HOWARD COUNTY MENTAL HEALTH COMMUNITY ACTION COUNCIL (MHCAC)

Fall Newsletter-Back to School

August 2025

Who are we...

The Howard County Mental Health Community Action Council was created in 2018 in partnership with Howard County Pubic Schools and the Howard County Local Children's Board. The MHCAC is made up of over 180 members from the community who are interested in removing barriers and building awareness for mental health support in Howard County for our children and families.

We meet the first Friday of every month from September to June. If you are interested in attending our monthly meetings, please email Cynthia Schulmeyer-Coordinator, Psychological Services at cynthia_schulmeyer@hcpss.org.

Howard County Mental Health Resources

Grassroots Crisis Intervention
24/7 mental health assistance and walk-in clinic. Crisis servcies available.
https://grassrootscrisis.org

Howard County Health Department
Howard County health and medical resource.
https://www.howardcountymd.gov/health

Howard County Health Department-Behavioral Health Navigator:
Howard County Health Department for mental health resources.
https://www.howardcountymd.gov/health/behavioral-health-navigation

Howard County Public Schools Mental Health Supports
https://www.hcpss.org/supports/mental-health-wellness/

NAMI-National Alliance on Mental Health
Mental health organization dedicated to improving the lives of individuals and families affected by mental illness.
https://namihowardcountymd.org

Howard County Network of Care
Resources for mental health services in Howard County.
https://mentalhealth.networkofcare.org/howard-md/HealthCare

HC DrugFree
https://hcdrugfree.org

Howard County Behavioral Health Road Map
Review of mental health process.
https://www.howardcountymd.gov/office-local-childrens-board/youth-behavioral-health

988 SUICIDE & CRISIS LIFELINE
24/7 CALL, TEXT, CHAT

Community Events

AUGUST

August 25th- First Day of School

SEPTEMBER

Sept 27th 9:00-12:00
Howard County Public School Family Academy Kick-Off
https://www.hcpss.org/f/news/25-26-kickoff-flier.pdf

Sept 27th 9:00 am
Howard County Health Department-Out of the Darkness, Suicide Prevention Walk
https://afspwalks.donordrive.com/HoCo

OCTOBER

Oct 1st HC DrugFree's Fall Parenting Class Registration Opens
https://hcdrugfree.org

Oct 4th 9:00-12:00
Every Step Counts Autism Walk
https://autismsocietymd.org/walk-5k-run/

Oct 25th 10:00-2:00
HC DrugFree Medication Disposal
https://hcdrugfree.org/drug-take-back-day-1/

TOP 10 TIPS

TO HELP YOUR CHILD HAVE A SUCCESSFUL START TO THE SCHOOL YEAR

1. Set a regular routine
2. Reset regular eating and sleeping routines
3. Prepare ahead for transitions
4. Address concerns early
5. Encourage a positive mindset
6. Stay involved and ask about their day
7. Be Visual and use a family calendar
8. Create a homework-friendly space
9. Support and practice coping skills
10. Encourage open communication by listening

MORE RESOURCES FOR BACK TO SCHOOL

https://childmind.org/resources/back-to-school/

https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/gradeschool/school/Pages/back-to-school-tips.aspx

https://www.kidsmentalhealthfoundation.org/mental-health-resources/anxiety/helping-children-minimize-back-to-school-anxiety

https://biglifejournal.com/blogs/blog/powerful-ways-to-manage-school-anxiety?srsltid=AfmBOopqRiam2ZElkbWCafRs0OlCPwkL4Kc5N8R5rHqZ7TdGMrmqhcPC

Back to School Worry and Anxiety

It's normal for kids and teens to feel worried or anxious about going back to school. We can help by preparing them for the change and listening to their concerns. One way to make it easier is by getting back into a regular routine for sleeping, eating, and doing schoolwork. Make sure they wake up and go to bed at the same time each day. You can also take a family trip to the school or plan the bus route together to help them feel more comfortable. Using a calendar in a central place can help the whole family stay on track with what's coming up, so everyone feels more organized and less stressed. Remind your child of the fun parts of school—friends, favorite subjects, or exciting activities. This can shift their focus from anxiety to excitement. Let your child know they can talk to you about any worries, big or small. Regular check-ins can help catch issues before they get too overwhelming. Help your child understand that it's okay if things don't go perfectly at first. Encourage them to focus on learning and getting better, not on being perfect.

****Please note that resources and information provided in this newsletter is just a sample of what is available and not an all inclusive list. For more information on mental health topics please use the links listed in the Howard County Mental Health Resources. You can also reach out to the the Howard County Health Department Behavioral Health Navigator at 410-313-6240 or bhnavigator@howardcountymd.gov.

If you or a loved one are experiencing a mental health crisis, call/ text 988.**

COPING SKILL CORNER

According to Johns Hopkins, coping can be defined as the efforts we make to manage situations we perceive as potentially harmful or stressful. To help your child develop strong coping skills, focus on building their ability to handle new experiences, transitions, social situations, adversity, and disappointment. Coping skills can be developed by encouraging your child to engage in activities that help them understand, express, and communicate their feelings. It is essential for children to learn how to recognize and manage negative or upsetting emotions, and anything that helps them feel better or calmer can be considered a coping strategy. For example, help your child explore their five senses and create a list of activities that brings them comfort and calm—what do they enjoy seeing, feeling, hearing, smelling, or tasting? This can help them become more aware of what soothes them personally. To support this process, consider creating a designated calm-down space in your home and using visual aids to help your child recognize different emotions and think through possible solutions to the challenges they face.

COPING SKILL RESOURCES

https://copingskillsforkids.com/coping-skills-in-school

https://www.strong4life.com/en/emotional-wellness/coping/healthy-coping-strategies-for-kids

https://mentalhealthcenterkids.com/blogs/articles/coping-skills-for-teens

https://www.samhsa.gov/mental-health/children-and-families/coping-resources

https://challengingbehavior.org/docs/Calm-Down-Area_Tipsheet.pdf

https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/about/community-health/johns-hopkins-bayview/services/called-to-care/develop-battery-coping-skills

FRIENDSHIP SKILLS

Developing friendships is one of the most important developmental tasks of the school years, one that has lasting positive impacts well into adulthood. Not every child is on the same developmental path when it comes to learning how to develop and maintain friendships. Making friendships is a lifelong exercise in skill building. As parents of school aged kids, we can help our children build these valuable friendship skills.

Here are some tips for parents:

1. **Free up time in your child's schedule to have time for friendships, with play dates or hang outs as well as some unstructured time.**
2. **Reduce interests that undermine friendships from developing, such as solo video gaming.**
3. **Encourage your child's interests that naturally attract friendships: dance, sports, music, robotics teams, acting, etc.**
4. **Use organized activities to help your child find friends such as scouting groups, 4-H, and other extra-curricular clubs.**
5. **Your child may prefer one or two closer friends to a larger group of friends.**
6. **Take time to listen about your child's friendship struggles.**
7. **Problem-solve together with your child about how to meet new people, begin friendships and ways to work through challenges with friendships.**
8. **Expand and improve your own network of community friends - build potential friendships from these networks.**
9. **Encourage your children to make wiser choices in their friendships as they go through their own learning process about the nature of friendship.**
10. **Help your child understand the differences between "levels" of friendship- acquaintances, larger friend groups, and an inner circle of trusted friends.**

FRIENDSHIP SKILL RESOURCES

https://sunshine-parenting.com/10-friendship-skills-every-kid-needs/

https://www.kidsmentalhealthfoundation.org/mental-health-resources/relationships/helping-kids-build-friendships

Kennedy-Moore, Eileen and McLaughlin, Christine (2017): Growing Friendships: A Kids Guide to Making and Keeping Friends. https://a.co/d/1ffz6xD

Frankel, Fred (2010) Friends Forever: How Parents Can Help Their Kids Make and Keep Good Friends; Jossey-Bassey. https://a.co/d/8BK7oME

The books listed above are available at Howard County Library

http://hclibrary.org