

# Building a Strong Foundation of Mental Health

## Our Case for Support

"It is easy to overlook the value of mental health until problems surface. Yet from early childhood until death, mental health is the springboard of thinking and communication skills, learning, emotional growth, resilience, and self-esteem. These are the ingredients of each individual's successful contribution to community and society. Americans are inundated with messages about success - in school, in a profession, in parenting, in relationships - without appreciating that successful performance rests on a foundation of mental health."

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Surgeon General's Report on Mental Health



**Mental Health Association**  
of Frederick County

# A brief introduction

Serving Frederick County for 42 years, the Mental Health Association of Frederick County (MHA) provided services for an estimated 37,300 residents in 2007. Weathering a 48% population growth in Frederick County since 1990, MHA has continued provision of critical services as Frederick has grown and changed.

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## The expanding need for services

### In 2007, MHA:

- Served over 37,300 families, children, and individuals
- Provided children and families with 2,627 hours of therapy regardless of ability to pay
- Answered over 19,730 calls for support and referrals, of which 421 were suicide-related
- Conducted training for 10,875 children on child abuse prevention, bullying, internet safety, and stress and anger management for teens
- Advocated for 47 foster children in the Frederick County court system
- Trained 3,420 local child care providers
- Provided 1,671 child care referrals for parents
- Made 2,787 calls to homebound seniors, offering support and checking on their well-being
- Distributed 2,500 copies of the Guide to Mental Health and Community Support Services

Since 1965 there has been incredible progress in the mental health field, as well as the public perception regarding the value of mental health. MHA's services have grown to focus on what we believe has the greatest long-term impact on our community.

### Services include:

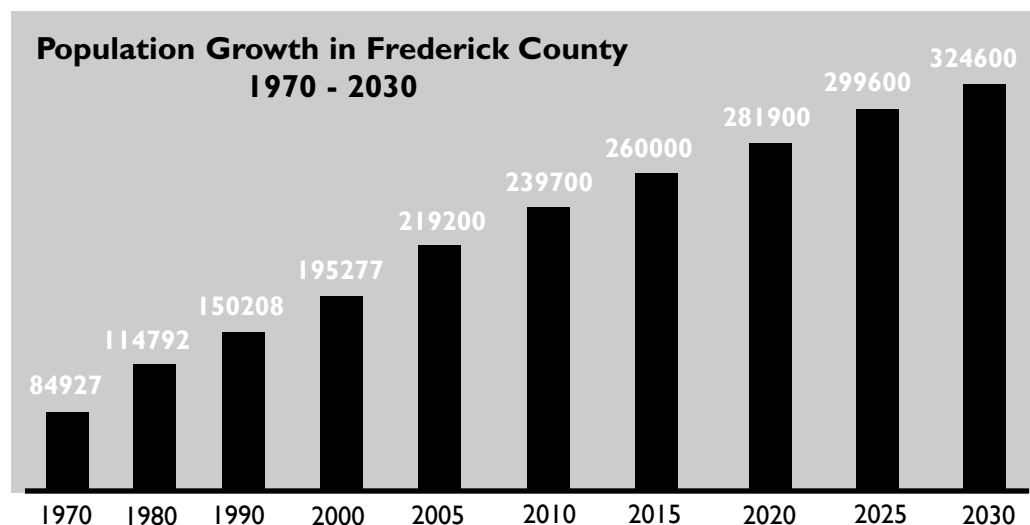
- Prevention of child abuse through education and family support
- 24/7 phone support, referrals and suicide intervention
- Creation of quality childcare environments ensuring young children receive adequate nurturing and stimulation during their most formative years
- Provision of professional therapy services regardless of ability to pay
- Education and advocacy regarding mental illness and the promotion of good mental health.

We believe that teaching good mental health practices at a young age is the way to change behaviors long-term.

With that said, knowledge is the key to growth at any age. All of our programs aspire to promote positive mental health and offer not just education, but the support and compassion needed to make real and lasting change in the lives of those we serve.

With many years of experience, MHA is the central network for local referrals, resources and services.

We encourage people to understand that seeking and accepting help, at any age, is the single most mentally healthy behavior there is.



## Meeting the needs of a growing community

Contributions to The Dove Society build long-term financial stability for MHA enabling us to sustain current services and expand for the future.



# Why is our mission important to you?

A strong foundation of good mental health is key not only to the well-being and success of each individual, but also to the stability, safety, and well-being of our entire community. MHA seeks to alleviate the personal pain and communal disintegration which can be brought on by the following:

- Suicide
- Depression, Anxiety, and Other Forms of Mental Illness
- Child Abuse and Its Effects
- Limited Access to Mental Health Care
- Children Unprepared for a Successful Future

## *Suicide and its devastating aftermath*

### **A CHILD IN CRISIS**

A Hotline listener receives a distressed call from a local youth's guidance counselor. The child's mother recently committed suicide, and now the father is exhibiting suicidal behavior.

Soon after, a friend of the family contacts the Hotline stating that they are also concerned about the youth's welfare due to his father's erratic behavior and suicidal threats.

The listener instructs them to remove all firearms and weapons from the home, contacts the police to keep watch on the family, and gives mental health treatment referrals for the father.

Within weeks, the troubled youth contacts the Hotline himself needing help because he too is having suicidal thoughts. The listener, fully aware of the entire situation surrounding this child, refers the youth for much-needed mental health treatment.

Calls to the Hotline for support have continued and he now appears better able to cope with the ongoing struggles in his life.

Without the support and intervention of the Hotline, the chaotic events of this child's life could have easily resulted in further tragedy.

### **The need:**

Nationally, suicide is the 11th leading cause of death. It outnumbers homicide by a ratio of three to two.

It does not discriminate based on age: it is the third leading cause of death for 10-24 year olds, and the highest overall suicide rate is among those 75 years of age and older.

Even more disturbing, it is estimated that there are 8-25 suicide attempts for every completed suicide.

The aftermath of suicide is devastating, leaving behind family, friends, and co-workers with unanswered questions and often extreme guilt for not recognizing the symptoms and getting help for their loved one.

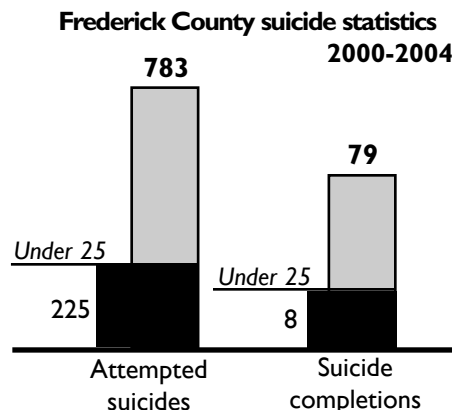
### **Our response:**

*Provide support and crisis intervention services 24 hours a day*

Serving as the only 24/7 crisis center in Frederick County, the Frederick County Hotline provided support, referrals, and suicide intervention for over 19,730 calls in 2007, of which 421 were suicide-related.

MHA created and facilitates a bi-weekly Survivors of Suicide Support Group for those who have lost friends or loved ones to suicide. The group provides a haven for those dealing with the overwhelming grief of suicide.

Counseling Services, offering professional outpatient therapy, remains one of two facilities in Frederick County offering mental health treatment on a sliding scale. Clients consist of the working poor, making too much money to qualify for Medicaid yet not enough to pay for services, and the under-insured.



### **Crisis intervention at the national level**

The Frederick County Hotline serves as the local crisis center for 2-1-1, the Maryland State Youth Crisis Hotline, 1-800-SUICIDE, and the Suicide Prevention Lifeline.

# Depression, anxiety, and other forms of mental illness

“Overall, untreated mental illness costs the United States \$150 billion in lost productivity and \$8 billion in crime and welfare expenditures annually.”

- National Mental Health Association

## The need:

One in five adults and children will suffer from mental illness in their lifetime. It is a certainty that you, or someone close to you, will need help at some time during your life.

Depression, the most common mental illness, can cause extreme feelings of hopelessness and helplessness and frequently leads to suicidal thoughts and action. The personal anguish is often so great that people with depression just can't find any other way to end their pain.

Those suffering often do not know that they have a treatable illness or that help is available. In fact, the number one cause of suicide is untreated depression.

Sadly, fewer than seven percent of those experiencing symptoms of mental illness will seek treatment. Untreated mental illness has a terrible ripple effect, negatively impacting a person's children, family, friends, and performance at work.

Even with ongoing public information campaigns, there are still huge holes in the public's knowledge and understanding of mental illness, what it looks like and when to seek help.

A terrible stigma is often associated with emotional struggles and mental illness, still widely thought to be a sign of personal weakness and shrouded in shame. Even if someone does recognize the need for help, it is difficult to talk about and hard to know where to turn.

## Our clients

Depression and anxiety disorders are the primary diagnosis for adults, with behavioral disorders as the top diagnosis for children under 18. In many cases, children we serve are dealing with adjustments to divorce/separation, being bullied or acting out in school.

## Our response:

*Connect people with the resources they need; destroy the stigma surrounding mental illness through public outreach and education*

Staffed by volunteers and paid listeners, the Frederick County Hotline is the first call for help in Frederick County. Hotline listeners are trained in recognizing signs of depression and mental illness, crisis intervention techniques, and providing referrals for help.

Counseling Services provided over 2,627 hours of therapy in 2007, with our current client base at 37 percent children and adolescents. Serving all clients regardless of their ability to pay, we are certain that without this program many people in need of help would not seek or be able to afford treatment.

Now in its 23rd year, the Guide to Mental Health and Community Support Services is the only referral resource in Frederick County listing licensed mental health professionals, treatment facilities, and community support services. Heavily requested, 2,500 copies are distributed free of charge each year.

Specifically meeting the needs of seniors, the Telephone Reassurance Program makes scheduled daily calls to clients checking on their welfare and making referrals. This population is at high risk for depression and suicide, making this service even more crucial as our population ages.

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## The Cost to Society

*There is a well-documented link between poor mental health and what may be termed social ills. Without question, poor mental health is a contributing factor to incidences of abuse, violence, crime, poverty, substance abuse, and the deterioration of families. These destructive cycles are very powerful and frequently pass from generation to generation, causing children to struggle without positive role models to emulate or to nurture their development.*



# Why is our mission important to you?

## *Child abuse and its effects*

We offer child abuse prevention services targeted to children, parents and professionals. Programs include:

- Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA)
- Kids on the Block Puppet Troupe
- Youth Education Programs
- Supervised Visitation/Monitored Transfer
- ParentPower parent education classes



*We believe that teaching good mental health practices at a young age is the way to change behaviors long-term*

### **The need:**

While the physical injuries may heal, abuse and neglect can have consequences for children, families, and society that last a lifetime, if not generations.

Children of abuse often experience impaired brain development resulting in cognitive delays, learning disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder, and anxiety disorders.

They typically develop poor mental and emotional health resulting in life-long struggles. In one study, as many as 80 percent of young adults who had been abused met the criteria for at least one psychiatric disorder by age 21.

These psychological effects often manifest as high-risk behaviors later in life. Depression and anxiety, for example, may make a person more likely to smoke, abuse alcohol or illicit drugs, or overeat. High-risk behaviors, in turn, can lead to long-term physical health problems.

While not true of all victims, there is a strong link between abuse as a child and a greater risk for juvenile delinquency and adult criminality, and alcohol/drug abuse.

There is a 30 percent chance that those who have been abused will repeat the cycle of violence by abusing their own children.

### **Our response:**

*Advocate for children; prevent child abuse through education and intervention*

Strong advocates for children, Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) is a national program that trains volunteers to act on behalf of abused and neglected foster children in the court system. Volunteers are appointed by judges to be a voice for these children in court. The end goal is that children be placed in safe, permanent homes as quickly as possible. Education programs specifically designed for children include the Kids on the Block puppet troupe, using life-size puppets to teach young children about difficult social topics, and on-site Youth Education Programs for school-age kids and teenagers.

*The KOB child abuse prevention script is a permanent part of the Frederick County Public Schools' third grade Personal Body Safety curriculum.*

For parents, ParentPower provides a seven-week course in basic parenting skills offering adults, many victims of abuse themselves, their first and only education about what it means to be "a good parent."

Lastly, we conduct ongoing training for professionals who work with children on how to recognize and report child abuse.

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### **Statistics of abuse in 2005**

- 899,000 children nationally
  - 63% neglect of basic needs
  - 17% physical abuse
  - 9% sexual abuse
  - 7% emotional abuse
  - 2% medical neglect
- 3 yrs & under = highest % of abuse
- 83.4% of abusers are parents
- 28 children died of abuse in Maryland over the past year

### **Kids on the Block & Youth Education Outreach presentation topics**

- child abuse prevention
- bullying
- Internet safety
- adjusting to divorce
- good mental health
- smoking prevention
- stress management
- anger management
- safety while in self-care
- conflict resolution

# Limited access to mental health care

The term “access to mental health care” encompasses a wide range of obstacles which prevent people from receiving needed mental health services or treatment. These include money, knowledge of services, adequate supply of professionals serving our community, language, transportation, and cultural barriers.

## The need:

Access to care is increasingly difficult for everyone in our community.

Continued public funding cuts, recent changes to Medicaid coverage qualifications, and restrictions regarding diagnosis and practitioners covered by private insurance present significant obstacles to mental health care in our community.

The working poor are some of the hardest hit, earning too much to qualify for Medicaid and not enough to afford private insurance or out-of-pocket payments.

There are only three remaining professional therapy centers in Frederick County offering services on a sliding scale, with very few options for children and adolescents.

## Our response:

*Provide mental health services without barriers; advocate for those with mental health needs.*

Counseling Services offers professional therapy on a sliding scale. While we do expect our clients to contribute something to their treatment, no one is denied service due to financial constraints.

For all services, we provide interpreters for those with limited English proficiency and the deaf population, as needed, thereby removing the obstacle of language in the pursuit of mental health treatment.

Contributing to the growth of mental health professionals within Frederick County, Counseling Services offers quality internships and professional supervision to graduate-level counseling students, helping them attain their state licensure.

This unique partnership between MHA and area graduate schools solves two current problems in the mental health industry: a shortage of facilities for students to acquire supervision for their license and lack of sliding scale services in our community.

From a public policy perspective, MHA hosts an annual Legislative Breakfast bringing together the mental health community and advocating for improved services and funding throughout Frederick County.



## A CHILD OF ABUSE

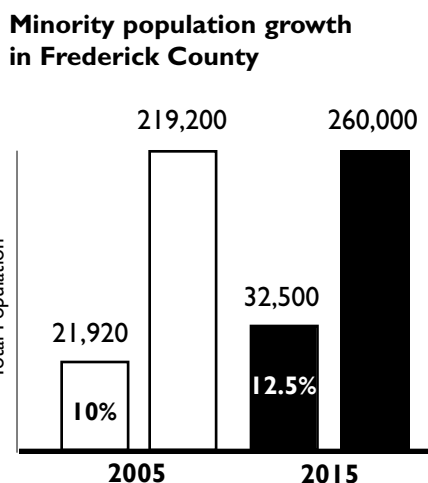
*A few years ago, MHA gave a Kids on the Block Puppet show on child abuse at an elementary school in Emmitsburg. Following the production, a small third grade child timidly went to her teacher and said, "I think that there's something going on in my neighborhood that you should know about."*

*It turns out that a man whom everyone called the "Neighborhood Dad" had been serially sexually abusing children in the neighborhood entrusted to his care.*

*As a result of the puppet show, and one young girl's brave disclosure, Gene Howard Huff was convicted of 141 counts of child abuse and is in jail for over 300 years, and there is a neighborhood of children in northern Frederick County who no longer suffer abuse.*

*At the end of the trial, the eldest victim, having suffered abuse for 29 straight months, gave the judge a hand-written letter: "I feel very sick and mad. I think what he did was very wrong. He is stupid and dumb. I think you should just feed him bugs because he deserves it. I think he should get the rest of his life in jail."*

*We are so happy that she got her wish.*



**Minority groups** now comprise ten percent of Frederick's population, and are predicted to reach 12.5 percent by 2015.

To serve these populations effectively, enormous changes are required.

# Why is our mission important to you?



## *Children unprepared for a successful future*

### **The need:**

Quality early childhood education is critical to long-term success in life. By age three, 90 percent of brain development has already occurred, long before a child begins kindergarten.

*"Early care and nurture have a decisive, long-lasting impact on how people develop, their ability to learn, and their capacity to regulate their own emotions. The contributions that high quality early childhood settings play in a child's physical, cognitive and social-emotional growth last into adulthood," according to Rima Shore, Ph.D., noted author of Rethinking the Brain: New Insights into Early Development, widely hailed as one of the most definitive summaries of research on the brain development of young children in the 20th century.*

In Frederick County, many parents can't find or afford quality childcare, and providers can't offer the services for less, a serious concern given that 77 percent of mothers today work.

On the other side of the issue, childcare staffs are becoming younger and less experienced due to the low pay scale, lack of benefits, and minimal career growth within the profession. These issues dramatically affect staff turnover within the industry.

Given that consistency of care for young children is absolutely critical for the development of their good mental health, these topics must be addressed.

### **77% of mothers today work**

*In 2005, twenty-four percent of the parents who contacted MHA's child care referral service were unable to locate childcare, citing no vacancies and cost as their largest obstacles. As a result, many children are placed into informal care settings with neighbors or family, not necessarily learning the skills needed to prepare them for success in the public school system. The fast-paced setting of today's schools means many children are left behind.*

### **Our response:**

*Link families and childcare providers with resources to ensure quality care for young children; train child care providers.*

Serving over 1,671 parents in 2007, Child Care Choices is the only childcare referral source in Frederick County connecting parents with the resources they need to find licensed care for their children.

Each parent receives a list of licensed providers in their desired area along with extensive information about what quality childcare should look like and interview questions to ask perspective providers.

Also serving the caregivers, Child Care Choices is the main training resource for licensed childcare professionals in Frederick County.

Training 3,420 professionals in 2007, topics covered include age-appropriate child development, children's mental health, positive discipline, physical health and preventing illness, and how to effectively communicate and partner with parents.

In addition, we offer technical assistance to new providers, helping them through the state licensing process, thereby facilitating the growth of the childcare industry to better serve Frederick County in the future.

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### **A PARENT'S DESPERATION**

*A mother of two calls the Child Care Choices LOCATE line, frantic for child care.*

*As the counselor completes the intake, the parent reveals that she works in the service industry; her terminally-ill husband is unable to work, and, due to state budget cuts, her co-pay for their current subsidized child care is now beyond her means.*

*The mother desperately confides to the counselor that she may need to put her two young children up for adoption if she can't find affordable child care. Without any support system or family to help carry the burden, she is out of options.*

*Knowing that there are many child care providers who offer service on a sliding scale or scholarships, the counselor gives the parent many referrals she never even knew existed.*

*The mother follows up to report she has found a caring provider who makes her children happy and is affordable. She is at peace knowing that her family is safe once again.*

# What does the future

# look like?

Urbanization and growth in our community will bring unprecedented challenges; tighter living conditions, more traffic, and a higher cost of living all boiling down to greater stress in our lives.

With this said, we at MHA are optimistic about the future of Frederick County.

In ten years, we envision a community where children can grow and thrive without fear, where good mental health is

valued, where people know when and how to seek help for emotional or family problems without shame.

Everyone will have access to mental health services without any barriers.



## Major Initiatives to Achieve Our Vision

2005 ~ 2015

### 1 Meet the needs of our growing community by:

- Creating a predictable source of funding through our permanent fund
- Increasing our ability to offer existing services; keeping pace with the population growth
- Fulfilling the demand for new services currently unavailable

### 2 Ensure access to mental health care for all residents through the following actions:

- Accept all clients for sliding scale therapy or psychiatric care by increasing Counseling Services' staff and capacity or advocate for the un- and under-insured
- Create a walk-in crisis center at MHA or in another location
- Offer all direct services in Spanish
- Lobby legislators for new/enhanced mental health coverage for privately insured, uninsured, and under-insured recipients
- Implement in-home visitation program for seniors
- Become the permanent 211 provider for Western Maryland. 211 is the national number to call for information and referrals related to health and human services and critical incidents.

### 3 Provide comprehensive services for at-risk families through:

- Case management to assist families navigating the systems of care in Maryland
- Parent education, coaching, and mentoring

### 4 Establish the *Public Information and Advocacy Institute*, educating the community and professionals through:

- On-site training in corporate, education, civic, and religious settings
- Mental health education program for the medical and mental health professionals offering continuing education units (CEU)
- On-line mental health resource center for the public
- Comprehensive mental health and community support services referral source for Western Maryland in print version and via web site access

### 5 Expand existing, or relocate to a new facility to house:

- Greater capacity for the Frederick County Hotline adding more call center stations and equipment
- New Walk-in Crisis Center
- Offices for increased individual and group therapy sessions
- Secure rooms for Supervised Visitation/Monitored Transfer services
- Venue to conduct training: Childcare provider training, parent education classes, *Public Information and Advocacy Institute*, and continuing education unit (CEU) classes for professionals

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*Our goal is for good mental health to be valued at the same level as good physical health, with the common understanding that the link between the two is absolute to achieve an optimum quality of life.*



# MHA Partnering Within the Frederick Community

**MHA's PARTNERS:** Frederick Memorial Hospital • Local Mental Health Professionals • Frederick County Health Department  
 Frederick County Dept of Social Services (DSS) • Frederick County Department of Aging • MD State Dept of Education Office of Child Care  
 CASS (Community Agency School Services) • Frederick County Public Schools • Frederick County Circuit Court • Frederick County Sheriff's Office  
 Frederick City Police Department • Frederick County Adult Detention Center • Child Advocacy Center • Families Plus! • Hearty House  
 Frederick County Head Start • Frederick County Office for Children & Families • Family Partnership of Frederick County • Hope VI Initiative  
 The Jefferson School • Frederick Community College • Hood College • Mount St. Mary's University • Over 220 religious organizations

## Health and Human Service Agencies

### Provide Direct Services

- ▶ Serves as the emergency after-hours contact for many local mental health professionals
- ▶ Provides therapy and parent education classes to DSS mandated clients
- ▶ Makes daily reassurance calls to senior clients of the Department of Aging

### Receive Referrals From

- ▶ Serves as main therapy provider for medical assistance or under-insured patients discharged from Frederick Memorial Hospital
- ▶ Trains medical & child care staff on: Recognizing & Reporting Child Abuse Depression & Warning Signs of Suicide

### Provide

- ▶ Offers free workshops with Families Plus! for child care providers
- ▶ 3-year partnership pending with Family Partnership to expand supervised visitation services for families
- ▶ Distributes Guide to Mental Health free of charge to local HHS agencies
- ▶ Serves on over 30 separate interagency partnership coalitions of HHS agencies

### Partner Together to Offer Services

- ▶ Facilitates depression support group for Latina women of the Even Start program offered through FCPS

### Resources & Advocacy

- ▶ Serves on the College Campus Suicide Prevention Coalition
- ▶ Distributes Youth Crisis Hotline information to all FCPS counselors

## Legal and Law Enforcement

- ▶ Provides Court-ordered therapy, parent education classes, and supervised visitation for families
- ▶ Sworn in as "amicus curiae" or friend of the court in foster care legal cases. CASA volunteers are appointed by the Circuit Court judge to advocate on the child's behalf
- ▶ Provides sole supervised visitation and monitored transfer service in Frederick County, heavily referred by many local attorneys

- ▶ Trains all Frederick City Police recruits on suicide and crisis intervention
- ▶ Offers parent education to inmates at the Adult Detention Center; provide referrals for their families

- ▶ Provides copy of the Guide to Mental Health for every member of the Frederick County Sheriff's Office and Frederick City Police force

## Educational Institutions

- ▶ Conducts Kids on the Block (KOB) and Youth Education Outreach programs on-site; KOB is part of FCPS's 3rd grade "Body Safety" curriculum
- ▶ Presents suicide prevention workshop to local high school students as part of their health curriculum

- ▶ Serves as main sliding scale therapy provider for Frederick County Public Schools and CASS

- ▶ Teaches Depression/Suicide workshop to FCC's Intro to Psych class students
- ▶ Conducts workshops for FCPS guidance counselors on depression/suicide