



MCF
maryland coalition of families

Family Focus

Celebrating Autism Acceptance Month

This month we celebrate Autism Acceptance Month with open arms and open hearts! Let's come together as a community to honor the unique experiences and perspectives of individuals on the autism spectrum. From sharing inspiring stories of resilience to promoting understanding and inclusion, we embark on a journey of acceptance and appreciation. Join us as we spread awareness, embrace diversity, and foster a world where every individual is valued just as they are.



Discover the various ways to celebrate Autism Acceptance Month with your loved ones! Whether it's attending virtual events, participating in sensory-friendly activities, or educating others about autism, there are countless ways to show your support.

If you're a caregiver of someone with autism and need support or resources, Maryland Coalition of Families is here for you. Together, let's celebrate acceptance, understanding, and love.

[Learn More About Autism Spectrum Disorder](#)

Alcohol Awareness Month



April marks Alcohol Awareness Month, a dedicated time to acknowledge the complexities of alcohol consumption and its impact on individuals and communities. Throughout this month, the spotlight is on educating and informing about the risks associated with alcohol use.

One critical aspect of addressing alcohol use is the support provided by family peers. Families can offer invaluable support, understanding, and guidance to their

loved ones navigating alcohol-related challenges. Whether it's through active listening, encouragement to seek professional help, or engaging in therapy sessions together, family peer support plays a vital role in fostering a supportive environment for recovery.

By nurturing open communication and empathy within families, individuals grappling with alcohol misuse can feel empowered to take positive steps towards healing and wellness. Let's join hands to raise awareness, extend support, and cultivate a culture of understanding and compassion throughout Alcohol Awareness Month and beyond.

The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) offers a wealth of research-based resources related to alcohol misuse. These resources are free, cover many topics, and are available in multiple languages.

NIAAA Resources

We're Here Because We've Been There Too

Staff Spotlight: April Adams

April's journey began with her son's health issues as an infant, requiring frequent hospital visits for physical ailments. Navigating insurance was tough, but she fiercely advocated for him at hospitals, ensuring he received the necessary care. Signs of autism emerged early, and her son faced challenges typical of the spectrum, including repetitive behaviors and social difficulties.

Despite these obstacles, April secured an Individualized Education Program (IEP) early on, recognizing his academic potential while acknowledging his social struggles. From uncertain beginnings in school to thriving academically on the honor roll from 5th to 12th grade, her son's journey was a testament to April's advocacy and his own perseverance.



As her son embarked on his college journey, April worried that she wouldn't be there to provide the immediate support and guidance he might need. The transition to college marked a significant step towards independence for her son, but it also meant April wasn't kept in the loop as closely as before. She had always been his primary advocate and confidante, and the thought of not being there for him every step of the way was difficult.

College posed new challenges beyond academics. Despite his intelligence, he really struggled with classes, not due to any lack of ability but because he didn't have the same level of support he had at home. He found himself confronting a whole new world of responsibilities and social dynamics.

The pandemic added another layer of difficulty, disrupting her son's treatment for physical ailments and further complicating an already challenging situation. Despite these obstacles, April remained steadfast in her support for her son, facing each challenge with love and determination.

Her son's achievements, from obtaining his driver's license to maintaining employment and forging meaningful connections, were a testament to both his resilience and April's unwavering support. Throughout it all, including the complexities of IEPs, care coordination, and Psychiatric Rehabilitation Programs (PRPs), April remains steadfast in her support for her son. She faces each challenge with love, always ready to navigate whatever comes next.

April is just one of MCF's Family Peer Support Specialists, serving families in the Mid and Upper Shore regions. Like many of her colleagues, April offers a monthly support group in the region called Building Family Bonds. Please visit our website to learn more about April's support group and all the support groups offered by MCF across the State.

[MCF Support Groups](#)

2024 Maryland General Assembly Session Recap

Maryland Coalition of Families is proud of the bills we helped pass during the 2024 Maryland General Assembly and we are committed to continuing to advocate for measures that didn't advance as far as we hoped. We were gratified by the support of our community and the families we support, who answered the call when we asked them to contribute their voices to the conversations about proposed legislation. MCF's Executive Director, Christi Green, and Policy & Advocacy Associate, Ashley Tauler, testified a combined 32 times. In addition, Ashley helped 13 people who have a loved one with a behavioral health challenge prepare their own written or oral testimony.



These efforts resulted in the passage of 7 of the 11 bills MCF supported this legislative session. Visit our 2024 Maryland General Assembly Recap webpage below!

[Maryland General Assembly Recap](#)

Parent CRAFT

A Tool to Guide Conversations About Substance Use

Parent CRAFT is a self-paced online video course that teaches parents the skills they need to meet the risks of substance abuse. Parent CRAFT is based on the proven CRAFT method and is for parents who know their youth is using substances or who need support to help their child accept treatment.



The course is designed to empower parents to build effective communication skills and teaches participants how to use positive reinforcement and natural consequences to help their child break the cycle of using substances. Parent CRAFT has a 71% success rate at getting adolescents to accept professional help and is shown to decrease episodes of anger, anxiety, depression and negative physical symptoms that impact the entire family.

[Register](#)

Parent CRAFT is made freely available to parents in Maryland by the National Center for School Mental Health at the University of Maryland School of Medicine, with funding from the Maryland Behavioral Health Administration and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

Looking Ahead

May is Mental Health Awareness Month

Its not too early to plan ahead for Mental Health Awareness Month and there are numerous ways to get involved:

Educate yourself: Take the time to learn about different mental health challenges, their symptoms, and available treatments. Understanding is the first step towards acceptance and support.

Share your story: Your experiences with mental health can have a profound impact on others. Consider sharing your journey to help reduce stigma and inspire hope.

Advocate for change: Use your voice to advocate for better access to mental health care, improved policies, and increased funding for mental health services in your community.

Support others: Reach out to friends, family members, or colleagues who may be struggling with their mental health. Offer a listening ear, empathy, and resources for support.



Participate in events: Attend mental health awareness events, workshops, or seminars in your area. These events provide opportunities to connect with others, learn from experts, and contribute to the conversation.

Together, let's work towards building a more accepting and supportive society for all individuals affected by mental health conditions. Join us in promoting mental health awareness and acceptance this May and beyond.

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!

[Upcoming Events](#)

MCF Employment Opportunities



The Maryland Coalition of Families was recently awarded the **Bell Seal for Workplace Mental Health** by Mental Health America. This honor recognizes employers committed to creating mentally healthy workplaces. Join us in a workplace that values positive mental health and wellness! Check out our current 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.

- Program Manager (Remote Worker - Must Live in St. Mary's, Charles, or Calvert County)
- Bilingual Family Peer Support Specialist
- Bilingual Team Supervisor

Employment Opportunities



www.mdcoalition.org



Donate

Maryland Coalition of Families | 8950 State Route 108, Suite 223, Columbia, MD 21045
www.mdcoalition.org

[Unsubscribe kduffy@mdcoalition.org](mailto:kduffy@mdcoalition.org)

[Update Profile](#) | [Constant Contact Data Notice](#)

Sent by karen@marylandcoalitionoffamilies.ccsend.com powered by



Try email marketing for free today!