



A Healthy Outlook!

240-314-1040 • FAX 240-314-1049 • www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/EAP • Vol. 4

Child Care Services in Montgomery County

Parents and children who are happy with their child care arrangements are less likely to feel stress in other areas of their lives. Children will be better adjusted while adults will be more relaxed. Given the consequences that may result from less-than-optimal arrangements, finding the appropriate child care services for your children can be an overwhelming task. Many questions may arise, including types of services required, how to find providers, and how to pay for these services. However, several programs and services are available in Montgomery County to help you decide what options are best for you and your children. These include the following:

♦ LOCATE: Child Care

(301-279-1773) provides child care referrals and information to parents throughout the entire process of finding care. Child care request forms can be retrieved online at the Montgomery County Child Care Resource and Referral Center (www.earlychildhoodservices.com). Follow this link to "Child Care," then click again on "Child Care Request Forms." Once completed, the forms can be mailed or faxed to—
LOCATE: Child Care
332 West Edmonston Drive
Rockville, MD 20852
Fax: 301-279-1812

- ♦ Parents also may search the LOCATE online database of licensed child care providers on the Maryland Committee for Children's Web site (www.mdchild-care.org).
- ♦ For children with special needs, there is the Arc of Montgomery County Family and Infant Center (301-279-2165) which assists families with children who have medical conditions by providing child care, family education, and training.



Financial Aid

The Purchase of Child Care Program and the Working Parents Assistance Program may be viable options for some families. Both programs provide child care subsidies to families who are working towards self-sufficiency. While income guidelines and other eligibility requirements limit the applicant pool, those who are interested in these programs may call 240-777-1155 to request information and an application.

In addition to the resources listed above, each library in the Montgomery County Public Library system has a Child Care Information and Resource Book featuring a list of child care centers and child care resources within the county. ■

Stress: Dispel the Myths

Several myths surround stress. Let's examine some myths to help us better understand and manage our stress.

Myth 1:

Stress is the same for everybody.

Not true. What is stressful for one person may or may not be stressful for another; each of us responds to stress in an entirely different way.

Myth 2:

Stress is always bad for you.

Wrong. Stress can be the kiss of death or the spice of life. Stress may bring new experiences or growth. The issue is how to manage stress. Managed stress makes us productive and happy; mismanaged stress is harmful.

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Myth 3:

Stress is everywhere, so you can't do anything about it.

Wrong. You can plan your life so that stress does not overwhelm you. Effective planning involves setting priorities and working on simple problems first. When stress is mismanaged, it's difficult to prioritize.

Myth 4:

The most popular techniques for reducing stress are the best ones.

Not so. No universally effective stress-reduction techniques exist. We are all different, our lives are different, our situations are different, and our reactions are different.

Myth 5:

No symptoms, no stress.

Absence of symptoms does not mean absence of stress. In fact, covering symptoms with alcohol or medication may not allow you to see the signals your body and mind are sending you.

Myth 6:

Only major symptoms of stress require attention.

This myth assumes that the "minor" symptoms, such as headaches or stomach aches, may be ignored. Minor symptoms of stress are early warnings that you need to do a better job of managing stress.

Want to talk more about how to manage your stress? Give the EAP a call at 240-314-1040. ■

**"What lies behind us
and what lies ahead
of us are tiny matters
compared to what
lives within us."**

—Oliver Wendell Holmes

Resiliency and Hope

Researchers Conclude That Each Person Has an Innate Capacity for Resiliency

Resilience refers to a person's ability to adapt successfully after negative life experiences or lifespan transitions; it underpins mental well-being and quality of life. The "self-righting tendency" operates best when people have resiliency-building characteristics.

The five characteristics of resiliency are—

- be positive
- be focused
- be flexible
- be organized,
- be proactive

Surviving change will depend upon being a resilient individual. Resiliency will be needed because change always brings resistance.

If you did nothing in the past week that was enjoyable, this could indicate a lack of resiliency. The symptoms are similar to those of depression, such as lack of energy and motivation along with increased levels of irritation and frustration. Remember that action leads to motivation. As you continue to act and create motivation, your level of resiliency rises and burnout wanes.

Numerous scientific studies of children facing adversity in their lives have supported the importance of resilience as a powerful insulating force. Resilience explains why some children overcome overwhelming obstacles while others become victims of their early experiences and environments.

Research has shown that students who perceived parents, teachers, and peers as supportive were more likely to have higher resiliency behavior in their communication, cooperation, self-esteem, empathy, goals, and aspirations. Also, they were more likely to feel healthy.

Hope Reduces Stress, Improves Recovery, and Acts as a Buffer Against Mental Illness

Belief and expectation are the two components of hope, one of our central emotions. Hope is the elevating feeling we experience when we see a path to a better future. Also, it acknowledges obstacles and gives us the courage to confront our circumstances.

Researchers have learned that a change in mind-set can alter neurochemistry. Hope affects fundamental physiological processes such as respiration, circulation, and motor function. During an illness hope can cause a chain reaction, making improvement likely.

A team of researchers reports that obese people who are hopeful and think they will be successful in weight loss will lose more pounds than their counterparts who are less hopeful.

A conclusion substantiated by several research groups is that belief and expectation blocks pain by releasing the brain's endorphins. It has been said that hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a longing fulfilled is a tree of life.

Sources: *The Anatomy of Hope*, by Jerome Groopman, M.D.; *The Washington Post*; *Time*; *Timeless Healing*, by Herbert Benson, M.D.; *Journal of the American Psychological Association*; Queensland Government Health Services; PubMed (www.pubmed.org); *Managing at the Speed of Change*, by Darryl Conner; *Raising Resilient Children*, by Robert Brooks and Sam Goldstein; Washington Hospital Center and Shady Grove Adventist Hospital. ■

Effective Communication Skills Are as Easy as 1-2-3

The bedrock of successful human interaction is effective communication, and it isn't something with which we are born. Our first communication teachers are our parents or primary caregivers. Research shows that even tiny babies absorb the speech patterns and emotional pitch of their caregivers. When children go to school, their peers and educators provide other models for communication.

By the time we reach the workplace, we've developed a style of communication that may or may not serve us well. Sometimes we use an ineffective communication style, especially in situations that have the potential for conflict. The *Handbook of Conflict Resolution Education*, by Richard J. Bodine and Donna K. Crawford explains a simple 1-2-3 communication model that can help anyone improve or enhance their communication with others:

1. Listen to understand. Listen to the other person's message, summarize it out loud to make sure you accurately hear what the other person is saying (or give the other person the opportunity to be more clear in his or her statement), and ask open-ended, non-leading questions to get information that will help clarify statements.

2. Speak to be understood. Avoid speaking with the intent of impressing or pressing your point. Aim for clearly and concisely stating the facts or expressing your feelings with "I feel" statements. Don't accuse, judge, or debate.

3. Reframe emotionally charged statements into neutral, less-dramatic terms.

Example: "It makes me feel like throwing a car through the window when you talk to me like that" could be reframed as "I feel angry when you speak to me that way." ■

Taken from *Health Sentry*, vol. 18, issue 2.

Dispute Resolution Program Update

Last school year a number of employees took advantage of the new free Dispute Resolution Program, a joint program of all three employee associations and MCPS in conjunction with the Conflict Resolution Center of Montgomery County. Some of the feedback we've received includes the following: "I was able to talk without feeling judged." "(I experienced) the freedom to express my ideas and concerns." "The process is excellent! Thank you!" "I strongly recommend the mediation program."

Have you been experiencing a difficult-to-resolve conflict with a coworker? Contact the Dispute Resolution Program at the EAP (240-314-1041) to get started on the path to resolution. ■

National Depression Screening Day

National Depression Screening Day is October 5, 2006. The EAP will once again be conducting screening for depression, bipolar disorder, generalized anxiety disorder, and post-traumatic stress disorder. If you think you or a member of your family might have one of these mental health issues, please call the EAP at 240-314-1040 to schedule an appointment for a screening. Screenings take no more than 30 minutes and include an opportunity to discuss your results with a trained mental health professional. ■



Looking for the EAP and Can't Find Us?

This summer the EAP moved to new offices.

Our address is
2096 Gaither Road, Suite 205
Rockville, Maryland 20850

You can reach us by phone at **240-314-1040** and, as always, on the Web at:
www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/eap.



Ask the EAP

Q. Can I get EAP services over the phone?

A. Of course, we always prefer to meet with you personally, but we recognize that sometimes work and family schedules prevent people from being able to fit in one more appointment. Feel free to call us at 240-314-1040 to speak to a specialist. We will be glad to assist you.

Do you have a question for the EAP? Send your questions to Jeff Becker via Outlook or the Pony.

Upcoming Events

October 5

National Depression Screening Day

For more information call the EAP or visit www.mentalhealthscreening.org.

November

National Family Caregivers Month

For more information visit www.thefamilycaregiver.org/empowerment/nfcmmonth.cfm.

Eldercare and the Impact on Your Work

How does caring for an elderly family member impact your work? A 2003 Society for Human Resources (SHRM) Elder Care Survey found that employees noticed a number of changes in staff members who were functioning as caregivers for an elderly person. Impact included the following:

- Partial-day absenteeism
- Full-day absenteeism
- Workday interruptions
- Mental disruptions
- Excessive personal phone calls
- Stress-related health problems



If you are concerned about the impact of caring for an elderly family member on you or your work, please give the EAP a call at 240-314-1040. ■

A Healthy Outlook!

To help employees with troubling issues before they become overwhelming.



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Important Notice: Information in *A Healthy Outlook!* is for general information purposes only and is not intended to replace the counsel or advice of a qualified health professional. For further questions or help with specific problems or personal concerns, contact your employee assistance professional.

You may contact us or send your questions and comments to Debra_Tipton@mcpsmd.org

Please note that e-mail is not necessarily confidential.

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