

Community Support Journal

Montgomery County Community Support Program Committee *Newsletter*

March 2026

Volume 3



CSP Logo designed by Chris Ford

Certified Peer Specialist Training Apply now

By: Tracey Riper-Thomas
Mental Health Coordinator of Peer Support and Career Services, Office of Mental Health

Do you or someone you know have interest in becoming a Certified Peer Specialist? The next CPS training is coming up quick! Please see dates on the next page for storytelling and WRAP training (prerequisites to CPS training) as well as the dates for the CPS training.



The Certified Peer Specialist (CPS) Training Application was distributed by email in early March. The PDF can be saved and submitted from a laptop, phone, or desktop computer. The application can also be downloaded at <https://www.montgomerycountypa.gov/CPSTraining>.

We look forward to receiving the applications which are due March 30th.

Who is a Certified Peer Specialist?

A Certified Peer Specialist (CPS) is a person who is trained and qualified/credentialed to be an employed staff member with lived experience of mental health or co-occurring challenges.

A CPS is trained to provide peer support and mutual aid, promoting recovery and self-advocacy, for others facing similar challenges. By offering insight into the recovery process based on their own experience, peer specialists are able to provide a unique perspective. Peer support is intended to inspire hope and

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Hospitality Center programs on hold temporarily

From: Norristown Hospitality Center

IMPORTANT SERVICE UPDATE!

Hospitality Center Transitional Schedule

 Last Day at the Senior Center March 11, 2026
This will be our final day of operations at the Senior Center.

Continued on page 3

demonstrate that recovery is achievable.

Please note:

CPS Training Dates

- WRAP and Storytelling Training, In Person: April 22, 23, and 24 (Full days) (Mandatory - Prerequisite)
- 75-Hour Training, In Person (10 Full days): Weekdays from April 27 - May 8

Also - The Information Session details will be sent over the next few days. (However, the sessions are not required to apply).

For additional information, CPS career description, and FAQs, please visit: <https://www.montgomerycountypa.gov/CPSTraining>



Certified Peer Specialist Training

Prepare for an exciting career opportunity! Certified Peer Specialists (CPS) are individuals with personal, lived experience in their own recovery, who work in the mental health field.

 **April 27 - May 8, 2026**



**MONTGOMERY
COUNTY**
PENNSYLVANIA

[montgomerycountypa.gov/CPSTraining](https://www.montgomerycountypa.gov/CPSTraining)

For more information, email Donna Vaughn:
Donna.Vaughn@montgomerycountypa.gov

March 12–13

We will be moving out of the Senior Center.

 Mail Services Continue!

Mail Service Resumes March 16, 2026 at HopeWorx

New Temporary Location for Mail Pickup:

HopeWorx

1210 Stanbridge St., Suite 600


Norristown, PA 19401

We currently serve 472 guests who receive mail through the Hospitality Center. To ensure uninterrupted access:

Daily mail distribution will take place at HopeWorx:

A dedicated volunteer will process all incoming mail

A Hospitality Center staff member will be onsite to provide support and referrals to community resources

 Temporary Pause of Other Programs

Most Hospitality Center programs will be paused briefly during this transition period.

 Our New Building Is Coming Soon!

We expect to move into our new permanent location in 8–10 weeks.

 Thank You for Your Patience and Support

We remain committed to serving our community and ensuring continuity of essential services throughout this transition.



Hospitality Center Transitional Schedule

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March 11 **Last Day at Senior Center**

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See next page



PROTECT YOUR VOTING RIGHTS!

Disability and civil rights organizations are calling on Congress to stand against the SAVE Act, HR 22, and any bills that make voting harder for people with disabilities. The SAVE Act has already passed the U.S. House and the U.S. Senate is going to start debate and voting on this TOMORROW, March 17th!

If passed, these bills would:

- Limit vote-by-mail
- Limit who can give help to voters with disabilities
- Require hard-to-get documents, such as passports or birth certificates, to register to vote.

Millions of voters will face new barriers when trying to vote, including:

- Disabled people
- Older adults
- People with limited transportation
- People with limited access to documents

There is no evidence that Election fraud by noncitizens is a widespread problem.

However, there is clear evidence that these policies would block people (who ARE legally eligible) from voting. These policies would conflict with protections under the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Voting Rights Act that have been around for many years.

With major elections approaching, these policies threaten accessible voting and our democracy.

Call on Congress to reject these policies and protect accessible voting.

Take action here: <https://action.aclu.org/send.../stop-anti-voter-bills-now>

**SAY “NO” TO
THE SAVE ACT!**

Protect:

- **Mail-in voting**
- **Voter assistance**
- **Accessible voter registration**

DRP DISABILITY RIGHTS PENNSYLVANIA

The 2026 Primary Election is Tuesday, May 19, 2026

General Primary – Unofficial List of Offices to Appear on the Ballot

The following are the public offices, including the number to be elected and the districts in which nominations are to be made, for which candidates are to be nominated at the General Primary and elected at the General Election:

Governor (Vote for One)

Lieutenant Governor (Vote for One)

Representative in Congress (Vote for One) (Districts 1, 4, 5)

Senator in the General Assembly (Vote for One) (Districts 4, 12, 24, 44)

Representative in the General Assembly (Vote for One) (Districts 53, 54, 61, 70, 131, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 152, 153, 154)

MONTGOMERY COUNTY BOARD OF ELECTIONS

Neil K. Makhija, Chair Jamila H. Winder, Vice Chair Thomas DiBello, Commissioner

www.montgomerycountypa.gov

Voter Services Montgomery County

- PO Box 311 Norristown, PA 19404-0311
- 610-278-3280
- montcovotes@montgomerycountypa.gov
- Frank Dean Director of Elections

Voting in Pennsylvania

Important Deadlines For The 2026 Primary Elections:

May 4, 2026	Last day to register to vote.
May 12, 2026	Deadline to request a mail-in or absentee ballot.
May 4, 2026	Suggested last day to request your mail ballot.
May 19, 2026	Deadline to return your mail ballot. It must be received by your county by 8 p.m.
May 19, 2026	Election Day





HAGIR NETWORK
CELEBRATING
WOMEN'S
HISTORYMONTH

Secretary
Dr. Valerie
Arkoosh



www.HagirNetwork.com

Women's History Month Spotlight | Dr. [Valerie Arkoosh, MD, MPH](#) Secretary, [The Pennsylvania Department of Human Services](#)

Leadership at scale requires more than credentials. It requires depth, judgment, and the ability to move complex systems toward measurable impact. Dr. Valerie Arkoosh brings all three.

Appointed by Governor [Josh Shapiro](#), she now leads one of the Commonwealth's most critical agencies, serving more than 3.6 million Pennsylvanians through programs including Medicaid, child welfare, behavioral health, and services for seniors and individuals with disabilities.

Before leading DHS, Secretary Arkoosh spent eight years on the [Montgomery County, PA](#) Board of Commissioners.

She became the first woman ever elected Chair of the Commission in 2016 and was unanimously chosen again in 2020.

Under her leadership, the county strengthened services for children, veterans, and seniors; eliminated street homelessness among veterans; implemented a \$15 minimum wage and gender-neutral paid parental leave for county employees; and advanced integrated strategies to combat the opioid crisis, including expanding access to naloxone.

As a physician and public health professional, she led Montgomery County's response to COVID-19 with transparency, data-driven decision-making, and steady communication, earning broad respect during an unprecedented public health emergency.

Her commitment to maternal health and reproductive rights remains central to her advocacy. She serves on the Pennsylvania Maternal Mortality Review Committee, bringing both clinical and policy insight to the work of improving outcomes for women and families.

Secretary Arkoosh's public service is grounded in clinical expertise. Prior to elected office, she was a Professor of Clinical Anesthesiology and Clinical Obstetrics and Gynecology at the Perelman School of Medicine at the [University of Pennsylvania](#).

She previously served on the faculty of [Drexel University College of Medicine](#) and Jefferson Medical College, and she held national leadership roles, including serving as President of the Society for Obstetric Anesthesia and Perinatology.

Her policy experience expanded nationally when she led the National Physicians Alliance, helping shape healthcare reform strategy and physician engagement during the implementation of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

MD, University of Nebraska College of Medicine
MPH, [Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health](#)
Residency in Anesthesiology, [Jefferson Medical College](#), with a focus in obstetrics
BA in Economics, [Northwestern University](#)

From: The Hagir Network



Montgomery County PRO-ACT presents

GAME NIGHT

Extravaganza

MARCH 26, 2026
6PM-8PM

MINI GOLF • BOWLING • LASER MAZE

MONSTER GOLF
7 W GERMANTOWN PIKE
NORRISTOWN, PA 19401

- ARCADE
- VIRTUAL REALITY
- FOOD & DRINKS

FREE EVENT- REGISTRATION REQUIRED

RSVP TO LIZ WENDT AT 267-817-4825 OR
LWENDT@COUNCILSEPA.ORG

 Ambassadors for Recovery

 MONTGOMERY COUNTY PENNSYLVANIA



Mental Health Advocacy Day 2026

MONDAY, MAY 4 | PENNSYLVANIA STATE CAPITOL ROTUNDA
501 N 3RD STREET, HARRISBURG, PA

10:00 AM - LEGISLATIVE VISITS
2:00PM - PRESS CONFERENCE

MENTAL HEALTH START TALKING

You don't have to fight your battle alone. Talk to us.

1-855-634-HOPE (4673)



MONTGOMERY COUNTY
**MOBILE
CRISIS
SUPPORT**
1-855-634-HOPE
(1-855-634-4673)

Join Us for NAMIWalks Montgomery County PA — May 16, 2026

Won't you join the joy of this year's most important
mental health fundraising event?

We're excited to invite you to NAMIWalks Montgomery County PA, taking place on Saturday, May 16, 2026, at Temple University Ambler Campus (580 Meetinghouse Rd., Ambler, PA 19002).

By registering, walking, or supporting a team, you play a vital role in advancing NAMI's mission and moving us closer to a future where Mental Health for All is not just a vision—but a reality.

<https://www.namiwalks.org/montcopa>

TOGETHER
we are
NAMIWalks
Montgomery County PA

2026
Ready to Rally?

MENTAL HEALTH for all

Together we're going to make NAMIWalks 2026 the best one ever!

Temple University Ambler Campus
580 Meetinghouse Rd.
Ambler, PA 19002



WOMEN VETERANS AND FIRST RESPONDERS SUPPORT GROUP

A free and confidential space for women veterans and first responders to connect, share, and lift each other up.

REGISTER NOW



**2ND AND 4TH
THURSDAY OF THE MONTH
6:30PM-8:00PM
VIA ZOOM**

People with mental illness deserve help — not handcuffs.

Learn more through Navigating the Criminal Justice System, a NAMI resource for individuals with mental illness and their families. Access guidance and tools to help families advocate for their loved ones: nami.org/CJGuide

**PEOPLE WITH
MENTAL ILLNESS
DESERVE HELP
NOT HANDCUFFS.**



COMMUNITY FOR CHANGE

Montco
**MUTUAL AID
MARKET**



March 21, 2026
1:30 PM - 4:30 PM



**Reformed Church of
the Ascension UCC**
1700 W Main St.
Norristown, PA

- ✓ *Goods Swap*
- ✓ *Skill Share*
- ✓ *Free Resources*

A monthly community-driven market bringing together art, skills, and resources in the spirit of care and connection.

It's a space where everyone can share what they have, take what they need, and know they belong.

No cash, no barter,
no barriers.



COMMUNITY FOR CHANGE

Montco MUTUAL AID MARKET



March 21, 2026

1:30 PM - 4:30 PM



**Reformed Church of
the Ascension UCC**

1700 W Main St.
Norristown, PA

- ✓ *Goods Swap*
- ✓ *Skill Share*
- ✓ *Free Resources*

Goods Swap Needs:



Art Supplies



Plants



Board Games



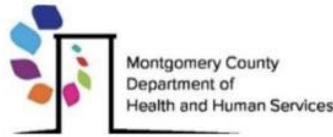
Spring Items

(umbrellas & rain gear)

**BRING WHAT YOU HAVE &
TAKE WHAT YOU NEED!**

All swap items should be clean,
useful, and in good condition.





ADULT MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID
Friday, May 15, 2026 at



Sponsored by The Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services

Mental Health First Aid teaches you how to identify, understand and respond to signs of mental illnesses and substance use disorders. In this course, participants learn the unique risk factors and warning signs of mental health problems, the importance of early intervention and, most importantly, how to help someone experiencing a mental health or substance use emergency.

- For all MHFA classes you will complete a 2-hour, self-paced online class, followed by a 6.5 hour (including lunch and breaks) Instructor-led training. Certification is for 3 years.

ADULT MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID
DATE: Friday, May 15, 2026
TIME: 8:30 am—3:30 pm
St Luke's Penn Foundation
807 Lawn Avenue Sellersville, PA 18960

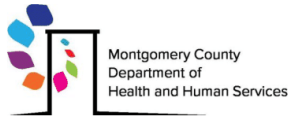
Learn how to respond with the Mental Health First Aid Action Plan (ALGEE):

- ⇒ *Assess for risk of suicide or harm.*
- ⇒ *Listen nonjudgmentally.*
- ⇒ *Give reassurance and information.*
- ⇒ *Encourage appropriate professional help.*
- ⇒ *Encourage self-help and other support strategy*



Register at www.fivecountymh.org

Questions?? Contact:
regionalmentalhealthfirstaid@pmhcc.org



Sponsored by The Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services

SE Regional Mental Health Services Coordination Office

Announcing 2026 Winter/ Spring Mental Health First Aid Classes

2026 Training Schedule

Adult Blended MHFA 2/27/2026
8:30-3:30 , at the Flux Space
56 Buttonwood St. Norristown, PA 19401

Older Adult MHFA 3/20/2026
8:30-4:30, at Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church, 1000 West Main Street Lansdale, PA 19446

Youth Blended MHFA 3/18/2026
8:30-3:30 at The Ambler YMCA
1325 McKean Rd, Ambler, PA 19002

Adult Blended MHFA 5/15/2026
8:30-3:30 at Penn Foundation
807 Lawn Ave, Sellersville, PA 18960

Youth Blended MHFA 5/13/2026
8:30-3:30 at the Spring Valley YMCA
19 W. Linfield Trappe Road

Mental Health First Aid teaches you how to identify, understand and respond to signs of mental illnesses and substance use disorders. In this course, participants learn the unique risk factors and warning signs of mental health problems, the importance of early intervention and, most importantly, how to help someone experiencing a mental health or substance use emergency.

- For all MHFA classes you will complete a 2-hour, self-paced online class, followed by a 6.5 hour (including lunch and breaks) Instructor-led training. Certification is for 3 years.

Sign Up for a Class today at:
www.fivecountymh.org
For More information email
regionalmentalhealthfirstaid@pmhcc.org



**“BE THE ONE TO MAKE A
DIFFERENCE IN SOMEONE’S LIFE!”**





Creating Increased Connections
A program of Resources for Human Development

CREATING INCREASED CONNECTIONS (CIC) GROUPS



TAKING BACK OUR POWER

Taking Back Our Power is a peer support group for individuals with lived experience of sensory phenomena (like hearing things others don't hear) and unusual beliefs

MONDAYS
2:00PM-3:00PM
Hopeworx
1210 Stanbridge St #600,
Norristown, PA 19401

TUESDAYS
2:30PM-4:00PM
Bryn Mawr Presbyterian Church
625 Montgomery Ave
Bryn Mawr, PA 19010

THURSDAYS
1:00PM-2:00PM
Trinity Reformed Church
60 N. Hanover St
Pottstown, PA 19464

CIRCLE OF HOPE

Circle of Hope is peer-to-peer led discussion group. Join us for lively conversation about how we are feeling, our successes and challenges, our recovery, and how we maintain our wellness. Everyone is welcome.

WEDNESDAYS
1:00PM-2:00PM
Hopeworx
1210 Stanbridge St #600,
Norristown, PA 19401

THURSDAYS
10:30AM-12:00PM
Hopeworx
1210 Stanbridge St #600,
Norristown, PA 19401

LIVE ANOTHER DAY

TUESDAYS
12:30PM-1:45PM
Lansdale Library
301 Vine St
Lansdale, PA 19446

Alternatives to Suicide groups are intended as non-judgmental spaces where people can share some of their darkest thoughts without being assumed to have an illness or being assessed for involuntary interventions. Openly exploring these thoughts - and the feelings and experiences underneath them - is often the key to moving toward something different.

WALK AND TALK

Every 1st and 3rd Friday
11:00AM-12:30PM
King of Prussia Mall
Meet at Food Court on 1st Floor
Join us for a time to work on our wellness, and enjoy each other's company as we exercise together.
Enter between KPOT and Bonefish Grill
160 N Gulph Rd
King of Prussia, PA 19406

WOMENS IDENTITY AND EXPERIENCES GROUP

This group was created for women as a safe environment to voice & openly share our life stories as women & to empower ourselves to find greater meaning & purpose in life.

WEDNESDAYS
3:00PM-4:30PM
Teams Link
<https://teams.microsoft.com/Womensgroup>

For More Information Contact Sheila.HallPrioleau@RHD.org 215-906-0453
www.ciconnections.org

Subcommittee Reports from February 2026

Advocacy Subcommittee – Discussed story sharing project. Links in chat for Medicaid stories and surveys. Family life line. RHD Services will work on feedback for surveys. Advocacy may or may not be closing at HopeWorx. What’s going to happen to those people who they served. What will happen to the resources. Hospitality Center has an extension to end of January. They are looking for extension and/or changing buildings. Funding in schools used for equipment and not direct involvement with kids.

Community Outreach – Lea Anne discussed walk and talk. Maybe now join in with CIC walks at the mall. Just too cold to walk outside at Valley Forge. CIC can partner with CSP in spring when warmer. Penny added that the new Community Connection Grant flyer is out. People can use grants for: movies, dinner, amusement park, concert, up to \$75. It can help with cost of transportation to an event. It’s not just for providers having an event. It’s for individuals as well. Penny sent it out through email. Christine said her friends from Philadelphia came up to Montco (Norristown) to do homeless outreach. They felt pushed out. Are there rules? They hand out food for homeless, socks, blankets. If they were inside the Transportation Center – you can’t be inside. McDonald’s doesn’t allow it. Other property owners don’t allow it.

Conference Subcommittee – Confirmed May 20th (a Wednesday). Will be changing venues to the Variety Club this year. Invoice put together for caterer. On hold for moment figuring out budget restrictions. Hopefully, sorted out by next month.

CSP MEETING
CALENDER
2026

Meetings are held every third Thursday, monthly from 12: 00-2:30pm

The next meetings will be:

March	19
April	16
May	21
June	17

Meetings are held in person and via Zoom.

Montgomery County CSP Executive Committee

2024/2025 Tri-Chairs
 Provider Member: Jim Markey
 Person in Recovery: Morgan Killian-Moseley
 Family Member: Vacant

2024/2025 Sub-Committee Chairs
 Community Outreach: Erin Villarose
 Advocacy: Cindy Todd & Christine Stutman
 Conference: Harry Bowles & Justin Chamrin

2024/2025 Treasurer
 Erin Anguish



County Liaison -
Tracey Riper-Thomas

Fiduciary - HopeWorx, Inc.

1210 Stanbridge Street,
Suite 600
Norristown, PA 19401
610-270-3685

CSP Principles

- * Person Centered/
Person Empowered
- * Culturally competent
- * Designed to Meet
Special Needs
- * Community Based
with Natural Supports
- * Flexible
- * Coordinated
- * Accountable
- * Strengths-Based

CSP Mission Statement:

Montgomery County's Community Support Program (CSP) brings together individuals that receive mental health services, their family members, providers and the Department of Behavioral Health in an equal partnership to promote recovery and excellence in the delivery of community-based mental health services.

The committee strives to include a balance of people who use services, people who provide services, family members, and interested members of the community at large. The CSP initiatives continue to grow state, regionally and county wide. As the involvement increases CSP has become a place that feedback can truly be given to the county from individuals that receive services and information can be given that suits the needs and requests of those that attend.

Organizations who regularly send representatives to CSP:

Central Behavioral Health, AdvocacyWorx, Community Satisfaction Team of Montgomery County, Magellan Health Services, Montgomery Co. Department of Behavioral Health, Montgomery County Emergency Services (MCES), NAMI Montgomery County, Norristown Vet Center, Resources for Human Development, Salisbury Behavioral Health

CSP Subcommittees:

- * **Advocacy Subcommittee**—Works on legislative, policy, communication, budget, voter education and other issues related to mental health services in the county, statewide and at the federal level when relevant. At the direction of the CSP Committee, the Advocacy Subcommittee gathers information on issues, plans advocacy events and creates a monthly newsletter to provide information to the stakeholder network as well as the community at large about the work of CSP. The newsletter also provides updates on new and changing mental health services provided in Montgomery County. The newsletter editor can be contacted at: kathiemitchell8221@gmail.com.
- * **Community Outreach Subcommittee**—Works on facilitating opportunities for people in the CSP community to be more involved in the Montgomery County community. This includes implementing the Community Connections grants, which provide funding for people to participate in a variety of activities. The committee also implements transportation grants that provide gas cards and SEPTA day passes to CSP community members. The annual CSP Poster Art contest is also organized by this committee.
- * **Conference Subcommittee** – The conference subcommittee will plan and fundraise for the annual Montgomery County CSP Conference.

Meetings:

12:00 p.m. to 2:30 p.m.

3rd Thursday of each
month

Montgomery County
Community College
Blue Bell, PA

In person & Zoom

Kathie Mitchell, Newsletter Editor

Join our Mailing list!

We have an email list as well as a regular mailing, to join:

Send an e-mail to:

pjohnson@hopeworxinc.org

Or send your contact info to this mailing address:

We invite all peers, family members and providers/professionals to attend.

Website: www.montcopacsp.org

<https://www.facebook.com/montcopacsp/>