

ABOUT THE MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION OF MARYLAND

Since 1915, the Mental Health Association of Maryland (MHAMD) has been the state's only volunteer, nonprofit citizen's organization that brings together individuals with mental health disorders, families, professionals, advocates and concerned citizens for unified action in all aspects of mental health and mental illness. MHAMD is an affiliate of Mental Health America and our experienced staff and volunteers work throughout the state and in partnership with local MHA chapters and branches.

We envision a just, humane and healthy society in which all people are accorded respect, dignity and the opportunity to achieve their full potential free from stigma and prejudice. Our advocacy and educational initiatives have resulted in significant policies and greater public understanding in support of the needs of Marylanders experiencing the full array of behavioral health disorders. Please visit the MHAMD website for a deeper understanding of our work: www.mhamd.org

The following is a brief summary of MHAMD programs and contact information should you have questions or a desire to be part of our volunteer team. There are many ways to become involved in our mission:

Advocacy and Public Policy

The Mental Health Association of Maryland's Public Policy staff works with the Maryland legislature, members of congress, other government officials, and other stakeholders including consumers, family members, mental health professionals and other advocates to affect laws and policies at the State and Federal level.

Contact: Dan Martin, dmartin@mhamd.org 443-901-1550 x 208

MHAMD chairs a number of coalitions addressing topics ranging from broad behavioral health concerns to the intersection of mental health and criminal justice, to issues specific to older adults.

1. **The Maryland Behavioral Health Coalition** is a coalition of behavioral health, provider, consumer, family and advocacy organizations whose priorities are to increase access to effective services that promote recovery for people of all ages living with mental illness. dmartin@mhamd.org
2. **The Mental Health and Criminal Justice Partnership** seeks to ensure better treatment and support for inmates with mental illnesses both while incarcerated and upon release. dmartin@mhamd.org
3. **The Maryland Coalition on Mental Health and Aging** provides an education and advocacy forum for people interested in aging and mental health issues. Consumers, family members, caregivers, and professional and government organizations work together through the coalition to improve the quality and accessibility of mental health services for older adults. The Coalition on Mental Health and Aging maintains Maryland's only mental health and aging website www.mdaging.org Contact: Kim Burton, kburton@mhamd.org

Commit2Five is a campaign whereby interested individuals commit to engage in one 5 minute advocacy activity per week. In 5 minutes a week, you can help to improve the lives of Marylanders living with mental illness or substance use disorders. Further information & sign up directions can be found at:

<https://www.mhamd.org/citizen-action-team/commit2five/>

Community Education and Training

Citizen Action Team provides opportunities for individuals to work with MHAMD in areas that are of most interest to them. Volunteers are needed on a variety of projects. More information can be found at: <https://www.mhamd.org/citizen-action-team/>.

The Children's Mental Health Matters Campaign, <http://www.childrensmentalhealthmatters.org/>, is a media and public information campaign that educates parents, daycare workers, teachers and other caring adults that mental illnesses in children are real and treatable. *Contact: Kari Gorkos, kgorkos@mhamd.org*

Healthy New Moms: Maryland's Maternal Mental Health Campaign, (<http://www.healthynewmoms.org/>), is an education and outreach initiative focused on raising awareness of perinatal mood and anxiety disorders among pregnant women, new moms and those who care for them to improve pathways to care for women who have depression and/or anxiety before and after birth. Through Healthy New Moms, MHAMD provides free print and web-based resources for Maryland families and providers, conducts community outreach, provides training, and builds partnerships,. *Contact: Kari Gorkos, kgorkos@mhamd.org*

Mental Health First Aid (MHFA), <http://www.mhfamaryland.org/>, is a certification program that trains people from all walks of life to be prepared to assist an individual who is experiencing a mental health problem or crisis situation. MHAMD trains nearly 2000 Marylanders in Mental Health First Aid each year. *Contact: Jen Treger, jtreger@mhamd.org*

The Mental Health Players are an all-volunteer, improvisational theater troupe that uses role-playing and audience participation to expand awareness and educate people about mental health issues. *Contact: Lisa Palmer, lpalmer@mhamd.org*

The Older Adult Program responds to the growing community need for important education to older adults, their families and friends, care partners and professional networks regarding late behavioral health issues. Public and professional audiences benefit from speakers and educational materials developed through the Older Adult Program. *Contact: Kim Burton, kburton@mhamd.org*

PEERS: Seniors in Partnership Program matches adult volunteers with older adults in Baltimore County who are in need of extra support for mental wellness. Through regular phone or in-person visits, both the PEERS volunteer and the older adult benefit from a partnership design to foster mental wellness. PEERS staff also provide public and professional educational programs on multiple issues relating to aging and behavioral health. *Contact: Bonney Moxley, bmoxley@mhamd.org*

Health Fairs and Publication Distribution are part of the MHAMD mission for education and outreach throughout Maryland. Literature on all aspects of mental health and mental health illness is provided free of charge and can also be downloaded from our website, <https://www.mhamd.org/getting-help/free-publications/> MHAMD appreciates the opportunity to participate in all variety of health fairs to provide important education and resource information. *Contact: Tiffany Thomas, tthomas@mhamd.org*

Information and Referral Services are provided to those seeking mental health information and resource guidance via phone or email. Several MHAMD staff are trained to respond to inquiries. *Call: 443-901-1550*

**PEER: n. 1. one that is of equal standing with another.
2. companion, fellow.**

About the PEERS: Seniors in Partnership Program

Since 1993, The Mental Health Association of Maryland has provided the PEERS: Seniors in Partnership Program to Baltimore County residents through funding from the Baltimore County Bureau of Behavioral Health.

The PEERS program matches volunteers with older adults who need some partnership and support for mental wellness. The older adults are referred to the PEERS program as individuals who may be experiencing challenging life transitions, loneliness or isolation. Many are at risk for, or are experiencing, depression or anxiety. The volunteer is there to be a listening ear and to offer support. There are no expectations that the volunteers will solve problems or in any way serve as a mental health surrogate.

Before the volunteer begins, a background check is performed and information is gathered so that the best possible volunteer / partner match can be made by the PEERS Project Manager. Thorough training is provided and volunteers are given educational material and resource information related to multiple aspects of mental wellness and personal engagement. Volunteers will know to call PEERS program staff if they need additional information or support. Every effort is made to ensure safety and confidence.

Flexibility is the key to PEERS success. PEERS volunteers can visit by phone or in person. They can work with their partner to decide the frequency of visits and the amount of time they would like to spend talking or doing activities together. On average, volunteers have contact with their partner once a week for the first month. During those first weeks, the PEERS staff will have regular communication with the volunteer to provide assistance and guidance. Ongoing support from PEERS staff continues through supervision calls or direct meetings at least twice a month.

The PEERS partnership matches last for as long as both parties benefit. Many partnerships have lasted for several years and others have been short-lived. Several volunteers have asked to have more than one match and this is always a welcome sign for PEERS program success! We strive to make sure that both the volunteer and participant feel good about their match and that the experience is mutually rewarding. To date, nearly 99% of PEERS program matches have reported favorable experiences and positive outcomes.

What makes an ideal PEERS volunteer?

- ✓ A person over 50 years of age with compassion and empathy for others who may be struggling.
- ✓ A person who believes that personal growth and quality of life is not limited by age.
- ✓ A person with strong interpersonal skills who feels comfortable reaching out to others.
- ✓ A person who wants to gain knowledge and skills in the area of mental wellness.
- ✓ A person who wants to do something meaningful and understands the mutual benefit of helping others.



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Perhaps you have requested this information or perhaps we are lucky that this folder of information *just happened* to fall into your hands! Either way, we thank you for reading about the Mental Health Association of Maryland's **PEERS: Seniors in Partnership Program**. You will see that we provide a unique community service that matches adult volunteers with older Baltimore County residents who may be lonely, isolated or in need of some extra socialization.

WE NEED VOLUNTEERS to support the growing number of older adults in Baltimore County who are facing challenges to their social and mental wellness due to a variety of circumstances. Our program is based on the successful "peer to peer" model of carefully pairing volunteers with "participants" (in this case, older adults in Baltimore County) who need the boost that comes from having a listening ear, supportive conversations and assistance with mental wellness strategies.

Our PEERS program has provided mutually beneficial volunteer / participant matches since 1993. PEERS success relies on our careful selection and pairing process as well as thorough education, training and ongoing supervision.

Should you decide you want to further explore or join the PEERS program as a volunteer, all the information you need to review and sign can be found in this folder. Bonney Moxley is the PEERS manager at the Mental Health Association of Maryland. She serves as the contact person for both volunteers and participants. Contact Bonney to join the program or to recommend an older family member, friend or neighbor who lives in Baltimore County and would benefit from the friendly support of a PEER volunteer.

CONTACT

Bonney Moxley

PEERS Project Manager

Mental Health Association of Maryland

443-901-1550 x 213

bmoxley@mhamd.org

Please visit Maryland's website for **MENTAL HEALTH AND AGING**

Great for older adults, caregivers, friends and professionals

www.mdaging.org

Where you can view or order a FREE copy of

Mental Health in Later Life: A Guidebook for Older Marylanders and the People Who Care for Them

Great information is only a click away!

- Maintaining good mental health
- Specific mental health and aging concerns
- How to get help
- Fact sheets to reprint and share

The Mental Health Association of Maryland's Older Adult Program offers FREE talks about all issues of mental health and to interested groups of professionals.

Want more information? Contact Kim Burton
kburton@mhamd.org 443-901-1550x 210