

branches & blossoms

Where strength branches out and joy blooms

CCYSB YOUTH SUICIDE INTERVENTION & PREVENTION SERVICES

APRIL 2026

Recognizing Early Warning Signs: When Something Feels "Off"

Maternal mental health challenges rarely appear overnight. More often, they begin subtly — small shifts in mood, sleep, thoughts, or behavior that are easy to dismiss. April is an opportunity to focus on prevention: recognizing early changes before they become overwhelming.

Many parents describe an early feeling that something simply feels "off." Trusting that feeling is important.

Emotional Warning Signs

Early emotional changes may include:

- Increased irritability
- Feeling unusually tearful
- Loss of interest in things that previously brought comfort
- Heightened sensitivity to criticism
- Feeling disconnected or numb
- A persistent sense of dread

These experiences may fluctuate at first, making them easy to minimize.

Cognitive Changes

Sometimes early signs show up in thinking patterns:

- Repetitive worry
- Difficulty concentrating
- Catastrophic thoughts
- Increased self-criticism
- Intrusive thoughts that feel distressing

It's common to assume these are "just stress," but persistent mental overload can signal vulnerability.

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What's Inside:

Recognizing Early Warning Signs: When Something Feels "Off"

Helpline & Crisis Resources

Substance Use & Coping: When Stress Relief Becomes Risk

When Support Doesn't Show Up: Coping with Disappointment & Isolation

Scan to learn more about Suicide Intervention & Prevention @ CCYSB !



Recognizing Early Warning Signs: When Something Feels "Off"

Behavioral Shifts

Behavior changes can include:

- Withdrawing from others
- Avoiding activities or appointments
- Changes in appetite
- Increased screen time to escape
- Difficulty resting, even when exhausted

Isolation in particular is both a symptom and a risk factor.

When to Reach Out

You don't need to wait until things feel unbearable. Consider support if:

- Changes last more than two weeks
- Functioning feels harder
- You're relying heavily on avoidance
- Loved ones notice changes
- You feel unlike yourself

Early support often prevents crisis.

Sleep as an Indicator

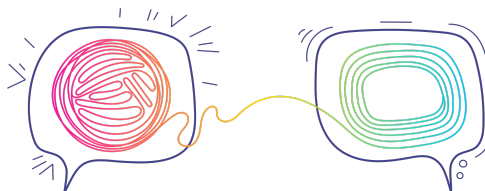
Sleep disruption is expected postpartum, but notice:

- Inability to sleep even when the baby sleeps
- Racing thoughts at night
- Early waking with anxiety
- Feeling emotionally unstable after poor sleep

Sleep changes often precede mood changes.

A Gentle Reminder

You don't need a diagnosis to deserve help. If something feels off, that is enough.



Local Roots: Community Spotlight



CARROLL COUNTY
PUBLIC LIBRARY

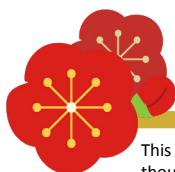
— Infinite Possibilities

The Carroll County Public Library offers programming & events geared toward youth Birth - 24 months. CCPL's mission is to inspire, educate, and empower the community by offering opportunities for exploration, lifelong education, community engagement, and access to technology, with locations in Eldersburg, Finksburg, Mount Airy, North Carroll, Taneytown, and Westminster.

Services specific to birth - 24 months includes Play & Learn Centers and developmentally appropriate programming scheduled throughout the month, some available in Spanish.

Play & Learn Centers: CCPL recognizes the importance of interactive play in the development of early literacy skills in children Birth through age five. The Play & Learn Centers are literacy-rich environments that offer opportunities to engage with your child in imaginative play. Each branch of CCPL houses a unique space and is open during library hours.

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Helplines & Crisis Resources

This newsletter is for educational and supportive purposes, not a substitute for mental health diagnosis or treatment. If you experience suicidal thoughts, thoughts of harming your baby, or severe symptoms, please contact emergency services, go to the nearest emergency department, or call 988 / crisis line immediately.

National Suicide &
Crisis Lifeline

Call or Text

988

Chat: <https://988lifeline.org/chat>

National Maternal Mental
Health Hotline

Call or Text

1-833-TLCMAMA

(1-833-852-6262)

Postpartum Support
International (PSI)

www.postpartum.net

1-800-4PPD (4773)

Substance Use & Coping: When Stress Relief Becomes Risk

The perinatal period is emotionally and physically demanding. When stress feels relentless, many parents look for ways to cope. Sometimes this includes alcohol, cannabis, prescription medications, or other substances. This conversation requires compassion, not judgment.

Why Vulnerability Increases

Substance use may increase due to:

- Sleep deprivation
- Anxiety
- Pain
- Isolation
- Trauma resurfacing
- Feeling overwhelmed

When coping resources feel limited, short-term relief can feel appealing.

Mental Health & Substance Use

Substances may temporarily reduce anxiety but can worsen:

- Depression
- Irritability
- Sleep quality
- Emotional regulation

They may also interact with prescribed medications.

Harm Reduction Perspective

Support does not always mean immediate abstinence. It can include:

- Honest conversation with a provider
- Safer use education
- Mental health treatment
- Peer recovery support
- Medication-assisted treatment when appropriate

You deserve help without fear of judgment.

Common Patterns

Parents may notice:

- Using alcohol to “turn off” anxiety
- Increasing frequency of use
- Relying on substances to sleep
- Hiding use from others
- Feeling guilt after using

Shame often prevents honest conversation.

When to Seek Support

Consider reaching out if:

- Use is increasing
- You feel unable to reduce use
- You are using to numb emotions
- You feel secrecy or shame growing

Early support prevents escalation.

A Compassionate Reminder

Using substances does not make you a bad parent. But struggling alone increases risk. Support improves safety — for you and your baby.



Programming for kids: CCPL offers a variety of activities each month. Visit CCPL's website to search the Events Calendar for more details. Examples of programming includes:



Family Storytime & Saturday Storytime:
We'll share books, stories, rhymes, and movement. Come talk, sing, read, write, and play together in a format appropriate for young children.



Pajama Party Storytime:

Wear your pajamas, bring your favorite stuffed animal, and listen to stories before bed. This storytime introduces stories through books, songs, and activities appropriate for young children.



Read and Play:

Join your little one at a storytime featuring interactive books, rhymes, music, and movement, followed by playgroup activities that allow children to practice skills and socialize.



Play & Explore:

Come play with us! Help your child practice fine motor, gross motor, and social/emotional skills through the art of play! A large variety of engaging toys and materials will be available.



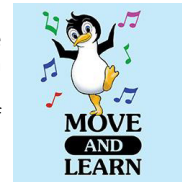
Move & Groove Storytime:

This energetic storytime encourages creative movement and dance to help develop gross motor skills, coordination, and spatial awareness while fostering a love of stories.



Let's Move!:

Join us for an interactive storytime where we're learning through movement. We'll explore books, rhymes, and songs with lots of wiggles and giggles!



Move and Learn:

A theme-based storytime featuring an age-appropriate story, songs, and learning activities, with a concentration on creative movement.

When Support Doesn't Show Up: Coping with Disappointment & Isolation

Many parents enter pregnancy or postpartum expecting a village — friends visiting, family helping, community showing up. Sometimes that support arrives. Other times, it doesn't. When promised or expected support falls short, the emotional impact can be significant. Disappointment during the perinatal period can feel personal, heavy, and isolating.

The Gap Between Expectation and Reality

You may have imagined:

- Frequent check-ins
- Help with meals or chores
- Emotional support
- Shared excitement
- Practical assistance

Instead, you may find:

- Silence
- Cancelled visits
- Superficial check-ins
- Advice instead of help
- Feeling forgotten

This gap can create sadness, resentment, or shame.

Naming the Disappointment

It is okay to say:

- "I feel let down."
- "I thought I would have more help."
- "This is harder than I expected."

Disappointment does not make you ungrateful. It means you had needs.

When Isolation Impacts Mental Health

Seek support if:

- You feel persistently alone
- You withdraw further
- Hopelessness increases
- You avoid reaching out at all

Isolation is a risk factor for postpartum depression and anxiety. Connection — even small connection — is protective.

A Gentle Truth

The absence of support does not reflect your worth.

If people are not showing up in the way you hoped, it may say more about their capacity than about your value.

You deserve care — even if it comes from unexpected places.

Why This Hurts So Much

The perinatal period heightens vulnerability. When support feels absent:

- Safety feels reduced
- Stress feels amplified
- Loneliness deepens
- Trust may feel shaken

You may wonder:

- "Why isn't anyone helping?"
- "Did I expect too much?"
- "Is this my fault?"

It is not your fault.

Coping With Limited Support

If your village is smaller than expected:

1. Redefine Support

Support doesn't always look like large gestures.

It may include:

- One reliable person
- A weekly phone call
- A therapist
- An online support group

2. Be Specific

People sometimes fail to show up because they don't know how. Try:

- "Could you bring dinner Tuesday?"
- "Can you hold the baby for 30 minutes?"

3. Lower Expectations Strategically

Releasing expectations for certain people may protect your emotional energy.

4. Build New Connections

Parent groups, therapy, lactation groups, or community classes can expand support.



PEARL will be a rolling admission group held at the Carroll County Youth Service Bureau every Wednesday 10 – 11 am. A licensed therapist will lead the group with the support of a peer support specialist. Medicaid and private insurance accepted. Referrals can be placed by contacting the Referral Coordinator at 410.848.2500, option 0. For more information on PEARL, please contact Bobby Jarrett, LCPC at 443.244.8657 or rjarrett@ccysb.org.