

Maryland School Mental Health Alliance*

Family Involvement in School-Based Mental Health Information for Families and Caregivers

Definition

Families who are well informed and supported are able to be stronger advocates for their children with mental health needs. Families who understand their own child's specific needs can assist school staff in developing the best strategies for classroom success. With family advocacy groups providing support, families can give one another coping skills and the benefit of their own experiences. Educators and school mental health providers who understand that families generally are the ones most knowledgeable about their own children will be more likely to find a returned respect and spirit of collaboration.

Why do we care?

- Informed families are in a better position to help their children
- Positive family and staff interaction help to achieve overall positive school climate
- Children have more school success when families are involved in their education
- Schools with strong family involvement see greater student achievement
- School staff and families who work collaboratively for a student will be more likely to have student cooperation

What can we do about it?

- Join advocacy and support groups for families
- Educate yourself about mental health diagnoses in children and adolescents
- Join PTA and other school committees
- Work in a spirit of mutual respect and cooperation with school staff to insure success for your child in school
- Learn more about PBIS, or other positive school programs in your child's school
- Continue involvement into the middle and high school years
- Continue to advocate, in a positive frame of mind, even when things do not go the way you would hope

Key Resources/Links

Maryland Coalition of Families for Children's Mental Health

"The Maryland Coalition of Families for Children's Mental Health is a grassroots coalition of family and advocacy organizations dedicated to:

- Improving services for children with mental health needs and their families
- Building a network of information and support for families across Maryland"

www.mdcoalition.org 410-730-8267, Toll Free 1-888-607-3637

NAMI Maryland

“NAMI Maryland is an advocacy organization for family and friends of people with serious mental illness, and people who have a mental illness.”

<http://md.nami.org/> 410-863-0470, Toll Free Helpline 1-800-467-0075

Mental Health Association of Maryland

“The Mental Health Association of Maryland works to ensure that people with mental illness reach their rightful place as participation, productive members of our community.”

<http://www.mhamd.org/> 410-235-1178, Toll Free 1-800-572-MHAM (6426)

Learning Disabilities Association of Maryland

“Learning Disabilities Association of Maryland promotes awareness and provides support to maximize the quality of life for individuals and families affected by learning and other disabilities.”

<http://www.ldamaryland.org/> 1-888-265-6459

CHADD/Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder Maryland Chapters

“CHADD is the nation’s leading non-profit organization serving individuals with AD/HD and their families.”

Local chapters are in Baltimore City and Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Harford, Howard, and Montgomery Counties.

<http://www.chadd-mc.org/>

American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry. *Facts for Families.*

“The AACAP developed Facts for Families to provide concise and up-to-date information on issues that affect children, teenagers and their families.” Fact sheets are available on line on topics such as childhood depression, Lying, Grief, Grandparents Raising Grandchildren and Grief. These are a small sample of the topics.

http://aacap.org/cs/root/facts_for_families/facts_for_families

Knowledge Exchange Network

The website for the National Mental Health Information Center, a component of the Substance abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. This website provides information on a multitude of topics. Examples of topics available are: “Your Child’s Mental Health: 12 Questions Every Parent Should Ask”, “The Myth of the ‘Bad’ Parent”, “Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder in Children and Adolescents”.

<http://www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/>

Reference

Lowie, J. A., Lever, N. A., Ambrose, M. G., Tager, S. B., & Hill, S. (2003). Partnering with families in expanded school mental health programs. In M. D. Weist, S. W. Evans, N. A. Lever (Eds.) *Handbook of School Mental Health: Advancing Practice and Research*, pp. 135-147. Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers: New York, NY.

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