May 2025

Family Focus

MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH

At the Maryland Coalition of Families, mental health awareness isn't just something we recognize in May - it's woven into everything we do, every day of the year.

We know that mental health journeys are made up of countless moments - some big, some small, all meaningful. We celebrate them all with you. Whether it's a breakthrough in therapy, a successful IEP meeting, a calm morning after a tough week, or simply making it through the day. These are victories, and they matter.

Since January 1st, we've hosted **101 support group sessions**, **37 workshops**, and **13 family fun events**, while distributing **9,415 resources** to families across the state. Additionally, we've supported **120 IEP and 504 meetings** in that time.

While these numbers highlight the incredible work of our Family Peer Support Specialists, they only scratch the surface of the true impact on the families we serve. Our support groups create a sense of community, reassuring families that they are never alone in their journey. The workshops we offer equip parents and caregivers with the knowledge and tools they need to confidently navigate their path forward. The resources we provide help families bypass the uncertainty and trial-and-error process of seeking support for themselves and their loved ones. Additionally, by attending IEP and 504 meetings alongside families, we help alleviate the stress, fear, and anxiety parents often feel about their child's educational journey.

Our work is grounded in honoring your experiences and walking beside you without judgment. We uplift mental health awareness by listening deeply, advocating fiercely,

and making space for healing - however it looks for you and your family.

As national attention focuses on mental health this month, we're reminded that for us, this work never begins or ends in May - we're with you all year long.

Still, Mental Health Awareness Month offers a meaningful moment to come together, amplify our voices, and take collective action. It's a great time to get involved and connect with others who care. Visit our events page to explore upcoming mental health events. We'd love to have you join us!

MCF Events

Get Help Now

Keep the Momentum Going: Champion Children's Mental Health All Year

Every year, during the first week of May, the Children's Mental Health Matters campaign brings together non-profits, schools, and agencies to raise awareness about children's mental health. This campaign aims to:

- Increase public understanding of the importance of children's mental health and substance use.
- Combat stigma surrounding mental health issues by encouraging open conversations.
- Connect children and families with resources for prevention, support, and treatment of mental health conditions.

How you can stay involved:

- Raise awareness: Share educational materials, social media posts, and personal stories to spark conversation in your community.
- Support local events: Attend or volunteer at events, webinars, or workshops dedicated to children's mental health.
- Spread kindness: Offer encouragement and support to children and families affected by mental health challenges.

Together, we can make a difference in the lives of children and families and foster a community of support and understanding.

Children's Mental Health Resources

Leading with Heart: A Young Advocate's

Mental Health Story

This month, we're proud to spotlight a remarkable young advocate who is using her lived experience to uplift others and spark open conversations about mental health.

At just 17 years old, Skylar Blades has been navigating mental health challenges for nearly eight years. "It took me a long time to feel comfortable enough talking about it to want to improve and change how things were in my head," she shared. "Since I have my own struggles, mental health and things to do with it have always been things I've felt very strongly about."

Her advocacy is rooted in a desire to help others feel less alone. "I know how I felt and still sometimes feel, and I don't want anybody else to feel the same way. And if they do, I want them to have the courage to get help."

This passion for making a difference led her to actively engage in advocacy, including attending MCF's Annual Family Day in Annapolis, where she had the opportunity to speak directly with her legislators about the importance of mental health support for youth. By sharing her story and advocating for change, she's helping ensure that the voices of young people are heard in spaces where decisions are made.

She believes that speaking openly about mental health is key to breaking stigma and building support. "Mental health is such a hard thing to deal with, but it's even harder when you don't have anybody supporting you," she explained. "By having these open conversations, we can create a space where individuals feel empowered to seek help and share their experiences without fear of judgment."

She reminds us that mental health advocacy has the power to make lasting change, not just for individuals, but for entire communities. "When the mental health in the community has improved, it will be an all-around better place with much happier people. When the community is happier, the people in it contribute to a more supportive and understanding environment."

Through her honesty and courage, she's helping create that environment - one conversation at a time.

Join us in continuing the conversation.

Share your story, check in with someone you care about, or explore local mental health resources. We can build a world where no one struggles alone.

A Gift in May Helps Support Our Work Long

After the Month Ends

This month, we seek to raise awareness and decrease the stigma experienced by people who live with mental health challenges.

Bet let's not forget the people who love them.

Parents and caregivers who love someone with a mental health disorder experience a range of emotions - sadness, grief, anger, frustration, fear, shame, guilt.

But when they work with a Family Peer Support Specialist, they also feel hope, courage, and optimism because they are seen and heard by someone who has been where they are.

Your contribution to MCF ensures that those who love someone with a mental health disorder get the care and support they need.

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

Donate Today!

MCF's Commitment to Staff Wellbeing: Summer Fridays

At the Maryland Coalition of Families, we prioritize the mental health and well-being of our staff. Recognizing that summer is a valuable time to spend with loved ones, MCF offers all staff Friday afternoons off starting at 12 p.m. during the summer months, beginning May 23rd.

Please note this schedule change and plan accordingly with your Family Peer Support Specialist if needed. We appreciate your understanding and hope you also take time for self-care this summer!

If you require immediate assistance for yourself or your loved one, please contact 988. If you need behavioral health resources, please visit our website.

Visit our Website

988 Lifeline

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

MCF is growing, and 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.

- **Supervisor - Behavioral Health (Homebased - Must Live in Baltimore or Harford County)**
- **Supervisor - Behavioral Health (Homebased - Must Live in Cecil, Caroline, Dorchester, Kent, Queen Anne's, or Talbot County)**
- **Training Manager (Homebased - Must Live in Maryland)**

Employment Opportunities

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Donate

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