



MIDDLE SCHOOL

PLAYBOOK

2026–2027 SCHOOL YEAR

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Welcome to the new school year! Our vision is for students to be Ready by Design, and we want to partner with you to make that a reality. Our new Middle School Playbook is designed to empower you as a caregiver, providing the tools you need to ask about academic progress, collaborate with teachers, and access available family resources. This guide is here to support you in helping your child(ren) navigate middle school successfully, and we hope you find these resources beneficial throughout their academic years.

Sincerely,
Dyann R. Mack, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

The Playbook includes:

A Day in the Life of a Middle School Student	3
Academic Information	4
Student Support Services	7
Future Planning	9

MIDDLE SCHOOL DIRECTORY

Aberdeen Middle

Marc A. Manzo, Principal
(410) 273-5510

Bel Air Middle

Laura Silk, Principal
(410) 638-4140

Edgewood Middle

Monisha Thomas, Principal
(410) 612-1518

Fallston Middle

Joanne C. Frailer, Principal
(410) 638-4129

Havre de Grace Middle

Brad Spence, Principal
(410) 939-6608

Magnolia Middle

Jason Redmond, Principal
(410) 612-1525

North Harford Middle

Mark C. Truszkowski, Principal
(410) 638-3658

Patterson Mill Middle

Brooke Harrell, Principal
(410) 638-4640

Southampton Middle

Dr. Helen Miller, Principal
(410) 638-4150

Middle school office hours are 7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
North Harford Middle School office hours are 7:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

[Click here to access HCPS Middle School Websites.](#)

A DAY IN THE LIFE

OF A MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENT

SAMPLE STUDENT SCHEDULE

We are excited to share a sample student schedule for the upcoming school year, thoughtfully designed to support academic success, personal growth, and overall well-being for all middle school students. While this is only a sample and individual schedules may vary, it highlights quarterly options in Unified Arts and offers choice for students interested in participating in band, chorus, or orchestra.* Our goal is to create a school day that is both engaging and manageable, with a focus of every middle school student's success.

QUARTERLY CLASSES	Class Period	Course	Description	Marking Periods	Days	Room
	1	SS017B-5	World History 7	1, 2, 3, 4	M, T, W, Th, F	205
	2	MA017B-2	Math 7	1, 2, 3, 4	M, T, W, Th, F	129
	3	TE017N-1	Interactive Media 7	1	M, T, W, Th, F	A2
	3	HE017N-2	Health 7	2	M, T, W, Th, F	214
	3	TE047N-3	Career Compass 7	3	M, T, W, Th, F	225
	3	TE027N-4	Computer Science 7	4	M, T, W, Th, F	222
	4	LA017B-3	Language Arts A Writing	1, 2, 3, 4	M, T, W, Th, F	201
	5	LA027B-3	Language Arts B Reading	1, 2, 3, 4	M, T, W, Th, F	201
	6	PE017N-5	Physical Education 7	1, 2, 3, 4	M, T, W, Th, F	GYM
	7	SC017B-1	Science 7	1, 2, 3, 4	M, T, W, Th, F	203

*Band, chorus, and orchestra are held every other day with physical education.

EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Visit your child(ren)'s school websites for information on extracurricular activities.

ACADEMIC

INFORMATION

ACADEMIC COMMUNICATION

Canvas

Parents and caregivers are “observers” in Canvas. Observers can view courses, pages, assignments, course calendars, and their inbox.

 [Click here to access Canvas.](#)

Home Access Center (HAC)

HAC is an online portal that allows parents/caregivers to log in and view information pertaining to their student(s) attendance, classes, grades, and registration information. Access is provided to all parents, caregivers, legal custodians, and students. Parents/Caregivers will need a HAC account to access their student's report card.

 [Click here to access HAC.](#)

MIDDLE SCHOOL MATHEMATICS SEQUENCE

The Office of Mathematics website includes links, by course, to what students will learn in mathematics. It also includes links to the middle and high school course sequences for incoming grade 6, 7, and 8 students. There are several possible course sequences for students based on their recommended placement. Student placement is the process of using data to make decisions about the right course for each student. The goal of student placement is to ensure that each student is given the right level of challenge, helping them build a positive relationship with math, and develop confidence in their abilities. If you have questions regarding your student's mathematics course placement, please contact your student's teacher.

 [Click here for more information on HCPS Mathematics.](#)

UNIFIED ARTS COURSE OFFERINGS

The following Unified Arts courses are offered to all middle school students:

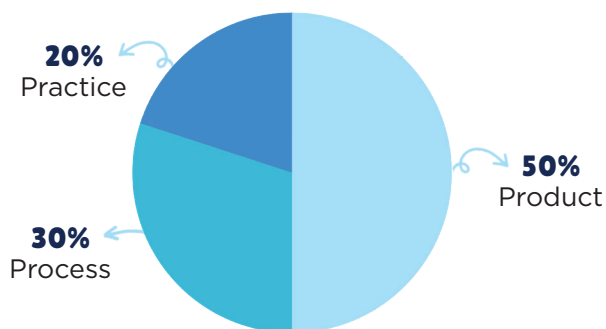
- Art
- Career Compass (*Grade 7 ONLY*)
- Computer Science
- Drama
- Engineering
- General Music

 [Click here for detailed unified arts course descriptions.](#)

ACADEMIC

INFORMATION, CONTINUED

GRADING AND REPORTING



Grades update every 10-12 days and are accessible on HAC.

Examples of:

- Practice - Homework
- Process - Classroom activities, lab
- Product - Projects, tests and quizzes

ADVISORY PERIOD

CAREER COACH LESSONS

DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP
LESSONS

FINANCIAL LITERACY
LESSONS

IREADY MATHEMATICS
PERSONALIZED INSTRUCTION

Students will participate in iReady Mathematics Personalized Instruction- these 45-minute online lessons provide instruction tailored to each student's needs and encourages students as they develop new skills.

STANDARDIZED TESTING

Standardized testing plays a key role in middle school education by providing a consistent measure of students' academic progress. It helps identify strengths and areas for improvement, guiding teachers in tailoring instruction to meet students' needs. By participating in standardized testing, middle school students develop essential test-taking skills and prepare for future assessments in high school and beyond.

MSTAR: Maryland System of Testing Academic Readiness (MSTAR) is an assessment administered in grades 3-8 in English Language Arts/Literacy and Mathematics.

MISA: The Maryland Integrated Science Assessment (MISA) is administered to grade 8 students.

Grade 8 Social Studies: Assessment as required by Maryland state law (Md. Ed. Art 7-203).

Mathematics	English Language Arts/Literacy	Science	Social Studies	Administration Window
Mathematics 3-8	ELA/L Grades 3-8	MISA Grade 5 MISA Grade 8	Social Studies Grade 8	SPRING

Click here for more information on College and Career Readiness.

ACADEMIC

INFORMATION, CONTINUED

HOMEWORK HELP

Does your child(ren) struggle with homework and you're not sure how to help? Your child(ren) can ask their teacher for homework help or utilize one of the available resources below. Parents/Caregivers can also call or email their child(ren)'s teacher for additional help.

- **Current and Retired Certified Teachers Tutoring Services**
- **Harford County Public Library Tutoring**
- **National Junior Honor Society Tutoring**

 [Click here for more information on HCPS Academic Tutoring.](#)

SPECIAL EDUCATION RESOURCES

At the middle school level, we focus on building students' independence and confidence as they prepare for high school. Special education services are primarily provided within general education classrooms through a collaborative teaching model, allowing students to receive specially designed instruction while remaining engaged with their peers. Based on their Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), some students also receive additional support in small groups or specialized classrooms, both within and outside of general education settings. Our goal is to help students become self-advocates and develop the skills they need to succeed in middle school and beyond.

 [Click here for more information on HCPS Special Education Resources.](#)

ACADEMICS AFTER GRADE 8

College and Career Readiness (CCR) sets a standard to prepare students for both college and the workforce. It ensures they have the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in entry-level college courses and pursue careers in high-demand, high-paying industries. The Blueprint for Maryland's Future aims for all students to meet this CCR standard by the end of grade 10, fully preparing them for higher education and rewarding career paths.

Math Mastery	Earn final grade of A, B, or C in the Algebra I course OR Score proficient (750) or above on the MSTAR Algebra I assessment
AND	
Academic Success	Earn a high school unweighted cumulative grade point average (GPA) of 3.0 or higher at the end of grades 10, 11, or 12

STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

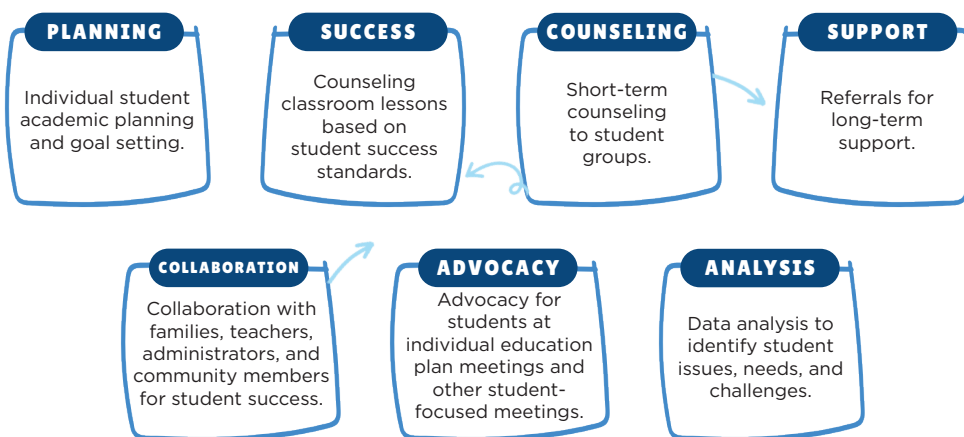
INFORMATION

Harford County Public Schools provide a variety of specialized services intended to optimize learning for all students. Coordinated Student Support Services support the instructional programs within our schools by addressing barriers to learning and promoting the healthy development of students.

[Click here for more information on HCPS Student Support Services.](#)

SCHOOL COUNSELING

Who are school counselors and what do they do for students?



[Click here for more information on the HCPS School Counseling Program.](#)

The School Counseling programs in HCPS are based on the American School Counselor Association's (ASCA) National Standards, facilitating student development in three broad content areas: Academic Development, Career Development, and Personal/Social Development.

CAREER COACHES

As part of the Blueprint for Maryland, students will receive support from Career Coaches to help them discover their strengths and interests. With this guidance, your child(ren) will create a personalized roadmap through activities that build self-awareness and explore different career options. They'll be encouraged and supported as they set goals for high school and their future beyond graduation. Each year, students will continue to take part in meaningful career-related experiences, and their plans will be updated regularly to reflect their growth and changing interests.

STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

INFORMATION, CONTINUED

ADJUSTING TO SCHOOL/GRADE LEVEL

The school counseling program assists students in adjusting to a new school or a new grade level:

TRANSITION TO GRADE 6

- Fifth grade students have the chance to visit and meet with the middle school counselors to learn about classes, programs, and opportunities available in middle school.
- Middle schools will provide parent/caregiver information through multiple channels including school websites, newsletters, phone calls, and in-person at a one-day summer orientation.

TRANSITION TO HIGH SCHOOL

- High school counselors will hold parent/caregiver information nights.
- Eighth grade students will have an opportunity to learn about ninth grade courses, graduation requirements, and choose classes for ninth grade in the spring of their eighth grade year.
- Students and parents/caregivers have many opportunities to attend magnet program information nights and open houses.

LAUNCH PLUS

LAUNCH PLUS is a comprehensive initiative aimed at empowering students beginning in grade 7 to set, monitor, and achieve their academic and post-secondary goals. Students will meet with their school counselor at the beginning of the school year to set an achievement goal which will be communicated to parents via email. Students will learn to monitor their progress as well as take the necessary steps to reach their specific goal. Each middle school will have a dedicated career coach to support students in attaining their goal. Launch Plus helps students to focus on the following: Goal, Action, Achieve!

 [Click here for more information on Launch Plus.](#)



XELLO: AN INTEGRATED FAMILY PORTAL

Xello is an integrated family portal. Families can explore and discover their students' future goals and plans with full access to their students' profile. And whether or not their child(ren) are in the same school or district, caregivers can access all their students' work from one portal.

 [Click here for in introductory video for Xello.](#)



STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

INFORMATION, CONTINUED

SUPPORTING YOUR ADOLESCENT

AGES 9–11

Middle childhood is an exciting stage of growth as children develop greater independence, strengthen friendships, and build important life skills. During these years, children become more aware of themselves and the world around them. While every child develops at their own pace, the following milestones can help you recognize healthy social and emotional development.

SIGNS OF HEALTHY DEVELOPMENT

A Growing Sense of Self

- Develops a clearer understanding of personal strengths, interests, and values.
- Begins to build confidence in who they are as an individual.

Stronger Teamwork Skills

- Works cooperatively with others during school, sports, and group activities.
- Demonstrates respect, empathy, and a willingness to compromise.

Increasing Independence

- Takes on age-appropriate responsibilities with less adult assistance.
- Shows confidence in making simple decisions while learning from mistakes.

Effective Communication

- Expresses thoughts, feelings, and ideas more clearly.
- Listens to others and participates in respectful conversations.

Positive Social Behavior

- Demonstrates appropriate behavior in different settings, such as school, home, and community activities.
- Understands and follows social expectations and rules.

Healthy Conflict Resolution

- Begins to resolve disagreements through problem-solving, communication, and compromise.
- Learns to manage frustration without hurting others.

Taking Responsibility

- Accepts responsibility for choices and actions.
- Understands that decisions have consequences and works to make things right when mistakes happen.

Safe and Responsible Technology Use

- Uses technology and social media in age-appropriate, respectful, and responsible ways.
- Understands basic online safety, digital citizenship, and the importance of protecting personal information.

HOW PARENTS CAN HELP

- Encourage your child's growing independence while providing guidance and support.
- Talk regularly about friendships, feelings, and problem-solving.
- Provide opportunities for teamwork through family activities, sports, or clubs.
- Model respectful communication and healthy ways to resolve conflicts.
- Praise responsibility, effort, and positive decision-making.
- Set clear expectations for technology use and discuss online safety regularly.

Remember

Every child develops at their own pace. Growth during the middle childhood years includes learning through successes, mistakes, and new experiences. Your encouragement, consistency, and involvement help your child build the confidence, responsibility, and social skills they need to thrive at home, at school, and in their community.

STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

INFORMATION, CONTINUED

SUPPORTING YOUR ADOLESCENT

AGES 12–18

Adolescence is a time of tremendous growth, change, and self-discovery. As your child develops greater independence, they are also learning important social, emotional, and decision-making skills. Every adolescent grows at their own pace, but the following milestones can help you understand healthy development.

SIGNS OF HEALTHY DEVELOPMENT

Growing Independence

- Takes responsibility for personal tasks and commitments.
- Demonstrates increasing independence while still seeking guidance when needed.

Positive Peer Relationships

- Feels accepted by peers and develops healthy, supportive friendships.
- Shows respect for others and values positive social connections.

Confidence in Decision-Making

- Makes thoughtful choices and learns from experiences.
- Demonstrates increasing self-confidence and trust in their own abilities.

Healthy Relationships

- Understands the importance of respect, communication, and boundaries in friendships and dating relationships.
- Responds appropriately to relationship challenges and seeks support when needed.

Managing Emotions

- Recognizes and expresses emotions in healthy ways.
- Uses positive coping strategies when faced with stress, disappointment, or unexpected feelings.

Self-Acceptance

- Develops a positive sense of identity and self-worth.
- Appreciates personal strengths while accepting areas for growth.

Adapting to a Larger Social World

- Successfully adjusts to new environments, responsibilities, and social situations at school and in the community.
- Demonstrates flexibility and resilience when navigating change.

HOW PARENTS CAN HELP

- Encourage open, judgment-free conversations.
- Support independence while maintaining appropriate expectations and boundaries.
- Praise effort, responsibility, and positive decision-making.
- Model healthy relationships and emotional regulation.
- Stay involved in your child's school, activities, and friendships.
- Remind your child that it's okay to ask for help when facing challenges.

Remember

Every adolescent develops at their own pace. Growth is rarely a straight path, and occasional setbacks are a normal part of development. Your encouragement, guidance, and consistent support play an important role in helping your child build the confidence and skills they need to thrive.

FUTURE PLANNING

Career and Technology Education (CTE) programs equip students with the content knowledge and durable skills to be competitive applicants for college and career-- and productive, successful citizens. Each CTE program offers unique coursework with opportunities to earn industry-recognized credentials and/or Advanced Placement and college credits, and to complete apprenticeships and/or internships.

HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAMS

These are broader educational offerings available at most high schools. They encompass multiple subject/career areas.

- Accounting and Finance
- Advanced Technology
- Apprenticeship Maryland
- Business Management
- Early Childhood/Child Development Associate
- Food and Beverage Management
- Marketing

SIGNATURE PROGRAMS

In addition to offering a comprehensive high school program, a number of high schools offer signature programs that integrate a specific focus or distinguishing theme with the skills, concepts, and instructional strategies of some portion of a school's curriculum. The theme or focus becomes the vehicle for teaching the traditional high school curriculum in a fresh, interesting, and challenging way.

- **Academy of Finance** (*Edgewood and Fallston high schools*)
- **Agriculture/Horticulture** (*North Harford High School*)
- **Biomedical Sciences** (*Havre de Grace and Bel Air high schools*)
- **Homeland and Emergency Preparedness** (*Joppatowne High School*)
- **Interactive Media** (*Bel Air, Patterson Mill, North Harford high schools, and Swan Creek School*)
- **Pre-Engineering** (*Aberdeen, C. Milton Wright, and Fallston high schools*)

MAGNET PROGRAMS

All students are able to apply for our Magnet Programs through an application process. Application is available on www.hcps.org/schools/magnetprograms.

- **Harford Technical High School**
- **Global Studies Program/International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme** (*Edgewood High School*)
- **Information Technology Oracle Academy** (*Havre de Grace High School*)
- **Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps (JROTC)** (*Joppatowne High School*)
- **Natural Resources and Agricultural Sciences** (*North Harford High School*)
- **Pathways in Technology Early College High School (P-TECH)** (*Joppatowne High School*)
- **Science and Mathematics Academy** (*Aberdeen High School*)
- **Teacher Academy of Maryland** (*Edgewood and North Harford high schools*)

FUTURE

PLANNING, CONTINUED

GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

Subject Area	Specific Credit Requirements
English	4 credits
Mathematics	4 credits, including: 1 credit in Algebra I and 1 credit in Geometry <i>Must be enrolled in a mathematics course in each year of high school</i> <i>(maximum of 4 years of attendance, unless in the 5th or 6th year a mathematics course is needed to meet a graduation requirement)</i>
Science	3 credits Students must complete coursework reflecting content from all three science disciplines: Earth and Space Science, Life Science, and Physical Science.
Social Studies	3 credits, including: 1 credit in American Government, 1 credit in World History, and 1 credit in U.S. History
Fine Arts	1 credit
Physical Education	1 credit <i>0.5 credit must include Foundations of Fitness and Physical Activity</i>
Health	1 credit
Technology	1 credit Foundations of Technology or AP Computer Science Principles
Career Pathway and Completer Program Requirements	4-6 credits 4 credits in an approved Career and Technology Education (CTE) Career Completer Program or 4 credits in a Career Pathway Program + 2 credits of same World Language + University Systems of Maryland (USM) requirements (4 years of math including Algebra II or beyond in the senior year)
Electives	May vary according to program

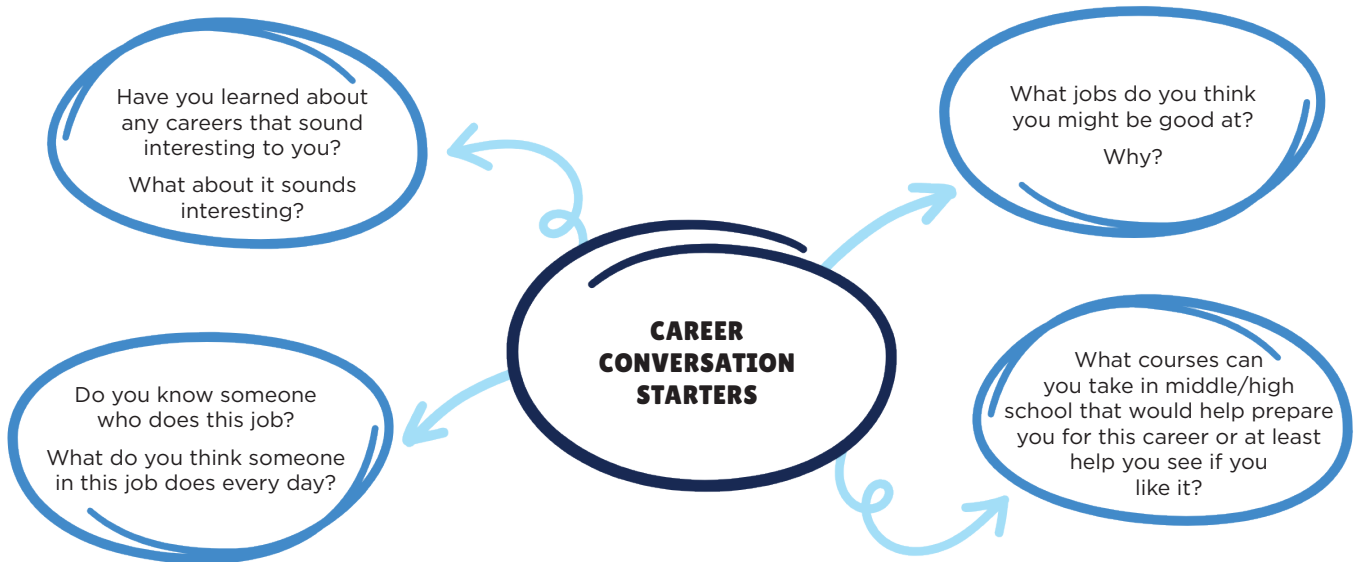
**Students must earn a minimum of 26 credits in grades 9 through 12 to receive a Maryland High School Diploma from Harford County Public Schools.*



Click here to access the HCPS Student Education Planning Guide.

FUTURE

PLANNING, CONTINUED



LAUNCHING YOUR MIDDLE SCHOOLER FOR SUCCESS

Parents/Caregivers can empower middle schoolers to become independent and responsible by gradually increasing freedom and responsibilities.

- **Foster independence**

If your child(ren) is struggling or has questions about their learning, have your child(ren) talk to their teacher independently first. This will show your child(ren) that you have confidence in them and will help build their independence.

- **Encourage time management**

Use planners or digital calendars for organization. Reminders for homework and projects build responsibility.

- **Assign age-appropriate tasks**

Regular chores like managing laundry or meal prep build confidence and accountability.

- **Support problem-solving**

Encourage your child(ren) to think through challenges independently by asking guiding questions.

- **Allow natural consequences**

Let students learn from mistakes (like forgotten homework) to reinforce responsibility.

- **Model independence**

Show how you set goals, manage tasks, and handle challenges to demonstrate adult responsibility.

- **Build financial awareness**

Give an allowance to practice budgeting, saving, and making spending decisions.

- **Encourage extracurriculars**

Sports, clubs, and activities build teamwork, commitment, and self-discipline.

PARENT COACHING



Parent coaching offers **no-cost, virtual support** to help you navigate challenges, strengthen your well-being, and help your child thrive.

Common Topics Parents Explore With a Coach



Strengthening Connections

Build trust with your child by learning how to listen, respond to their needs, and create a safe space for open conversation.



Improving Communication

Discover ways to stay patient, reduce conflict, and guide your child with calm, productive conversations.



Understanding Emotions

Learn practical ways to address anxiety, anger, and stress while helping your child develop healthy emotional skills.



Encouraging School Engagement

Work through challenges like school avoidance, motivation, and attendance so your child can feel more confident at school.



Supporting Friendships and Social Confidence

Help your child navigate friendships, bullying, and social challenges while building confidence and connection.



Managing Technology and Boundaries

Set clear boundaries around screens and technology while reducing daily struggles at home.

One-on-One, Virtual, Private

Use coaching to talk through everyday challenges, set goals, track progress, and find strategies that work for your family!

Participation and conversations are not shared with your school.

How to Get a **COACH**

- 1** Enroll at *ParentGuidance.org*
- 2** Schedule your first session
- 3** Download the mobile app

Get started today, and
schedule the time that
works best for you!



Scan or Visit
ParentGuidance.org



Mental Healthcare Coordination Service *for Harford County Public Schools Students, Staff, and their Families*

Getting help can be a daunting process.
Let our Care Companions find the help you need for

- *depression*
- *stress*
- *anxiety*
- *and more*

caresolace.com/site/harford



It's okay
to ask for help.

(888) 515-0595





2026-2027