Mental Health Awareness Month Toolkit May 2024

May is Mental Health Awareness Month. This year, the Mental Health Association of Maryland and Maryland Department of Health's Office of Suicide Prevention are partnering to help spread the message that **mental health *is* health**.

We believe that mental health care is a fundamental human right that includes not only emotional health, but improved physical health, addiction recovery, lower health care costs, greater equity and opportunity, and the capacity to realize our hopes and dreams. Together, we are committed to ensuring the wellbeing of all Marylanders.

We've developed this toolkit to equip you with everything you need to participate in Mental Health Awareness Month. We are thrilled to have you join us in helping to raise awareness here in Maryland!

Here are some of the ways you can participate:

- *Light up green* in support of mental health during Mental Health Awareness Week: May 13th–19th
- *Light up green* in support of children's mental health during Children's Mental Health Awareness Week: May 5th–11th
- Become a Champion for children's mental health

- Spread awareness on social media
- Share resources
- Spread awareness with Mental Health Awareness Month merchandise
- Get trained in Mental Health First Aid
- Start conversations

LIGHT UP GREEN DURING MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS WEEK: MAY 13TH – 19TH

Green is the color for mental health awareness. Across the country, Mental Health America is asking buildings, landmarks, and communities to raise awareness by *lighting up green*, from May 13th-19th. You can show your support for mental health by joining the Mental Health Association of Maryland and the Maryland Department of Health's Office of Suicide Prevention's efforts to grow the light up green movement in our home state so we can collectively say—**Maryland believes that mental health *is* health**. We hope that you will join us by committing to *light up green*. Participating organizations will be listed (and linked to) on the Mental Health Association of Maryland's campaign web page.

We need to do more to protect mental health and ensure equitable access to care for all Marylanders. Let's rally together and show our commitment to the wellbeing of all Marylanders by lighting our skyline in green. We're stronger together! To sign up, go to mhamd.org/yes-to-green.

LIGHT UP GREEN DURING CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS WEEK: MAY 5TH – 11TH

May 5th – May 11th is Children's Mental Health Awareness Week. Now more than ever, we need to rally together in support of the mental health and wellbeing of all children in Maryland. You can show your support by *lighting up green* during Children's Mental Health Awareness Week. To sign up, go to mhamd.org/yes-to-green.

BECOME A CHAMPION FOR CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH

Each year, the Children's Mental Health Awareness Campaign brings together nonprofits, schools, local business, and communities from across the state to champion children's mental health by raising awareness, reducing stigma, promoting protective factors, and increasing access to resources to improve the mental wellness of Maryland's children and families. When you sign up to be a Children's Mental Health Matters Champion you join a growing network of Marylanders coming together to advocate for the mental wellbeing of children in communities across the state. Anyone can be a Champion! To sign up as a 2024 Champion, visit childrensmentalhealthmatters.org.
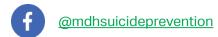
SPREAD AWARENESS ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Social Media Handles:

(f)	@MentalHealthMaryland	(f)	@mdhsuicideprevention
(IG)	@mentalhealth_maryland	(IG)	@mdhsuicideprevention
(X)	@mentalhealthmd	(X)	@mdhsuicideprev

Social Media Graphics:

To download, click on the image. In your browser, right click on the image and select "Save Image As" and save to your computer. The image should be available in your downloads folder.

Mental health *is* health.

May is Mental Health Awareness Month! Learn more: MHAMD.ORG/GREEN — Maryland mhamd

I believe mental health care is a *fundamental* human right.

May is Mental Health Awareness Month! Learn more: MHAMD.ORG/GREEN — Maryland mhamd

Hashtags: #MentalHealthAwarenessMonth   #MentalHealthAwareness   #MentalHealthMD

Sample Social Media Posts:

1. May is #MentalHealthAwarenessMonth! It's important to remember that everyone has mental health—mental health is how we think about life or issues, feel about ourselves and others, and handle change, stress, and other things that happen to us.

2. This #MentalHealthAwarenessMonth let's make sure we're taking care of ourselves and each other. Check in on your loved ones, seek help when you need it, and prioritize your mental health.

3. May is #MentalHealthAwarenessMonth! According to Mental Health America, 46% of Americans will meet the criteria for a diagnosable mental health condition during their lifetime. Learn how you can make a difference by visiting mhamd.org/green. #MentalHealthMD

4. #MentalHealthAwarenessMonth is the perfect time to prioritize your mental health. Visit the Mental Health Association of Maryland's website for information, resources, and more: mhamd.org/green.

5. You don't need to be an expert to offer support to someone who is struggling with mental health issues. You can make a real difference in someone's life by being a good listener, showing empathy, and offering resources. #MentalHealthAwareness #MentalHealthMD

6. Mental health care is a fundamental human right that includes emotional health, but also so much more: improved physical health, addiction recovery, lower health care costs, greater equity and opportunity, and the capacity to realize our hopes and dreams. Learn more: mhamd.org/green. #MentalHealthAwarenessMonth

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EXPLORE AND SHARE RESOURCES

-   **Share resources:** Share mental health and substance resources, such as hotlines ([988 Lifeline](#)), support groups, online resources, or local resources. Encourage the people in your life to seek help if they need it and remind them, they are not alone.

    -   [Grief and Loss](#)

    -   [Coping with Violence](#)

    -   [Minority Mental Health](#)

    -   [Children's Mental Health](#)

    -   [Mental Health in Later Life](#)

    -   [Paying for Care](#)

-   **Learn warning signs:** Familiarize yourself with [common signs of mental health challenges](#), such as changes in behavior, mood, or physical symptoms. Educating yourself on warning signs is an important step in promoting mental wellness for yourself and those around you.

-   **Learn about this important tool for empowerment and communication:** A mental health advance directive (MHAD) is a legal document you can complete to express your needs and preferences for mental health treatment in case you are unable to make or communicate your decisions in the future. If you are living with a serious mental illness, consider completing a mental health advance directive during a period of wellness or recovery. You can communicate what types of treatment you do or do not want and appoint an individual to assist with your health care decisions. [Go here to learn more about the benefits of MHADs and how to get started](#).

SPREAD AWARENESS WITH MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH MERCHANDISE

You can support mental health and help spread the message—**Mental health *is* health**—by choosing from t-shirts, hoodies, and other fun items in the [Mental Health Association of Maryland's Mental Health Awareness Month's online store](#).

GET TRAINED IN MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID

Learn the skills needed to support yourself and others who may be struggling with a mental health or substance use challenge. Mental Health First Aid® teaches people how to recognize and respond to a person experiencing a mental health or substance use concern or crisis and to connect them to appropriate care. To learn more about Mental Health First Aid, visit [MHFAMaryland.org](#).

START CONVERSATIONS

Start conversations about mental health with the people in your life, asking questions like "How are you really feeling today?" or "I've been feeling stressed lately. How do you usually manage stress in your own life?". Remember that starting a conversation about mental health can be sensitive and personal, so it's important to approach the topic with kindness, empathy, and respect.

- **Be mindful of language:** Use language that is respectful towards individuals living with mental health and substance use disorders. Using stigmatizing or offensive language can reinforce negative stereotypes and contribute to the stigma and discrimination that individuals with mental health and substance use challenges often face. [Go here to learn more.](#)

Mental health awareness is a continuous effort. Use your platform all year long to create a safe and supportive community.