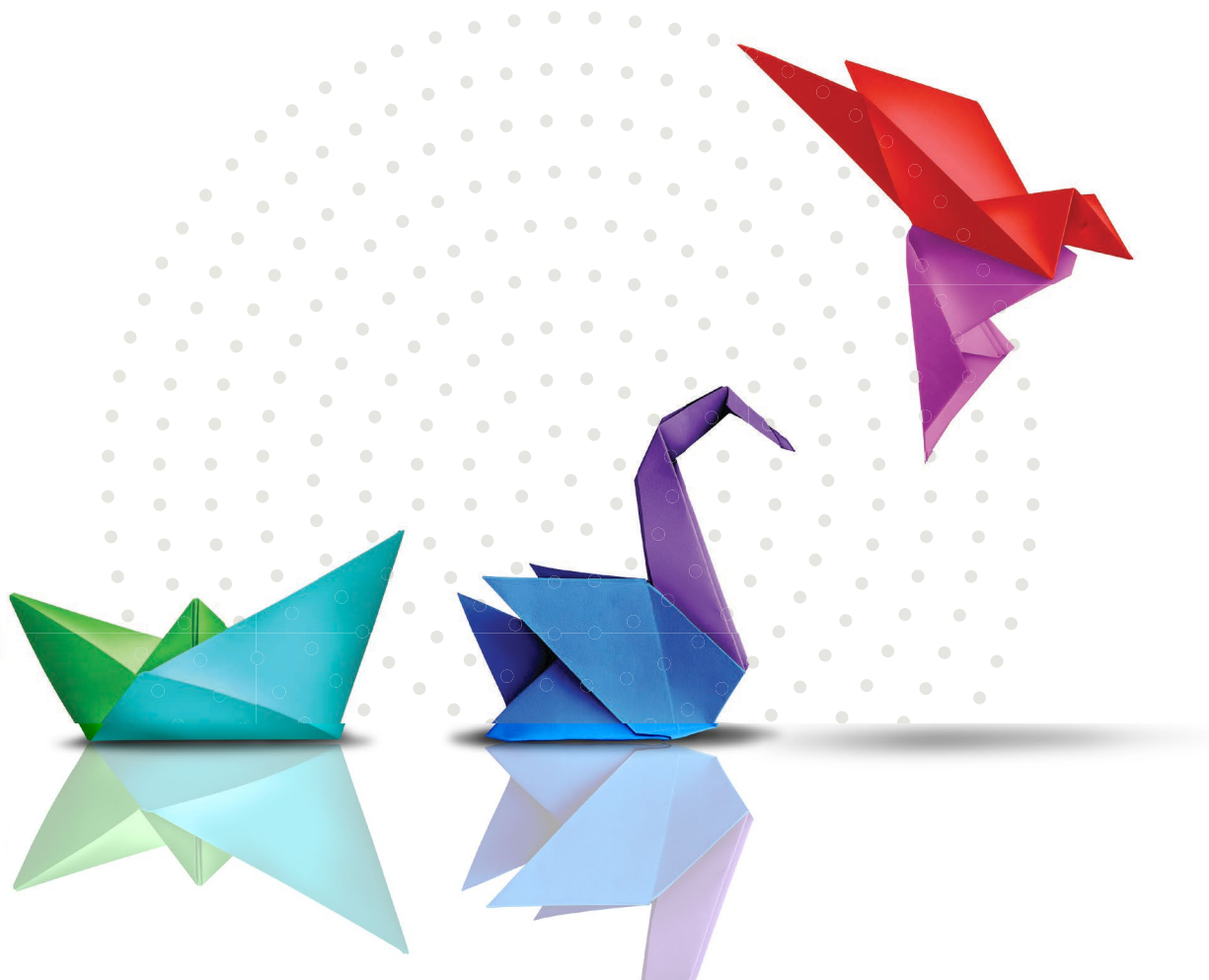




Leading the Way

FOR MARYLAND FAMILIES





Ready to Face the Challenges

It's no secret that communities across the country are facing unprecedented mental health and substance use crises. With high demand for services and treatment and a shortage of behavioral healthcare professionals, the need for family peer support has never been greater.

Data contained in our FY23 Impact Report support this. During this past fiscal year, Maryland Coalition of Families served 33% more families than we did in FY22 and twice as many as we served in FY21. Partners, funders, school personnel, behavioral health professionals and families all recognize the value of working with a Family Peer Support Specialist. In fact, in May 2023, the Biden-Harris Administration identified expanding access to peer support as a core strategy in its efforts to combat the nation's mental health crisis. This all points to what we already know – family peer support is a vital component to behavioral healthcare services.

This past year, we made tremendous progress toward positioning the organization to continue meeting the demands for our services. We developed a new strategic plan, took critical steps to diversify our funding sources, and built the infrastructure necessary to support administrative as well as programmatic functions. For example, we simplified the process for requesting our services by embedding the referral form directly on our website. Then we expanded our Referral Specialist team to keep pace with the increased requests for services. These simple yet effective steps ensure a quick and efficient connection to a Family Peer Support Specialist so families can get the help they desperately need.

While we're taking care of our communities, we also recognize the need to take care of our staff. Their work is demanding, seemingly endless, often traumatic and

incredibly important. Many staff members work all day to support others, then go home to face ongoing challenges within their own families. We are committed to building a supportive, understanding and inclusive culture that provides staff with opportunities to pay attention to their own self-care. For example, we closed the organization between Christmas and New Year's Day to give staff paid time off to spend with their families without having to take leave. During the summer months, we closed the office at noon on Fridays so our staff could get an early start to their weekend or just spend some time doing something for themselves. We hope that these gestures demonstrate to our staff just how grateful we are for all that they do each and every day to make the road a little easier for the families who turn to MCF for help.

As we reflect on this past year, we do so with a sense of pride and optimism for the future. MCF is well-positioned to grow and expand to keep up with the needs of Maryland families, build new partnerships to strengthen our presence in the community and demonstrate how connection through lived experience is vital for those who love someone with a behavioral health challenge.

We hope you will continue this journey with us and thank you for your support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Christina A. Green". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping "C" and a long, horizontal stroke at the end.

Christina A. Green
Executive Director



Founded in 1999, Maryland Coalition of Families is dedicated to connecting, supporting and empowering families who have loved ones with 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 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.



Navigating complex systems of care.



Teaching self-care and resiliency.



Offering emotional support, guidance and hope.



Offering workshops, trainings and support groups.

Our Impact

Fiscal Year 2023

Western Maryland:

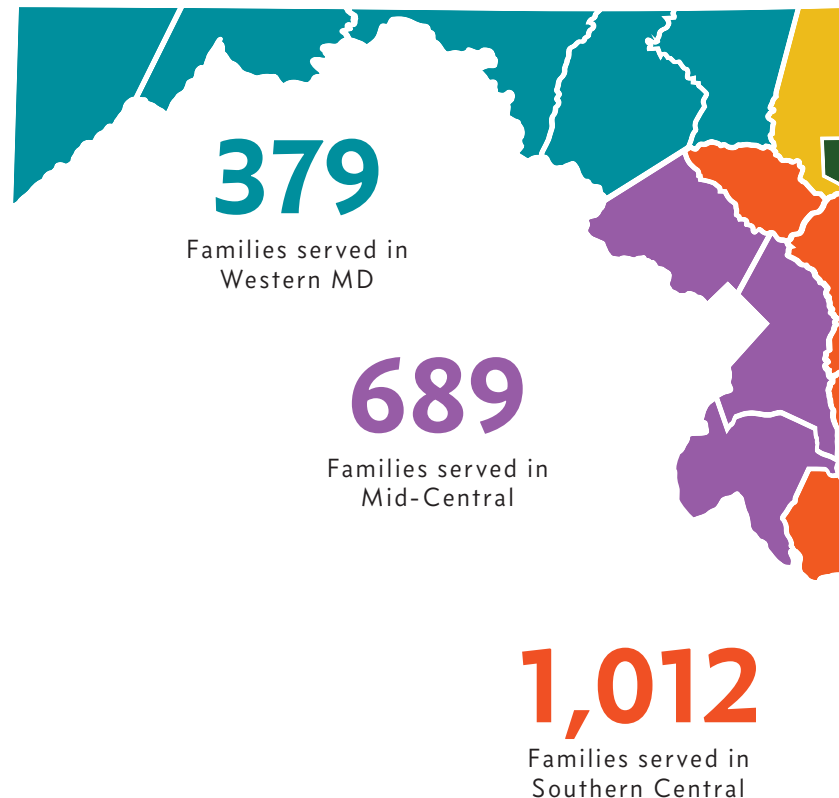
Family Day at the Frederick Keys baseball game and the Rollin for Recovery Skating Party to honor people in recovery and their families were just two of the successful events this energetic team hosted this year. They also set up a Winter Wonderland Holiday shop where people impacted by substance use or homelessness could pick up items for their family members to celebrate the holiday season.

Mid-Central Maryland:

The Mid-Central team brought families together to build support systems and strengthen family bonds last year, hosting holiday parties, going to fall festivals and attending the Bethesda Big Train baseball game and a Lady Terps Basketball game.

Southern Central Maryland:

The Southern Central team shows up for the community in so many ways. From hosting a Drum Circle to facilitating a budget workshop, they find unique and helpful ways to support their families. The team co-hosted a Town Hall in their region to discuss trends in teen substance use. Two members of the team received their certificates as Strengthening Families facilitators and another is serving her second term on the Board of Directors for the Anne Arundel County Mental Health Agency.





570

Families served in
Baltimore City

720

Families served in
Northern Central

711

Families served in
Mid & Upper Shore

471

Families served in
Lower Shore

Baltimore City:

This team always finds new ways to reach Baltimore families! This year they participated for the first time in the Baltimore Pride Parade to show their support for the LGBTQ+ community. They also partnered with St. Francis Neighborhood Center, sharing office space and connecting with more families.

North Central Maryland:

This phenomenal team has built strong partnerships within their community to benefit the families they serve. Whether they are panelists speaking to Baltimore County Public School staff, supporting with residents at the Eastside Family Shelter or participating in the Wellness Fair at St. Agnes Hospital, the team is reaching families who need us most!

Mid/Upper Central Maryland:

Staff on this team always go above and beyond and set lofty goals! This year two members renewed their national Family Peer Support certification. They hosted 3 Active Parenting Workshops, hosted 6 different support groups each month and held 4 family fun events!

Lower Shore:

The Lower Shore team believes fun is a great way to connect, support and empower the families in their community. This year, they hosted their families at a water park, a Shorebirds baseball game, at the Festival of Lights where they decorated a tree and ate pizza at the beach where kids learned to fish and crab.

Statewide:

Our new statewide team is comprised of our Referral Specialists, Taking Flight staff and Family Peer Support Specialists helping families across the State who speak Spanish or have a loved one with a Problem Gambling challenge. With a streamlined intake process and new "easy access" referral button on our website, the Referral Specialists processed almost 2,000 referrals last year! Our Problem Gambling Family Peer Support Specialist assisted 78 families and our Spanish Speaking Family Peer Support Specialist helped 147 families!



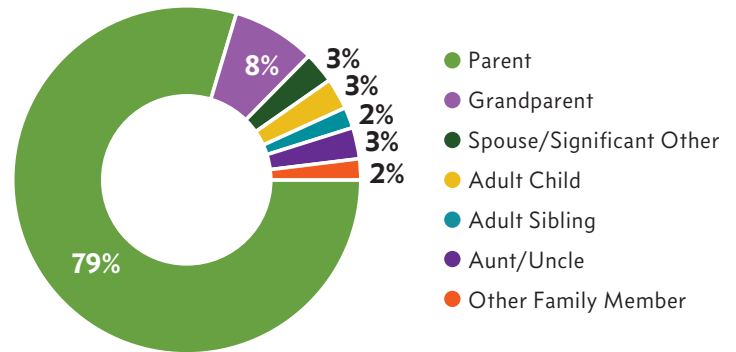
**MCF
Served
4,603
Families**



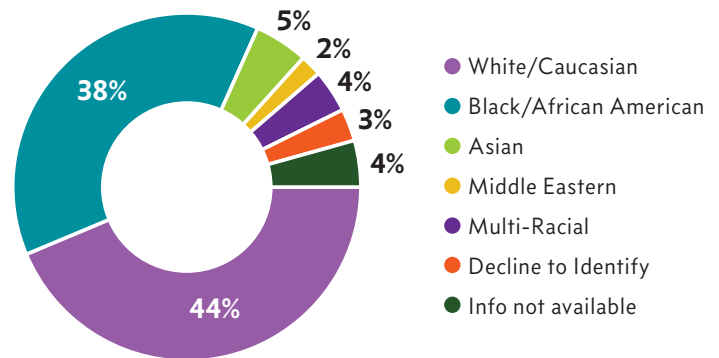
**A 33% Increase
over FY22**



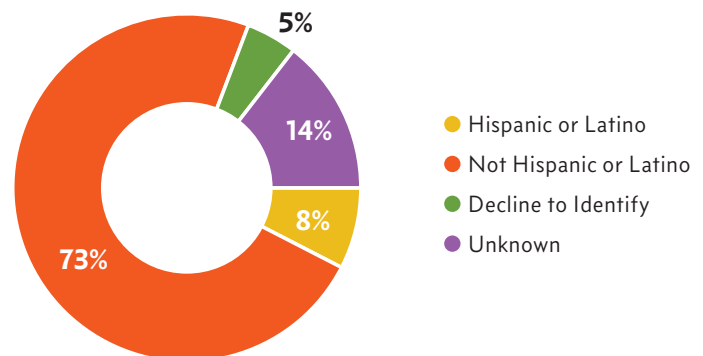
Families Served by Caregiver Role



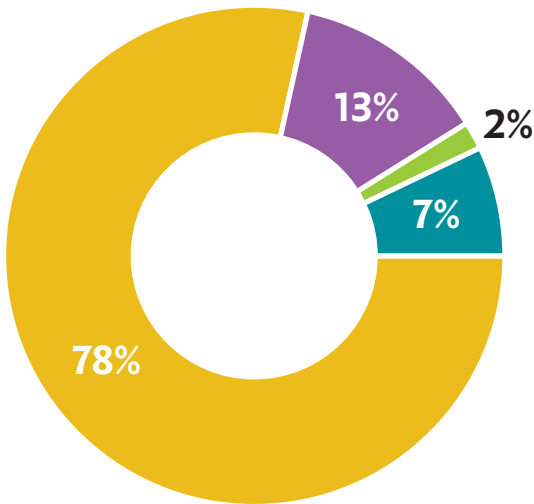
Families Served by Race



Families Served by Ethnicity



Reason for Seeking Services



- Mental Health
- Substance Use
- Problem Gambling
- Co-occurring

Resources Provided by Category

- #3 Cultural: 28
- #3 Education: 667
- Educational Support: 10
- Emotional: 159
- Employment: 105
- Financial: 200
- Substance Use & Recovery: 435
- Housing: 270
- Legal: 151
- Recreation/Fitness: 332
- Safety: 563
- #1 Self-Care/Stress Management: 1705
- #1 Social: 55
- #2 Specialized Treatment: 742
- Summer Camp: 3
- Transportation: 40
- Treatment: 406
- Unknown: 106



708

Support groups to help families connect and build natural support networks.

21

Educational workshops to give families the tools they need to thrive.

30

Family fun events to provide opportunities to just spend time together as a family.



Cory: **Emerging Stronger**

Cory Turner started to notice behavioral changes in her son that concerned her shortly after his father returned home from 8 years of military service overseas. Uncertain what was happening, Cory started with finding a therapist for her son and advocating for additional support for him at school.

But then something happened that Cory wasn't at all prepared for. Her son's father made false allegations against her and an investigation by child protective services was launched. Cory didn't see her son for 33 days. She didn't know whether her son was seeing his therapist or getting the classroom support she knew he needed. Cory was frightened, isolated, and uncertain about what to do to fight the allegations, regain custody of her son, and help him heal from this traumatic experience. Further, she felt judged, bullied and confused by the myriad of systems she had no experience navigating.

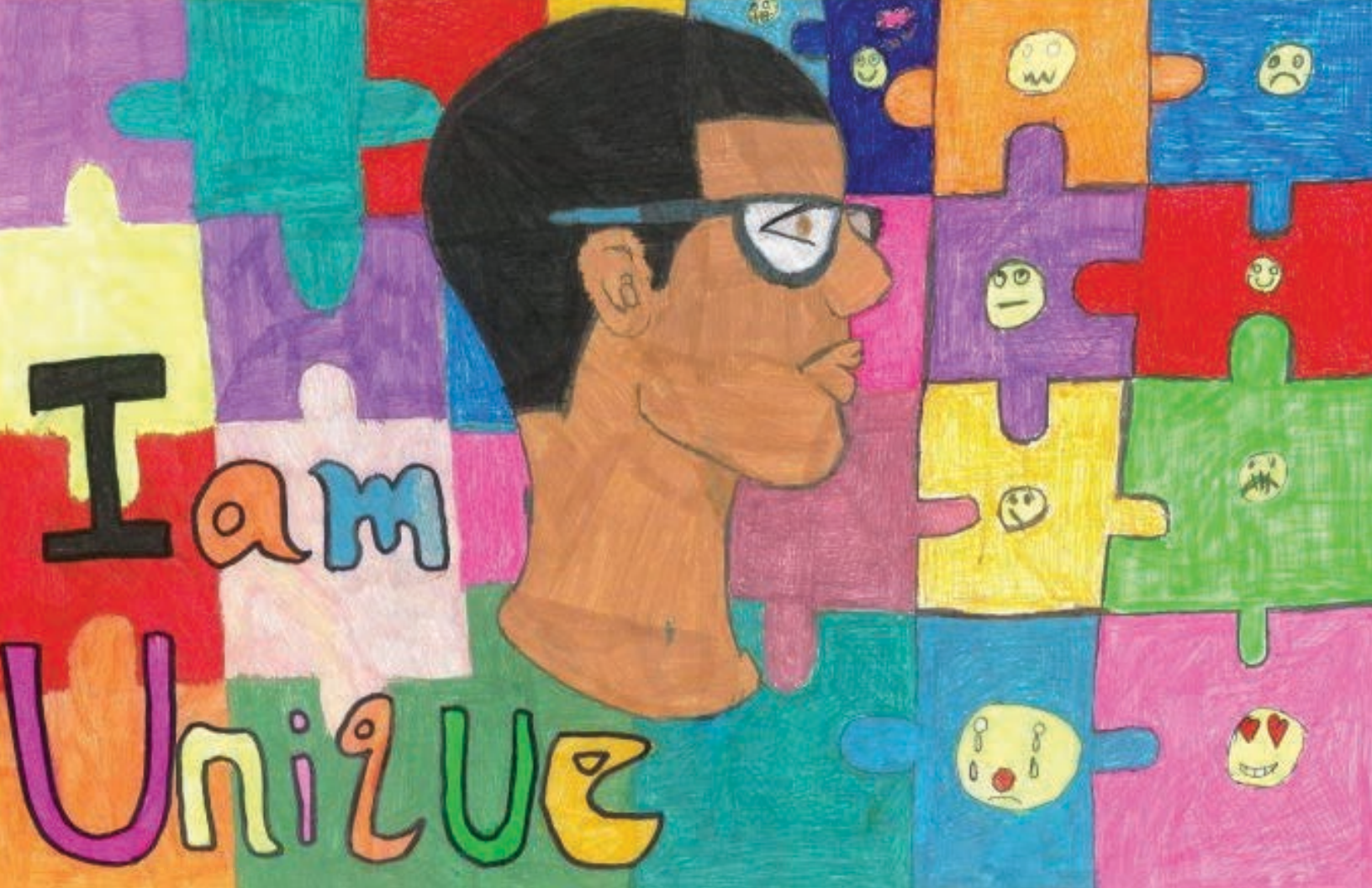
Then Cory heard about MCF from her Local Care Team and was connected with Kimberly Shoe, a Family Peer Support Specialist with lived experience navigating the same systems Cory now found herself in. Kim offered Cory a perspective and answers no one else could. She provided Cory with the emotional support she needed to meet the challenges ahead and served as a model of hope and resiliency. She helped Cory learn to advocate for herself and her son. Kim attended court hearings with Cory and provided her with critical resources to navigate the web of systems Cory was caught up in. Kim focused on Cory's well-being, reminding her that self-care is critical and teaching her ways to take care of herself so she could take care of her son. Cory believes that Kim's support is what made the awful circumstances she was in bearable. "The support and resources provided by MCF have made a significant impact on my well-being. By offering me

a sense of belonging and connection, they have helped alleviate the feelings of loneliness and isolation," Cory says. "Additionally, the local resources that have been shared have been instrumental in furthering my journey towards healing and personal growth. I am deeply grateful for the support, as it has empowered me to navigate through parenting with greater confidence and resilience."

With a successful resolution to her involvement with child protective services and a workable custody plan in place, Cory began to wonder how she could support other families going through similar situations. She remembers how alone, frightened, confused and worried she felt and believes that no family should have to face these challenges alone.

Today, Cory is an MCF Family Peer Support Specialist, helping other families the way Kim helped her. Cory and her colleagues walk alongside the families they help and offer them something no one else can – a voice of reassurance, a model for resiliency and hope for a path forward.

Family Peer Support isn't just about helping families through difficult times. It's about helping them build their confidence, find their voice and emerge stronger than before. It's about empowering them to be their own champion and their loved one's hero. And for many parents and caregivers who receive family peer support services, the experience is so transformational that they want to give to others what they received from their Family Peer Support Specialist. This is the essence, the beauty and the importance of Family Peer Support.



Children's Mental Health Matters! Campaign

Once again, Maryland Coalition of Families collaborated with the Mental Health Association of Maryland on the Children's Mental Health Matters Campaign to raise awareness of mental health and substance use challenges in youth, decrease stigma surrounding mental health, and support school and community Champions throughout Maryland.

Each year the Campaign invites Maryland schools, non-profits, businesses and others to participate as a Champion for children's mental health by sharing resources and supports with families. These organizations represent a vibrant network of like-minded leaders who are committed to doing their part to improve children's well-being. Their efforts provide families with resources, tools, activities and learning opportunities to normalize talking with their children

about mental health and well-being. **This year, Maryland Coalition of Families was joined by 181 Community Champions and 352 School Champions to reach over 212,860 students and their families.**

As part of the Children's Mental Health Matters Campaign, Maryland Coalition of Families sponsors a contest for students to draw what mental health and wellness feels like to them. The winning submission serves as the campaign poster for the year. This year's winner was Irving, a student artist at The Foundation School of Montgomery County.



Families Show Up to Advocate in Annapolis

More than 200 families from across the State joined MCF for our annual Family Day in Annapolis, our first in-person Family Day since 2020! Howard County Executive Calvin Ball, State Comptroller Brooke Lierman and Dr. Maria Rodowski-Stanco, Director of Child, Adolescent and Young Adult Services at the Maryland Department of Health Behavioral Health Administration spoke to parents, caregivers, and youth about their commitment to building equitable behavioral health systems that work for all Marylanders.

Family Day participants then had the opportunity to meet with elected representatives from their districts to share their story and advocate for legislation important to them and their families. Family Day in Annapolis is just another way MCF brings family voice into important conversations!





Cindy: A Path to a Brighter Future

Cindy steadfastly supported her son during years of substance use challenges. His struggles escalated rapidly after high school, marked by stays in peer recovery houses, encounters with law enforcement, and prolonged absences from the home. Recognizing the severity of his situation, Cindy helped him enter a residential treatment facility in Texas.

During treatment, he met a woman facing similar challenges, and they began building a family. Later, they returned to Maryland, moving in with Cindy to raise their growing family, which now included three children. Unfortunately, her daughter-in-law's mental health severely declined after the birth of her third child, and their lives took an unexpected turn when Cindy's son left the home, leaving Cindy and his wife to care for the children. Soon after, Cindy's daughter-in-law left the home as well, leaving her three small children in the care of Cindy.

During this time, Cindy remained uncertain about the type of treatment, if any, her son and daughter-in-law were seeking. Balancing support for her son, daughter-in-law, and grandchildren was difficult, especially as the children struggled to understand their parents' emotional distance. Nevertheless, Cindy remained determined to provide a stable and loving home for her grandchildren.

Amid these challenges, Cindy found a ray of hope in Amy Young, a Family Peer Support Specialist (FPSS)

from MCF. Amy, who was caring for children close in age to Cindy's grandchildren, became a reliable pillar of support. Cindy says her life profoundly changed when she found MCF. She received valuable resources, guidance, and the emotional support she desperately needed during that turbulent first year.

The challenges intensified during the COVID-19 pandemic, yet MCF and Amy stood beside Cindy. She ensured the children had essential school supplies for remote learning and offered vital emotional support during these trying times. She also facilitated Cindy's connection with a kinship care coordinator from the Department of Human Services, broadening her network of support and linking her to financial benefits. Additionally, Amy arranged for counseling services for the children at their school, helping them cope with the emotional toll of their parents' absence.

Reflecting on this remarkable journey, Cindy expressed her gratitude, acknowledging, "I don't know if I would be where I am today without MCF." With Amy's unwavering support, her home is a sanctuary of love and stability for her grandchildren, illustrating that, even in adversity, a grandmother's love can illuminate the path to a brighter future.

Legislative Advocacy:

Elevating Family Voice in Annapolis

MCF is proud of the work done during the 2023 Maryland General Assembly to pass several critical bills aimed at improving services and systems for individuals with behavioral health disorders and their families. We submitted written testimony on 25 bills and our Director of Public Policy, Ann Geddes, provide oral testimony on 6 of those bills, many of which ultimately passed and have been enacted into law.

Collaborative Care: Since pediatricians and primary care providers are common prescribers of psychiatric medications, this bill supports the collaboration and consultation between physical health and behavioral health providers to ensure the patient is receiving the best possible care. The Collaborative Care Model is a best practice across the country and its adoption in Maryland will improve services to people with behavioral health disorders.

Strengthening and Sustaining 988: In July 2022, the 10-digit Suicide Prevention Lifeline telephone number was replaced by 988. People who need to talk to someone or are experiencing a mental health crisis can call this number to connect with a trained counselor who can provide support and appropriate intervention as needed. Last session, the Maryland General Assembly authorized funding to ensure that Maryland's 988 services are well-funded and ready to meet the needs of people with behavioral health challenges now and in the future.

Expanding Access to Wraparound Services for Children: Targeted Case Management and 1915(i) are two programs that provide wraparound support to families who have a child with significant mental health challenges. This session, the General Assembly acted to improve and expand these programs, improve training on wraparound services, increase reimbursement rates for care coordination organizations and promote the use of evidence-based practices.

Several bills critical to behavioral health were passed during the 2023 General Assembly session, while others pieces of legislation fell

short of passing. **MCF is committed to ensuring family voice is represented and reflected in legislation that impacts our families.**





Business Champion: Host Hotels and Resorts

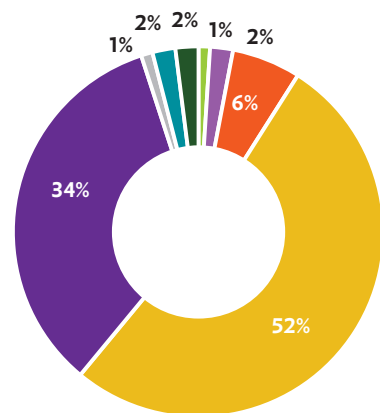
With the support of Host Hotels and Resorts and their employees, MCF has expanded efforts to raise awareness about children's mental health and reduce the stigma surrounding behavioral health disorders.

Grant Revenue

Fiscal Year 2023

MCF's revenue totaled approximately \$6.2 million in Fiscal Year 2023 with grants accounting for 98% of this total. This chart represents this grant revenue broken down by program category.

*Administration is covered by program grants revenue.



- Family Engagement - Child Welfare
- Family Leadership Training
- Family Peer Support - Child Welfare
- Family Peer Support - Mental Health
- Family Peer Support - Substance Use & Problem Gambling
- Public Awareness
- Young Adult Programming
- Unrestricted Donations/Interest Income

Our Funders

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

Anne Arundel County Mental Health Agency, Inc.
 Baltimore City Department of Social Services
 Behavioral Health System Baltimore, Inc.
 Calvert County Health Department Local Behavioral Health Authority
 Cecil County Local Management Board
 Charles County Government, Department of Community Services
 Host Hotels and Resorts
 Howard County Government, Department of Community Resources and Services
 Maryland Department of Health, Behavioral Health Administration
 Maryland Department of Human Services, Social Services Administration
 Maryland State Department of Education
 Maryland Department of Health
 Opioid Operational Command Center
 Prince George's County Health Department
 Queen Anne's County Community Partnerships for Children and Families, Local Management Board
 The University of Maryland, Baltimore



Dear Friends of MCF,

This year, Maryland Coalition of Families is proud to have supported more families than at any other time in our history.

In addition to the expansion of critical infrastructure and the funding opportunities we built to sustain this growth, we also worked to enact legislation that will significantly improve the lives of people who have behavioral health challenges and those who love them.

As MCF's Board President and a personal recipient of MCF's family peer support services, I am both heartened by these achievements and forever grateful for the essential services MCF has provided to my family.

Our dedicated staff, volunteers, and supporters have worked tirelessly to ensure that MCF continues to be a beacon of support, guidance, and advocacy for families navigating the challenges of behavioral health and other life-altering circumstances.

But our work doesn't stop here. In the coming year, we are committed to expanding our reach, refining our programs, and strengthening our partnerships. Our mission to connect, support and empower families who

have a loved one with behavioral health challenges and advocate to change systems that impact them remains at the core of everything we do.

I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to our supporters, volunteers, and donors who have made our work possible. Your belief in our mission has been a driving force behind our success.

I hope as you explored this year's report, you learned how Maryland families have found hope, resilience, and empowerment through our peer support programs and the impact we have made together creating new policies in Maryland. We are excited about the journey ahead, and we look forward to your continued support and partnership in the years to come.

With gratitude and optimism,

Laura Kimmel
Board President

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Shelley Stokes-Hammond
Aaron Vander Meer
Yojinde Paxton

Christina Green, Executive Director





Lydia: Unwavering Dedication

Lydia and her husband made a remarkable gesture to open their home to a family they encountered through their church community. Their initial offer of help and support gradually evolved into a heartfelt commitment when they became the primary caregivers to the family's young daughter. Though already raising two children of their own, Lydia and her husband lacked the skills and experience needed to care for a child who had experienced traumatic events at such a young age.

Lydia's determination to provide the young girl with all the support she required underscored her dedication. Lydia's biological children were homeschooled, leaving her with limited knowledge of the intricacies of the public school system and the available accommodations for students. Lydia had two goals in mind: to gain a comprehensive understanding of the public school system and to educate herself on the impact of trauma. Notably, the young girl's brother also temporarily resided with Lydia's family, resulting in Lydia becoming the primary caregiver for both siblings. This difficult period was marked by violent outbursts at home and resulted in intervention from the Department of Social Services which led Lydia and her family to MCF.

Her encounter with MCF was a pivotal turning point in her journey. She learned about IEPs, safety plans, crisis de-escalation, and much more. Additionally, Lydia's participation in MCF's Family Leadership Institute ignited a newfound passion within her for advocating within the school system and supporting others in need. Her dedication led to her becoming a certified therapeutic foster parent, further enhancing her capacity to provide care and support to those who needed it most. The young girl remained under Lydia's loving care until she reached the age of 18.

Reflecting on her transformative experience, Lydia acknowledges that MCF played an instrumental role in fostering her passion for helping others through recovery. Through her advocacy efforts, she has discovered her voice and continues to make a profound impact on the lives of those she touches with her unwavering compassion and dedication.



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