



Mental Health First Aid USA

Mental Health First Aid is a public education program that introduces participants to risk factors and warning signs of mental illnesses, builds understanding of their impact, and overviews common supports. This 8-hour course uses role-playing and simulations to demonstrate how to offer initial help in a mental health crisis and connect persons to the appropriate professional, peer, social, and self-help care. The program also teaches the common risk factors and warning signs of specific types of illnesses, like anxiety, depression, substance use, bipolar disorder, eating disorders, and schizophrenia.

Mental Health First Aid is included on the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices (NREPP).

COURSE DETAILS

Mental Health First Aid teaches participants a five-step action plan, ALGEE, to support someone developing signs and symptoms of a mental illness or in an emotional crisis:

- **A**ssess for risk of suicide or harm
- **L**isten nonjudgmentally
- **G**ive reassurance and information
- **E**ncourage appropriate professional help
- **E**ncourage self-help and other support strategies

Like CPR, Mental Health First Aid prepares participants to interact with a person in crisis and connect the person with help. First Aiders do not take on the role of professionals — they do not diagnose or provide any counseling or therapy. Instead, the program offers concrete tools and answers key questions, like “what do I do?” and “where can someone find help?” Certified Mental Health First Aid instructors provide a list of community healthcare providers and national resources, support groups, and online tools for mental health and addictions treatment and support. All trainees receive a program manual to compliment the course material.

PROGRAM GROWTH

Mental Health First Aid was introduced in the U.S. in 2008 and, to date, more than 100,000 people from all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico have taken the course. The course is offered to a variety of audiences, including hospital staff, employers and business leaders, faith communities, and law enforcement . In 2012, a Spanish adaptation of the course was released.

In 2012, Youth Mental Health First Aid was introduced to prepare trainees to help youth ages 12-18 that may be developing or experiencing a mental health challenge. The youth course is most appropriate for adults who regularly interact with youth, such as teachers or coaches, but may also be appropriate for youth who are 16 years and older.

To find a course or contact an instructor in your area, visit www.MentalHealthFirstAid.org.

Mental Health First Aid USA is coordinated by the National Council for Behavioral Health, the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, and the Missouri Department of Mental Health.

Mental Health First Aid: *Program Background, Accomplishments, & Highlights*

Mental Health First Aid USA is a public education program that introduces participants to the unique risk factors and warning signs of mental health problems, builds understanding of the importance of early intervention, and, most importantly, teaches individuals how to help someone in crisis or experiencing a mental health challenge.

Program Background & Accomplishments

In 2008, the National Council for Behavioral Health, the Maryland State Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, and the Missouri Department of Mental Health worked with the program's founders in Australia to bring Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) to the U.S. Since U.S. program inception:

- More than 150,000 individuals have been trained in Mental Health First Aid
- Certified instructors in all 50 states, District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico
- Curriculum specific to adults who work with youth ("Youth MHFA") launched in 2012
- Spanish adaptation released in January 2013
- President Obama included Mental Health First Aid as one recommendation in his Plan to Reduce Gun Violence
- Many states have proposed legislative efforts to mandate MHFA for certain populations and/or appropriate funds to expand training opportunities
- Mental Health First Aid was added to SAMHSA's National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices (NREPP) in July 2013

Federal & State Legislative Action

In January 2013, the Mental Health First Aid Act (S. 157/H.R. 274) was introduced in both the House and Senate. To date, the Act has 15 bipartisan Senate cosponsors, and 46 bipartisan House cosponsors. Under the Mental Health First Aid Act, there would be \$20 million in grants for MHFA training opportunities, available to states and other entities. A number of states have also proposed state-specific legislation related to Mental Health First Aid funding.

- *Arizona:* Approved \$250,000
- *Virginia:* Introduced request for \$2.5 Million; Received \$600,000
- *Texas:* MHFA training to become part of the teacher continuing education curriculum; \$5 million appropriated
- *Washington:* SB 5333 providing MHFA to teachers and educational staff did not pass public hearing and was sent back to the Senate Ways and Means Committee
- *Illinois:* State agencies will administer MHFA; Mental Health First Aid Act of Illinois is being signed by Governor on August 7, 2013
- *Michigan:* MHFA had \$1.5 million appropriated
- *Florida:* Passed Florida Senate; died in calendars committee on May 3, 2013
- *Connecticut:* Measure called for the state's mental health and education commissioners to administer a mental health first aid training program. The law also allows boards of education to require teachers, school nurses, counselors and other school employees to participate in mental health first aid training.
- *Maryland:* Governor issued supplemental budget appropriation including \$300,000 for MHFA

The Future of MHFA

Mental Health First Aid USA has a goal of training an additional 100,000 individuals in 2014 alone. Based on current predictions, an additional 3,000 instructors will be certified in the next year. Currently, MHFA-USA is developing supplemental modules specific to the following populations/groups: Higher Education; Public Safety/Law Enforcement; Faith-Based Communities; Veterans; and Older Adults.

Our vision is that by 2020, Mental Health First Aid in the USA will be as common as CPR and First Aid.