



# Family Focus

## Celebrating Black History Month

Each February, Black History Month offers an opportunity to honor the achievements, resilience, and leadership of Black Americans throughout history. It is also a time to recognize the pioneers who have shaped the way we understand mental health, trauma, community healing, and the importance of culturally responsive care.



Leaders such as Bebe Moore Campbell, who founded National Minority Mental Health Awareness Month, worked tirelessly to reduce stigma and increase access to care in Black communities. Dr. Joy DeGruy brought national attention to the concept of historical and intergenerational trauma, helping professionals and families better understand the long-term impact of systemic inequities. Decades earlier, Dr. Mamie Phipps Clark conducted groundbreaking research on the psychological effects of racism on children, work that continues to inform conversations about identity, belonging, and mental wellness today.

Black History Month also calls us to reflect on the disparities that still exist in behavioral health access and outcomes. Stigma, lack of culturally responsive services, and systemic barriers have long impacted Black children and families seeking care. As an organization dedicated to supporting families, we reaffirm our commitment to equity, inclusion, and ensuring that all children and caregivers, regardless of race, background, or circumstance, have access to compassionate, high-quality behavioral health services. We believe that honoring the legacy of these pioneers means continuing their work: listening to families, amplifying community voices, and building systems that truly support every child's opportunity to thrive.

## Thank You for Making Family Day a Success!

More than 100 families from across Maryland gathered in Annapolis on February 12th for our annual Family Day, sharing their experiences with lawmakers and advocating for stronger children's behavioral health services and protections.



Throughout the day, families heard updates about the future of Maryland's children's behavioral health system, learned more about emerging concerns such as the impact of social media and online gaming, and received information about current and proposed legislation affecting children and youth. Most

importantly, parents and caregivers met directly with legislators to speak candidly about the challenges they face and the supports their children need to thrive. Their stories reflected concerns shared across the state, including access to affordable care, the availability of local services, and the protection of special education supports.

We are deeply grateful to every family member who took the time to attend, share their voice, and stand up not only for their own children but for families across Maryland. Your courage, honesty, and commitment to creating meaningful change are what make this event so powerful year after year. Because of you, policymakers heard firsthand what matters most to families, and together we continue building a stronger, more responsive behavioral health system for our children.

Use the buttons below to view our [Legislative Watch List](#) and subscribe to our email list to receive [Advocacy Action Alerts](#).

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## Family Peer Support for Service Members

Military families face unique challenges, including frequent relocations, deployments, long separations, and the stress that can come with constant transitions and uncertainty. These experiences can affect the emotional and behavioral health of the entire family, and caregivers often carry a significant responsibility in supporting their loved ones while also managing their own well-being. The demands of military life can be isolating, and finding the right support can make a meaningful difference in a family's ability to thrive.



We provide family peer support for caregivers of veterans and service members, as well as caregivers who are veterans or service members themselves. Our Family Peer Support Specialists understand military life firsthand and offer guidance, encouragement, and help navigating services.

No matter where you live in Maryland, we have an FPSS ready to support you, someone who truly understands the unique challenges of military families and ensures that help is always within reach.

[Request Services Now](#)

## Next Month is Problem Gambling Awareness



Next month is Problem Gambling Awareness Month, a time to bring greater attention to an issue that is often misunderstood. Gambling is frequently viewed as entertainment or simply a financial matter, but problem gambling is a behavioral health concern. Like other mental health challenges, it can affect a person's mood, relationships, school or work performance, and overall well-being.

For young people especially, the growth of online gaming, sports betting, and digital platforms has blurred the lines between gaming and gambling, increasing exposure and risk in ways many families may not immediately recognize.

Problem gambling can co-occur with anxiety, depression, substance use, and trauma, and it can create significant stress for individuals and their families. Because it is not always openly discussed, warning signs may be overlooked and stigma can prevent people from seeking help.

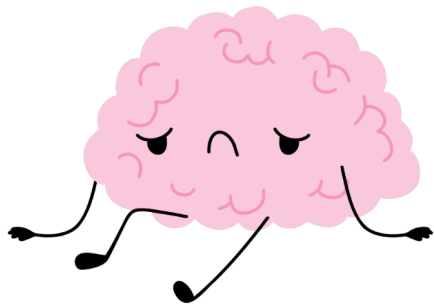
Problem Gambling Awareness Month is an opportunity to start conversations, increase understanding, and remind families that support is available. By recognizing problem gambling as a mental health issue, we can encourage early intervention, reduce stigma, and ensure that children, youth, and caregivers receive the care and compassion they need.

Visit our website to learn more about the problem gambling support services and resources available to individuals and families.

[Read More](#)

## Resource Spotlight

### Helping Children Cope with Seasonal Affective Disorder During the Winter Months



Winter can take a real toll on kids' mental health, especially during an especially cold season like this one, when it feels like winter has been dragging on for months. With shorter days and less sunlight, you may notice changes in your child's mood, energy, sleep, focus, or motivation. Seasonal affective disorder (SAD) is a type of depression that follows a seasonal pattern, and in children it can sometimes show up as irritability, low energy, or difficulty keeping up with school and activities.

This helpful resource from the Child Mind Institute explains what signs to look for and offers practical, evidence-based strategies, like increasing exposure to natural light, encouraging time outdoors and physical activity, maintaining consistent sleep routines, and seeking professional support when needed.

If winter has felt especially long and heavy this year, you're not alone, and there are meaningful steps families can take to help kids feel brighter and more supported until spring arrives.

Click the link below to read more.

[Explore This Resource](#)

## 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 - Substance Use (Must live in Baltimore City)
- Family Peer Support Specialist (Bilingual) - Substance Use (Must live in Baltimore)
- Controller - Home Based (Must live in Maryland)

[Employment Opportunities](#)

*We're here because we've been there too*



# Thank you to our Family Voice Advocate Sponsors

These generous donations helped support Family Day in Annapolis, an event that empowers families to share their voices and advocate for their needs.



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[www.mdcoalition.org](http://www.mdcoalition.org)



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