



## **The History of Children’s Mental Health Acceptance Week (CMHAW):**

### **Why Green?**

To combat bias and discrimination! In the 1800s, the color green was used to brand people who were labeled “insane.” The children’s mental health community decided to continue using the color green, but with a completely different focus. Green signifies new life, new growth, and new beginnings. Therefore, we wear green to signify better the lives of children with mental health challenges, as well as supporting disorders and show our support of these children and their families.

### **The History of Children’s Mental Health Acceptance Week**

**1949** The National Mental Health Association declared May as Mental Health Month. Although this nationally recognized observance began as Mental Health Week, with an increase in public interest and a broadening scope of issues, it grew into a month-long awareness campaign.

**1950s-60’s** Through the next 2 decades, special emphasis was placed on educating the public around mental illness and inviting them to state hospitals and other locations to learn more. In the late 1960s, this national observance was expanded, and May was declared Mental Health Month.

**1970s** In the 1970s, observances shifted to community-based events as state hospital “patients” were moved to community settings.

**1991** A group of parents in Missouri got together and decided that one of the most important projects they could undertake was to raise awareness and reduce prejudice and discrimination surrounding children’s mental health. They formed a coalition of parents, professionals and other stakeholders and created Children’s Mental Health Awareness Week. Over the next five years three more states, Kansas, Illinois, and Ohio began their own celebration of Children’s Mental Health Week. The National Federation of Families later joined the coalition and promoted the mission.

**1996** PAL, today called [PPAL](#), launched the first Children’s Mental Health Week in Massachusetts. Its theme was “One Youth at A Time” and included posters, a tool kit, as well as public service announcements. The campaign has grown each year since then.

**2004** The National Federation of Families declared the first full week of May as Children’s Mental Health Awareness Week nationally. National Federation partners and all 120 Federation chapters and state organizations were invited and encouraged to participate in a weeklong celebration of advocacy and awareness efforts.

**2006** The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration’s (SAMHSA) Center for Mental Health Services launched an annual national initiative called “National Children’s Mental Health Awareness Day,” which occurred during Children’s Mental Health Awareness Week until 2020.

**2007** The National Federation of Families launched the Annual Green Ribbon Campaign, one of its most important awareness and education campaigns. The green ribbon is a key symbol in social marketing and awareness efforts. It is an uplifting campaign that aims to spread awareness through positive public health promotion and by initiating dialogue in local, national, and international communities.

**2022** The National Federation of Families updated the annual campaign name, changing the “a” from awareness to acceptance. This significant shift to "acceptance" speaks more directly to the goals of the campaign - to eliminate bias and discrimination toward anyone facing mental health challenges of any kind. **Acceptance** leverages the lessons of what our nation faced during the pandemic: we know there will be long-lasting adverse effects on mental health and wellbeing.

**Today**, this nationally recognized event continues to increase public acceptance, educate communities, and expand the general public’s understanding of children’s mental health needs and its resulting impact on their parents, caregivers, and families across the lifespan.

