

Children's Mental Health Awareness Week 2021



May 2nd - 8th



Join us for

Parent Learning & Support

Visit www.gearparentnetwork.org to register or call 1 (800) 264-9224



May is Children's Mental Health Awareness Week/Month. Join us at our events and activities listed in Red below and wear a green ribbon as it brings awareness about the importance of children's mental health and to show that positive mental health is essential to a child's healthy development from birth. A positive outcome of these uniquely challenging times is that we are aware of and talking about our mental health more than ever. According to MentalHealth.gov, "Mental health includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel, and act. It also helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make choices. Mental health is important at every stage of life, from childhood and adolescence through adulthood." That said, our perception of mental health and learning to care for it - like we do our physical health - begins in childhood. It's time we "flip the script on mental health" and think of it as all "healthcare"!

Androscoggin, Cumberland, Oxford & York Counties

Rebecca Williamson, CFPS, Regional Parent Support Coordinator, Ph: 207.713-2268 or Email: rwilliamson@crisisandcounseling.org

"ACEs, Being a Trauma-Informed Parent: Linking Childhood Trauma to Long-Term Health & Social Consequence" Presented by Rebecca Williamson, CFPS, Regional Parent Support Coordinator

Traumatic childhood experiences such as abuse, neglect, domestic violence, or substance abuse in the home can have long-term physical, psychological, behavioral and economic consequences. The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study demonstrates the connection between childhood trauma and a wide array of physical & mental health problems. Despite the trauma in their lives, children can survive and even thrive. Protective factors, including healthy relationships with parents and caregivers, foster resilience in children and help them to overcome early adversity.

Tuesday, April 5, 2021 from 1-3 p.m.

Supportive Educational Workshops, **Special Events and Activities** listed in red print and are offered **FREE** to parents/grandparents/caregivers/educators of children with emotional or behavioral health concerns! For safety during the Coronavirus Pandemic all workshops/events are virtual as a webinar by GoToMeeting™ with pre-registration. Cancellations/changes are posted on the G.E.A.R. Parent Network Facebook page.

"Take Action Against Bullying" Presented by Rebecca Williamson, CFPS, Regional Parent Support Coordinator

Bullying has become such a widespread problem it is now being recognized as a major mental health concern for children and youth, having been found to leave long-term emotional scars and psychological effects similar to anxiety disorders and post-traumatic stress. This workshop will help you identify the warning signs of both the victim and the bully. Prevention and effective coping skills will be explored.

Tuesday, May 4, 2021 from 1-3 p.m.

"Creating a Calming Bottle for your Kids" Facilitated by Rebecca Williamson, CFPS, Regional Parent Support Coordinator

Join us for this fun inexpensive family craft activity for any age! We have a simple 4-item activity to create a unique calming bottle for children that sometimes can help to distract them help them calm down. Let's have some fun together and help you add another tool from your toolbox to help your child calm down. You will need to have: a clean small plastic bottle (juice or soda) with cover, Elmer's glue or any washable clear glue and glitter -1/4 cup or more and warm water.

Thursday, May 13, 2021 from 1-3 p.m.

"Parenting with Dignity - Picking up This Ball Is a Victory for All" Facilitated by Rebecca Williamson, CFPS, Regional Parent Support Coordinator

G.E.A.R. Parent Network invites you to pick up the ball and run with it through a multi-part parenting education course developed by Mac Bledsoe, father of a celebrated former New England Patriots' quarterback. Parenting with Dignity helps parents learn effective techniques for raising responsible, independent children. Topics include:

- Session 1: A Model of Human Performance and Five Rules for Parents - Saturday, May 8, 2021 from 9a-3p.m.**
- Session 2: Discipline, Deciding what you Want - Part 1 and 2 - Saturday, May 8, 2021 from 9a-3p.m.**
- Session 3: Sending a Constant Message of Love - Part 1 and 2 - Saturday, May 8 & Part 2 on 15th, 2021 from 9a-3p.m.**
- Session 4: Teaching Your Values to Your Kids and Goal Setting - Saturday, May 15, 2021 from 9a-3p.m.**
- Session 5: The Reasons Punishment Doesn't Work - Saturday, May 15, 2021 from 9a-3p.m.**

"It's So Much Work to Be Your Friend: Helping the Child with Learning Disabilities Find Social Success" by Author Rick Lavoie, M.A., M.Ed. Facilitated by Rebecca Williamson, CFPS, Regional Parent Support Coordinator

Are you concerned that your child has no friends? Do you watch your child struggle with social isolation and rejection? This workshop will identify specific reasons why children with learning disabilities have difficulty with social interaction. Parents and caregivers will learn practical strategies to assist children in gaining peer acceptance and developing age appropriate social skills.

Tuesday, June 8, 2021 from 1-3 p.m.

Call 1.800.264.9224 to register for one or more of our free workshops or special events today!

If you are unable to attend in person you may join us remotely from your computer or mobile device! Workshops at locations marked with an asterisk (*) are available by Go ToMeeting, a live and interactive web-based interface. You must pre-register to utilize Go ToMeeting. Regional Parent Support Coordinators are available after workshops for parents or caregivers who would like additional support!

"How Difficult Can This Be? The F.A.T. City Workshop" Video Presentation by Author Rick Lavoie, M.A., M.Ed. Facilitated by Rebecca Williamson, CFPS, Regional Parent Support Coordinator

This unique and interactive program allows participants to experience the same Frustration, Anxiety and Tension that children with learning disabilities face in their daily lives. See how teachers, social workers, psychologists, parents, and friends who have participated in Richard Lavoie's workshop reflect upon their experience and the way it changed their approach to children who have a learning disability.

Tuesday, June 29, 2021 from 1-3 p.m.

Kennebec, Somerset & Franklin Counties

Diane Bouffard, CFPS, Team Leader & Regional Parent Support Coordinator, Ph: 207.612.8996 or Email: dbouffard@crisisandcounseling.org

"IEP's, S.M.A.R.T GOALS, Great Tips and Strategies" Presented by Jodie Hall, Maine Parent Federation

This interactive workshop we will discuss different IEP situations, your rights under Special Education Regulations and various strategies to promote positive outcomes. Learn about the importance of writing clear, measureable, SMART Goals to see if your child is moving forward and making the progress they need to succeed.

Tuesday, April 13, 2021 from 5-7 p.m.

"Suicide Prevention Awareness in our Youth" Presented by: Greg A Marley, LCSW, Director of Suicide Prevention, NAMI Maine

The US and Maine have experienced an increase in suicide rates across all ages during the past decade. The increase among youth is the largest of any age group. Suicide is a mostly preventable tragedy, and prevention rests on the intervention and support of caring and concerned people armed with information about suicide and with the willingness to intervene. This session is for anyone who wants to prepare themselves as a resource for prevention. It includes basic information about suicide, how to talk about it and some of the key risk factors and warning signs that may indicate heightened risk. Learn how to ask about suicide and the resources to connect someone with the help they need. Because suicide prevention is up to all of us.

Wednesday May 19, 2021 from 9 to 11 a.m.

Children's Mental Health Awareness Event- We have a fun filled time for the whole family! At this location we will be live offering a workshop "Managing Stress" from 12:30-2 p.m. (see description below) There will be fun activities outside for the whole family so join us in creating your own items to take home: sugar/salt scrubs, essential oil roller balls, activities such as packing peanuts sculptures and ball toss, and more. We will be observing CDC COVID protocols and providing COVID safe snacks. After what we all have been through in the last year your family deserves some relaxing fun and self-care time. The activities outside will be weather permitting. Please bring your own masks to wear and there is plenty room on our grassed in area so feel free to bring lawn chairs or blankets so you can relax and enjoy family time outside while socially distancing.

Sunday, May 23, 2021 from 11-3 p.m. at Ginny's Natural Corner, 217 North Ave in Skowhegan

"Autism and Strategies" Presented by Cheryl Stalilonis, Information Specialist, Autism Society of Maine

Participants will gain a basic understanding of autism along with some general strategies to use while interacting with individuals on the spectrum. These strategies relate to sensory, communication, behavioral and social deficits that often interfere with an individual's ability to process information.

Tuesday, June 22, 2021 from 1-3 p.m.

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Waldo, Knox, Lincoln & Sagadahoc Counties

Open position for Regional Parent Support Coordinator. Call 1-800-264-9224

Understanding Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) Presented by Sarah Judge, G.E.A.R. Family Peer Specialist

AAC refers to systems and devices that aid communication for those who find it difficult to speak. Children and adults with severe speech or language problems may need to find other ways to communicate. We all use forms of AAC every day. You may have seen someone write in a notebook to answer a question or perhaps you have seen people using gestures to communicate or seen someone point to pictures or push buttons on a computer that speaks for them. These are all forms of augmentative and alternative communication, or AAC. Join us to learn what AAC is, what the benefits are and who can assess what might be the best type of system or device for the child or person.

Thursday, April 15, 2021 from 9-11 a.m.

"Managing Stress: Strategies for Recognizing & Reducing Stress" Presented by Cindy Seekins, CFPS, Director

We all have stress in our lives. The stress is even greater for parents of a child with behavioral health needs. Please join us in the conversation and discovery of what stress is, how stress affects us, how to differentiate between good and bad stress and learn about some different stress relief and reduction strategies that can help us to live healthier lives.

Sunday, May 23, 2021 from 12:30-2 p.m. at Ginny's Natural Corner, 217 North Ave in Skowhegan

"What are Family Peer Specialists and How do they Support Maine Families?" Presented by Rebecca Williamson, CFPS, Regional Parent Support Coordinator

The Family Peer Specialist (FPS) role has been in Maine to support families who have children/youth with special medical, emotional and behavioral health needs for over 25 years. During the past 10 years this role has quickly evolved to being one of not only providing emotional support and resource sharing to also reducing feelings of isolation by providing opportunities to learn from and support each other; build family protective factors, resiliency and strength; and practice vital parenting skills in an environment free from shame, blame and judgment. Join us to learn about the family organizations in Maine who offer free parent peer support, the three levels of support, FPS credentialing, role functions and the benefits to the family and service delivery system when family peer specialists are utilized!

Wednesday, June 9, 2021 from 10:30 - 12:30 p.m.

"Summer Safety: Keeping it Cool, Preventing Heat Related Illness and Sun Safety for Children" Facilitated by Shannan Boyorak, CFPS, Regional Parent Support Coordinator

Sunburn, heat cramps, heat stroke and skin cancer often are not thought of when you are enjoying the outdoors. Learn about the importance of keeping your children and yourself safe while having fun in the sun! Parents are welcomed in sharing their challenges and ideas how they deal with the sun protection and other summertime problems.

Thursday, June 17, 2021, 9-11 a.m.

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Aroostook, Hancock, Penobscot, Piscataquis and Washington Counties

Shannan Boyorak, CFPS, Regional Parent Support Coordinator, Ph. 944-4295 or Email: sboyorak@crisisandcounseling.org

"Non-Toxic Housekeeping Class" Presented by Shannan Boyorak, CFPS, Regional Parent Support Coordinator

Save money and reduce your family's exposure to toxic cleaners! Join us and learn: how to avoid using toxic chemicals and still provide a clean, healthy and comfortable home; how to save money and time with simple cleaning techniques; and easy and inexpensive recipes to make safe, effective homemade household cleaners.

Tuesday, April 27, 2021 from 1-3 p.m.

"Positive Behavioral Supports & Tantrum Management: Self-Preservation & Success in Parenting Children with Behavioral Health Needs" Presented by Shannan Boyorak, CFPS, Regional Parent Support Coordinator

Do you sometimes feel like you don't know how to help your child? Children with behavioral health needs do not come with a manual! This workshop will offer a framework to understand the nature of your child's behavior and methods to flexibly respond to the needs your child presents. Positive behavioral supports emphasize practical ideas about how to meet your child where they are and utilize their motivation to increase success. Understanding and using Stage of Change concepts, maximizing provider involvement, and enhancing natural supports will be emphasized to provide usable tools that can be applied in a variety of real-life situations. Temper tantrums are disruptive behavior or emotional outbursts displayed in response to unmet needs or desires. Come and learn how to manage your child's tantrums by using positive behavioral supports!

Thursday, May 6, 2021 from 1-3 p.m.

"ADHD 101 - What We Want to Know but Forgot to Ask!" Shannan Boyorak, CFPS, Regional Parent Support Coordinator

This workshop will offer the framework to help us understand what Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder is, what causes it, how to diagnose and who can diagnose it; the symptoms, what helps, supports, treatment and management. Come and join in the conversation as we journey together toward greater success.

Tuesday, May 11, 2021 from 1-3 p.m.

"LGBTQ+ Youth" Presented by: Chris McLaughlin, LCSW, Associate Vice President, Community & Pediatric Services, Northern Light Acadia Hospital

In this interactive webinar, Chris will provide an overview of the concerns many LGBTQ+ youth face and will present on the alarming statistics that impact this group of young people. Chris will review the common terms associated with this population of youth and will discuss how families and providers can work to create an affirming and safe space for these youth. This webinar will also cover other topics such as the importance of pronouns and healthcare disparities. Chris will be prepared to answer any questions participants have and is eager to provide any support to families who are coping with the coming out process of their own children.

Tuesday, May 18, 2021 from 6-8 p.m.

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"Helping Your Child Manage Their Meltdowns" Presented by Shannan Boyorak, CFPS, Regional Parent Support Coordinator

Are you feeling like you are always walking on eggshells when dealing with your young child's meltdowns? (Professionals sometimes call these behaviors "dysregulation") Are you at a loss about how to help your child to be successful? You're not alone! Join in the discussion about what meltdowns are and strategies that can be used to help your child better manage these meltdowns.

Thursday, June 10, 2021 from 1-3 p.m.

"Toxic Chemicals and Our Children's Developing Brains" Presented by Shannan Boyorak, CFPS, Regional Parent Support Coordinator

Why is environmental health so important? Consider the following information: Twelve million American children or 17 percent of all Americans under the age of 18 have one or more developmental, learning or behavioral disabilities; more than 1.5 million Americans are autistic. In the 1970s, autism was estimated to have affected about 1 in 2,500 to 5,000 children and today it is 1 in 54; 127,000 adults and children in Maine are identified as having learning disabilities; and 37 percent of the children receiving special education services in our public schools have learning or attention disabilities. Learn why it is important to protect your family from toxic chemical exposures.

Thursday, June 24, 2021 from 1-3 p.m.

"Virtual Support Group Time" Occurring every **Monday 7-8 p.m. and Wednesday from 1-2 p.m.** (unless date falls on a holiday) Call 800.264.9224 to register and receive virtual link.

You are NOT Alone! Parenting and raising a child/youth is often challenging, however even more so with a child with an emotional or behavioral health concern. Join us in this safe place with no shame, blame or judgment from comfort of your home on your tablet or smart phone and chat with other parents who share similar life experiences. If you are a parent wanting support, or a parent/caregiver of a child with behavioral, emotional, or developmental health needs, please consider joining to meet and compare notes with other parents who truly understand the journey you are on.



G.E.A.R. Parent Network is a Parent-to-Parent Network of Information & Support for parents of children with behavioral health needs, is a program of Crisis & Counseling Centers, Inc. and is funded by the Department of Health & Human Services, the United Way, and private donations,
Administration: 10 Caldwell Rd, Augusta, Maine 04330 • 207.626.3448 (voice & TTY); Fax 207.626.3453

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