make sure that every young person knows there is always hope, and there is always help.

At MCF, we are committed to offering family peer support, resources, and a compassionate listening ear to families facing mental health challenges. We want every family to know they are not alone. Suicide Prevention Awareness Month is an opportunity to reinforce that together we can prevent tragedies and support one another through life's toughest moments.

If you or someone you know is struggling, don't hesitate to **call or text 988**, the 24/7 crisis lifeline for suicide prevention, mental health, and substance use support.

Let's work together to make this month a time of awareness, action, and healing for children and families everywhere. ***Every life is worth saving.***

988 Lifeline

Warning Signs in
Children

Help Shape Our Upcoming Webinars: We

Want to Hear From You!

We offer free webinars for families and caregivers of loved ones facing behavioral health challenges.

Your voice matters, and we want to make sure our future webinars cover the topics that are most important to you.

Tell us what you want to learn more about by completing the quick poll at the link below. We're here to support you, and we're listening to what families need.



[Complete Poll Here](#)

Understanding IEPs: What Families Should Know

An Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a legally binding plan designed to ensure that students with disabilities receive the support and services they need to succeed in school. The IEP process can feel overwhelming, but families don't have to navigate it alone.

Here are a few helpful reminders:

- Start early: If you have concerns, you can request an evaluation, don't wait for a diagnosis.
- You have rights: As a parent or caregiver, you're a key member of the IEP team.
- Be prepared: Bring your questions, concerns, and any helpful documentation (like therapist notes or schoolwork samples).
- Follow up: After the meeting, make sure services are being provided as agreed, and stay in touch with your child's teachers and support staff.



Need help preparing for or understanding your child's IEP? Our Family Peer Support Specialists are here to support you! They can help you review documents, prepare for meetings, and feel more confident advocating for your child.

[Top 10 Things to Know About IEP Meetings](#)

Howard County Family Leadership Program

We're excited to announce the Fall session of our Family Leadership Program in Howard County! This **free, 2-day in-person training** is designed for parents and caregivers of school-aged children facing mental health challenges. Don't miss out on this valuable opportunity to gain new skills and support!



Workshops will include information about:

- understanding your child's behavioral health needs.
- learning to navigate special education services and other systems you and your family rely on.
- finding your voice to be the best advocate for your child, yourself, your family, and your community.
- gaining insight into why self-care is essential for caregivers' well-being and their ability to support loved ones.

The training is free and includes meals and overnight accommodations. Support for childcare and transportation expenses is also available if needed.

Space is limited for this event to 20 participants who live in Howard County.

Program Dates: Friday, November 7th & Saturday, November 8th

Application Deadline: October 17th

To learn more, view a sample program agenda, or apply for the Program, please visit our website at the link below.

**Learn
More**

Please note that this program is only available to residents of Howard County and individuals who have already participated in this program are not eligible to reapply.

Watch our website and your email inbox for opportunities coming up in your area!

Words of Encouragement from our Family Peer Support Specialists



This Suicide Prevention Month, we invited our staff to share messages they hope families will remember: messages of comfort, hope, and strength during difficult times.

Here are the words they felt most needed to be heard:

"You don't have to be strong all the time. Vulnerability is strength, too. Let yourself lean on others." - Carolyn Blades, Family Peer Support Specialist

"Tell on yourself - talk to someone about what you are thinking." - Kimberly Shoe, Caregiver Advisor Program Administrator

"Your life has value and more meaning than you know." - Aricka Washington, Family Peer Support Specialist

"The world needs you whether it feels like it or not." - Karen Duffy, Executive Director

As you read these reflections, may you find reassurance that you're not alone, and that even in the darkest times, there is always a path forward, and a community that cares.

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 are 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](#)

MCF 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 - Substance Use - Bilingual (Must live in Baltimore City)**
- **Family Peer Support Specialist - Substance Use (Must live in Worcester County)**
- **Family Peer Support Specialist - Mental Health (Must live in Washington County)**

[Employment Opportunities](#)



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