



FAMILY PEER SUPPORT PILOT PROGRAM

In 2023, Governor Greg Gianforte and the Behavioral Health Systems for Future Generations (BHSFG) Commission invested in a Family Peer Support (FPS) pilot project as part of an effort to bolster the state's youth behavioral health care system.

This two-year project works with grantees to deliver FPS services to parents, caregivers, and guardians of children with suspected, diagnosed, or likely behaviors of a Serious Emotional Disturbance (SED). In 2025, FPS became a certified role through the Montana Department of Labor and Industry, but it is not yet Medicaid billable.

FPS specialists offer guidance, moral and practical support, mutuality, and behavioral health system navigation to these caregivers. Each specialist located at one of two grantee sites (see below), has firsthand lived experience raising a child with an SED – just like those they serve. The pilot is overseen by the Children's Mental Health Bureau in the Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities Division of the Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS).

FPS Summary

Montana families raising children with behavioral health challenges often have unmet emotional support needs. These unaddressed needs can, in turn, exacerbate the behavioral health of their children and can negatively impact the health and well-being of families, parents, and caregivers.

Research shows that FPS can improve health outcomes for those served. According to a 2023 survey of 94 families conducted by the Montana Peer Network, 91 percent of those who received FPS felt more comfortable and confident managing their child's health challenges and care. Additionally, 95% of those surveyed said they experienced an improvement in the quality of their family's life since having access to FPS.

FPS Grantees

- St. John's C.A.R.E.S. – **actively seeking referrals!** This family-centered, strength-based, and community-driven care program provides free, wrap-around services to families, including connection with FPS specialists. Known as family partners, these specialists serve Yellowstone, Big Horn, and Carbon Counties. For more information, or to make a referral for the Billings area, please email Jamie Rettig at jrettig@stjohnsunited.org or call (406) 655-5427.
- Aware Inc. – FPS specialists employed by this mental health provider in Missoula serve families by providing aftercare follow-up services and family peer support to youth and their families discharging from an AWARE group home. **Please note:** At this time, the Aware pilot is not accepting community referrals.