

HEY, HOW ARE YOU?

Embracing Tranquility:



Happy holidays!

from



EMBRACING TRANQUILITY BEHAVIORAL HEALTH LLC
Developing your peace and positivity to achieve Tranquility



Welcome to the December edition of our newsletter! As the year winds down, Maryland comes alive with festive lights, community celebrations, and holiday cheer. Whether you're looking for cultural experiences, family-friendly activities, or opportunities to give back, there's something for everyone this season! This month is an important time to reflect on awareness, self-care, and community engagement. December brings focus to several key health and wellness initiatives: **National Handwashing Awareness Week**, **HIV/AIDS Awareness Month**, **Cancer Awareness Month**, and **Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) Awareness Month**. These observances remind us of the importance of education, advocacy, and proactive care in improving our collective well-being.

Clean Hands, Healthy Lives: National Handwashing Awareness Week

Proper hand hygiene remains one of the simplest yet most effective ways to prevent illness and reduce the spread of germs. During National Hand-washing Awareness Week, we are reminded to prioritize this essential habit in our daily lives.

- **Why It Matters:** Hand-washing can prevent 1 in 3 diarrhea-related illnesses and 1 in 5 respiratory infections, including colds and the flu.
- **Tips for Effective Hand-washing:** Use soap and water, scrub for at least 20 seconds, and pay attention to commonly missed areas like the thumbs and fingertips.
- **Engage:** Schools and workplaces can host hand-washing demonstrations to promote awareness.



Yoga Classes:

Stay on the look out for yoga dates!



inhale
exhale

Breathwork and Stress Reduction Techniques:

Your breath is your anchor. We explored the transformative power of breathwork and stress reduction techniques. Participants learned how to harness the breath to calm the nervous system, reduce anxiety, and cultivate inner peace.

INSTANT DOWNLOAD

YOUR GUIDELINE FOR BREATHWORK HERE



HIV/AIDS Awareness Month: Knowledge, Prevention, and Support

This month calls for the attention of the ongoing global and local fight against HIV/AIDS, emphasizing the importance of prevention, testing, and compassionate support for individuals living with HIV. By reducing stigma and promoting education, we can work toward ending the HIV epidemic.

Critical Points:

HIV in Maryland: Key Statistics and Demographics

- Over 32,000 Maryland residents live with HIV, with Baltimore City and Prince George's County having the highest rates of infection. This is due to factors like limited access to healthcare, economic disparities, and high-risk populations.
- On a national level, 1.2 million Americans live with HIV, and about 13% are unaware of their status. This highlights the need for increased testing and early diagnosis to prevent further transmission.
- Disproportionate Impact on Black Communities: In Maryland, Black residents represent 76% of new HIV diagnoses, despite comprising only 30% of the population. Addressing these disparities is crucial, as these communities often face greater barriers to accessing healthcare and HIV education.

Progress in HIV Treatment

- Antiretroviral Therapy (ART) allows HIV-positive individuals to achieve undetectable viral loads, meaning the virus is not detectable in their blood and they cannot transmit HIV to partners. This development has been key in transforming HIV from a fatal disease to a manageable condition.
- Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) has proven to be a game-changer in HIV prevention. When taken daily, PrEP can reduce the risk of HIV transmission by up to 99%, particularly for individuals at higher risk.

What We Need To Do

1. Get Tested

- Testing is the first step in prevention and care.
- Free or low-cost HIV testing is available through your local department of health.

2. Support Local Organizations

- Moveable Feast: Delivers meals and nutritional support to individuals living with HIV/AIDS across Maryland.
- Chase Brexton Health Care: Provides comprehensive medical care and resources, including mental health services for those impacted by HIV.
- Whitman-Walker Health: Serves Maryland and D.C. residents with HIV care, prevention, and community education.

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3. Advocate for Prevention Initiatives

- Promote PrEP (Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis): A daily medication that reduces the risk of HIV transmission by up to 99% in sexual transmission and 74% for intravenous drug use.
- Educate on PEP (Post-Exposure Prophylaxis): An emergency medication that can prevent HIV if taken within 72 hours of exposure.

4. Volunteer and Donate

- Volunteer with organizations like AIDS Action Baltimore or The Maryland AIDS Advocacy Network to support local efforts in education and healthcare advocacy.
- Donate to support programs that provide free testing, counseling, and medication access for under-served populations.

5. Raise Awareness

- Participate in events like World AIDS Day (December 1st) by attending local vigils, educational seminars, or fundraisers.
- Share information on social media to help combat stigma and encourage people to get tested.

HIV/AIDS Resources Across Maryland: Access, Support, and Prevention:

Prince George's County Health Department

The Prince George's County Health Department is dedicated to reducing HIV infections and providing care to those living with HIV.

- Services Offered: They provide free HIV testing at clinics, offer Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) and Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) for those at risk, and offer ART (Antiretroviral Therapy) for those already diagnosed with HIV.

Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services

Montgomery County is one of the leading jurisdictions in HIV prevention and care in Maryland.

- Services Offered: Montgomery County offers HIV testing, confidential counseling, and linkage to care for individuals who test positive. They also provide PrEP and PEP services, which are critical in preventing new infections.

Howard County Health Department

The Howard County Health Department is focused on providing comprehensive HIV prevention, care, and education.

- Services Offered: In addition to free HIV testing, they offer counseling and support services for individuals living with HIV, as well as access to treatment options like ART. They also have community outreach programs that educate at-risk populations about HIV prevention methods, including PrEP and safer sex practices.

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Anne Arundel County Department of Health

In Anne Arundel County, the health department provides critical support and prevention services to combat HIV.

- **Services Offered:** The department provides free HIV testing and access to PrEP for individuals at high risk. They also offer linkage to care and essential medical services for those living with HIV, including ART.

Baltimore City Health Department

As the largest urban area in Maryland, Baltimore City has a robust set of programs and services designed to combat HIV and support those living with the virus.

- **Services Offered:** Baltimore City Health Department offers HIV testing, treatment, and prevention services such as PrEP and PEP. They have a dedicated HIV Prevention Program that works closely with the community to educate on safer sex practices and available prevention options. The department also provides case management for people living with HIV and helps them access treatment and services.

Statewide Resources:

Maryland AIDS Administration

The Maryland AIDS Administration (MAA) oversees HIV care, prevention, and education throughout the state.

- **Services Offered:** MAA provides funding and resources to local health departments, clinics, and community-based organizations to support HIV prevention, testing, and treatment services. They also fund initiatives that focus on outreach to underserved and high-risk populations.
- MAA emphasizes comprehensive care for people living with HIV and ensures that Maryland residents have access to vital medications, services, and support.

The Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program

The Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program offers services that help low-income individuals living with HIV access care, including medical services, medications, and case management.

- **Services Offered:** The program supports testing, treatment, and prevention, including assistance with medications and medical care.
- Ryan White focuses on low-income individuals and those who may face challenges accessing healthcare, ensuring they receive life-saving care.

Shedding Light on Mental Health: Seasonal Affective Disorder Awareness Month

Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) is a type of depression that occurs as the seasons change, typically in the winter months when daylight hours are shorter. It can affect mood, energy, and overall mental well-being. During SAD Awareness Month, we should focus on raising awareness about the condition, its symptoms, and the resources available to support those affected.

Key Facts

- **Prevalence:** SAD affects about 5% of U.S. adults annually, with symptoms lasting 4-5 months.
- **Demographics:** Women are diagnosed four times more often than men, and individuals in northern climates are at higher risk due to shorter daylight hours.
- **Symptoms:** SAD symptoms include fatigue, oversleeping or changes in sleep patterns, changes in appetite or weight, difficulty concentrating, withdrawal from social activities, and persistent feelings of sadness.

Maryland Statistics:

Prince George's County

- Depression rates in PG County are higher than the state average, largely due to stressors, socio-economic disparities, and limited access to care.
- 20% of adults in PG County report experiencing depressive symptoms, and limited sunlight exposure during the winter months significantly exacerbates SAD symptoms.

Montgomery County

- Although Montgomery County has relatively better access to mental health resources, approximately 10-12% of residents report experiencing seasonal depressive symptoms during the winter.
- The Montgomery County Crisis Center has seen an uptick in mental health calls related to winter-related depression, particularly from suburban areas and older adults.

Howard County

- The Howard County Health Department reports a significant increase in winter-related depression during colder months, with 15-20% of residents seeking therapy for depression in the winter.
- Efforts to combat SAD have led to a 25% increase in residents accessing light therapy and counseling services.

Anne Arundel County

- Anne Arundel County Mental Health Agency notes that about 15% of adults in the county report feeling symptoms of SAD, with increased rates among lower-income communities.
- The county's public health campaigns emphasize the importance of exercise and light therapy to mitigate SAD's effects during winter.

Baltimore City

- Baltimore's Behavioral Health System reports that 12-18% of adults in the city experience symptoms of SAD, with a notable spike in requests for affordable light therapy and counseling during the winter months.
- Baltimore is focusing on equitable access to mental health services, especially among low-income populations, who are disproportionately affected by seasonal depression.

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Symptoms of SAD

- **Common Symptoms**
 - **Increased irritability:** Feeling more easily frustrated or annoyed than usual.
 - **Physical symptoms:** Headaches, muscle tension, or general aches that may coincide with depression.
 - **Low motivation:** Difficulty initiating or completing everyday tasks, often feeling overwhelmed.
 - **Heightened sensitivity:** Feeling more emotionally reactive to rejection or criticism.
 - **Increased anxiety:** This can manifest as restlessness, a sense of dread, or physical symptoms like a racing heart or tightness in the chest
- People with SAD may also experience symptoms like guilt and thoughts of worthlessness. The severity of these symptoms can impact one's ability to work, interact socially, and maintain personal responsibilities, especially during the colder months.

Treatment Options

- Light therapy involves daily exposure to a specially designed lightbox that simulates natural sunlight. Studies show that 30-45 minutes a day can help regulate circadian rhythms and improve mood
- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) is an effective treatment for SAD, helping individuals identify and challenge negative thoughts that worsen depression during the winter. It also teaches coping strategies to manage the lack of sunlight.
- Antidepressant Medications, such as Selective Serotonin Re-uptake Inhibitors (SSRIs), are commonly prescribed when light therapy or CBT isn't enough. These medications help increase serotonin levels, which regulate mood. Access to these medications is available through primary care providers or psychiatrists.

What We Can Do to Help

- **Encourage Early Diagnosis:**
 - Promoting awareness of SAD in local communities can help those struggling with its symptoms seek treatment early. Advocate for increased mental health screenings in schools, workplaces, and healthcare settings, particularly during the colder months.
- **Promote Light Therapy Access:**
 - Working with local healthcare providers to ensure affordable access to light therapy lamps can make a significant difference. Encourage people to check if their insurance covers light therapy or to explore community resources.
- **Stay Active:**
 - Encouraging physical activity during daylight hours can improve mood and energy levels. Local fitness programs and parks, provide opportunities for outdoor walks, even in winter.
- **Social Support:**
 - Combat isolation by encouraging social activities during the winter months. Community centers and support groups offer programs specifically designed to provide social connections and reduce the impact of isolation during colder months.

Fighting for a Cure: Cancer Awareness Month

Cancer Awareness Month calls to mind of the critical importance of prevention, early detection, treatment advancements, and community support in the ongoing battle against cancer. This observance provides an opportunity to educate communities, support those affected, and advocate for continued progress in research and care.

Need to know:

- The most common cancers worldwide include lung, breast, and colorectal cancers, with liver and stomach cancers also among the leading causes of cancer-related deaths.
- In 2023, an estimated 1.9 million new cancer cases were diagnosed in the U.S., with breast, lung, and colorectal cancers being the most common.
- Cancer deaths in the U.S. are declining, with survival rates improving due to advances in treatment and early detection.

Maryland Statistics

- Cancer is a leading cause of death in Maryland, accounting for approximately 24% of all deaths statewide.
- Lung cancer is the most fatal, while breast and prostate cancers are among the most frequently diagnosed.
- Maryland has improved screening rates for breast and cervical cancers, but disparities persist for low-income and minority populations, who often face barriers to access.
- The state ranks among the top in adopting HPV vaccinations, which prevent several types of cancers.

How to Help

1. Promote Prevention

- **Healthy Living:** Encourage a balanced diet rich in fruits, vegetables, and proteins. Advocate for regular physical activity and tobacco cessation programs.
- **Vaccination:** Promote the HPV vaccine, recommended for individuals starting at age 9, to protect against cervical, anal, and throat cancers.

2. Encourage Early Detection

- Early detection is crucial in improving survival rates. Screenings include:
 - Mammograms for breast cancer (recommended annually for women over 40 or earlier based on risk factors).
 - Colonoscopy for colorectal cancer (recommended starting at age 45).
 - Pap smears and HPV testing for cervical cancer detection.
 - PSA Tests for prostate cancer screening, particularly for men over 50 or earlier for high-risk groups.
- [Maryland's Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program](#) offers free or low-cost screenings to eligible residents.

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3. Support Research and Treatment

- Participate in or donate to initiatives like:
 - Relay for Life: Community events raising funds for cancer research and patient services.
 - Stand Up To Cancer: A campaign funding cutting-edge research and clinical trials.
- Advocate for increased funding for cancer research at local and national levels. Maryland is home to premier research institutions like Johns Hopkins University and the National Cancer Institute (NCI) in Bethesda.

4. Volunteer or Donate Locally

- Maryland Cancer Fund: Provides financial aid for screenings and treatment, targeting underserved communities.
- American Cancer Society: Offers patient support programs like transportation to treatment, lodging near hospitals, and counseling services.
- Johns Hopkins Sidney Kimmel Comprehensive Cancer Center: Conducts advanced clinical trials and personalized cancer therapies.

5. Raise Awareness

- Share survivor stories to inspire hope and reduce stigma.
- Organize educational webinars or prevention workshops in your community.
- Participate in campaigns using awareness ribbons (e.g., pink for breast cancer, gold for childhood cancer) to show solidarity and spread knowledge.

Maryland-Based Support

- **Maryland Department of Health Cancer Program:** Provides access to free or low-cost screenings, educational outreach, and vaccination clinics.
- **University of Maryland Marlene and Stewart Greenebaum Comprehensive Cancer Center:** Offers advanced treatments, patient support, and clinical trials.
- **Maryland Cancer Fund:** Provides financial assistance for cancer screenings and treatment, targeting underserved populations across Maryland. This fund supports low-income residents who need access to life-saving services.
- **Hope Connections for Cancer Support:** Hosts support groups and wellness programs to address the emotional and physical challenges of cancer for residents in PG and nearby counties.
- **Pro Bono Counseling Project:** Offers free counseling services to Maryland residents dealing with the emotional challenges of cancer. Services are available to patients and caregivers.
- **Cancer Support Foundation:** Assists Maryland families by addressing barriers like financial difficulties and navigating medical resources for cancer patients.

National Resources

- **National Cancer Institute:** A leading resource for information on cancer prevention, types, treatments, and ongoing research.
- **Livestrong Foundation:** Provides practical resources for patients, survivors, and caregivers, including financial assistance and coping tools.

Embrace Wellness: Local Free Events for December

Welcome to December! This month, we're excited to bring you a variety of free local events in the DMV area, offering opportunities to connect with your community, support important causes, and enjoy family-friendly activities. Whether you're looking to experience a long-standing festival tradition, sample delicious local cuisine, or participate in events promoting awareness and advocacy, November has something for everyone. From the vibrant streets of Fells Point to the culinary delights of Bethesda, join us in celebrating the spirit of community, wellness, and fun for all ages.

1. Holiday Lights at the Maryland Zoo

- Dates: November 23, 2024 - January 1, 2025
- Time: 10 a.m.-4 p.m.
- Location: The Maryland Zoo in Baltimore
One Safari Place, Baltimore, MD 21217
- Enjoy the festive lights and decorations throughout the zoo, as well as seasonal activities for all ages. While entry is free for members, general admission applies, but there are often free admission days or family-oriented programs.

2. Ice Skating at Baltimore's Inner Harbor

- Dates: November 9, 2024 - January 20, 2025
- Time: 12-10 p.m.
- Location: 201 E Pratt St, Baltimore, MD 21202
- Kick off the season with free opening night activities at the outdoor ice rink, including hot chocolate and treats. It's a festive way to enjoy the season with family-friendly fun.



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Free Resources:

NAMI Maryland (National Alliance on Mental Illness)(410-884-8691):

- NAMI Maryland provides free mental health education, support groups, advocacy, and resources for individuals and families affected by mental illness. They offer programs such as NAMI Family Support Groups and NAMI Peer-to-Peer classes.

Mental Health Association of Maryland(443-901-1550):

- The Mental Health Association of Maryland offers free mental health resources, advocacy, and support services to promote mental wellness and recovery. They provide information on mental health topics, support groups, and educational programs.

Mosaic Community Services(410-453-9553):

- Mosaic Community Services is a nonprofit organization that offers free and low-cost mental health and substance use disorder services in Maryland. They provide counseling, therapy, case management, and other support services for individuals of all ages.

Maryland Coalition of Families (410-730-8267):

- The Maryland Coalition of Families is a nonprofit organization that provides free support, education, and advocacy for families of children and youth with mental health, substance use, and other behavioral health challenges. They offer support groups, workshops, and resources for families navigating the mental health system.

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (1-800-273-8255):

- The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is a national network of crisis centers that provide free and confidential support to individuals in suicidal crisis or emotional distress. Trained crisis counselors are available 24/7 to offer support, intervention, and resources to those in need.

Crisis Response Team (301-429-2185):

- This team likely consists of mental health professionals who are dispatched to respond to crisis situations, such as mental health emergencies or suicidal threats, in the community. They provide on-the-ground support and intervention to individuals in crisis.

Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH) Behavioral Health Administration (BHA) (410-402-8300):

- The DHMH Behavioral Health Administration oversees mental health and substance abuse services and programs at the state level in Maryland. They may provide funding, coordination, and oversight for various mental health initiatives and organizations.
- School Max has changed over to Synergy please register

Maryland Programs Addressing Hunger and Homelessness



Maryland Food Bank

The Maryland Food Bank is a statewide nonprofit that provides millions of pounds of food to residents in need every year. It works with more than 1,200 community organizations, including food pantries, soup kitchens, and shelters. Programs include:

- **Mobile Pantries:** Delivering food directly to underserved areas across the state.
- **School Pantry Program:** Offering nutritious food to children and families at over 40 schools in Maryland.
- **SNAP Outreach:** Assisting residents in applying for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program to access nutritious food.

2. Moveable Feast

Moveable Feast provides nutritious meals and grocery items to individuals facing serious health challenges, such as HIV/AIDS, cancer, and diabetes, in Maryland. This program not only helps reduce food insecurity but also addresses the specific dietary needs of individuals with chronic illnesses. Volunteers are central to Moveable Feast's operations, helping prepare, package, and deliver meals throughout the state.

3. Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD)

The Maryland DHCD provides several programs aimed at preventing homelessness and supporting affordable housing initiatives. Key programs include:

- **Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG):** Funding for emergency shelters, rapid rehousing, and homelessness prevention.
- **Rental Assistance Programs:** Offering financial support to low-income residents, including the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program.
- **Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA):** Providing housing support to individuals with HIV/AIDS.

4. Homeless Persons Representation Project (HPRP)

The Homeless Persons Representation Project offers free legal services to people experiencing homelessness or those at risk of homelessness in Maryland. HPRP assists with issues like eviction prevention, public benefits access, and veteran's benefits. Their work is essential for protecting the legal rights of homeless individuals and families.

5. Health Care for the Homeless (HCH)

Health Care for the Homeless in Baltimore provides medical, mental health, and substance abuse services to homeless individuals. HCH's approach emphasizes integrated care, addressing both physical and mental health needs alongside housing services. They also provide case management to help individuals find stable housing and other community support.

6. Project PLASE (People Lacking Ample Shelter and Employment)

Based in Baltimore, Project PLASE provides transitional and permanent housing to homeless individuals, especially those with complex medical or behavioral health needs. They also offer support services, including job training, mental health counseling, and case management, to help residents gain stability and self-sufficiency.

7. Montgomery County Coalition for the Homeless (MCCH)

The Montgomery County Coalition for the Homeless works to reduce homelessness in Montgomery County by providing housing, advocacy, and supportive services. MCCH's programs include:

- **Safe Havens and Permanent Housing Programs:** For individuals with chronic homelessness or severe mental health needs.
- **Housing Stabilization Services:** To prevent individuals and families from becoming homeless.
- **Veteran Housing:** MCCH provides resources specifically tailored to veterans experiencing homelessness.

8. Baltimore City's Mayor's Office of Homeless Services (MOHS)

- The Mayor's Office of Homeless Services in Baltimore City is responsible for coordinating homeless outreach, housing programs, and resource distribution. MOHS works closely with local shelters, nonprofits, and community programs to deliver essential services such as:
- **Street Outreach:** Connecting people with shelters, healthcare, and support.
- **Permanent Supportive Housing Programs:** Offering stable housing and case management services to chronically homeless individuals.
- **Family Stability Programs:** Providing support for families facing homelessness or housing instability.

Maryland Domestic Violence Resources:

Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence (MNADV)

- Phone: 1-800-634-3570
- Website: mnadv.org
- Provides information, support, and a directory of local service providers for victims of domestic violence.

Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault (MCASA)

- Phone: 1-877-988-7800
- Website: mcasa.org
- Offers support and resources for sexual assault survivors, including those experiencing domestic violence.

Crisis Intervention Services

- Phone: 1-800-322-4043 (available 24/7)
- Provides immediate support and crisis intervention.

Local Shelters and Services:

- Montgomery County:
 - Phone: 240-777-4195
 - Website: montgomerycountymd.gov
- Prince George's County:
 - Phone: 301-883-7870
 - Website: pgcmls.info
- Baltimore City:
 - House of Ruth Maryland
 - Phone: 410-828-6390
 - Website: houseofruth.org

National Domestic Violence Hotline

- Phone: 1-800-799-SAFE (7233)
- Website: thehotline.org
- Connects Maryland residents to local services.

Legal Aid Bureau

- Phone: 1-877-261-8807
- Website: mdlab.org
- Provides free legal assistance for protective orders and other legal matters related to domestic violence.



Director's Corner...



Erica Coleman CPRP Founder/ Director

"Be patient with yourself. Self-growth is tender; it's holy ground. There's no greater investment." –Stephen Covey