

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 health problems, builds understanding of their impact and overviews appropriate supports. This 8-hour course uses role-playing and simulations to demonstrate how to offer initial help in a mental health crisis and connect people to the appropriate professional, peer, social and self-help care. The program also teaches common risk factors and warning signs of specific 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 experiencing 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 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 complement the course material.

PROGRAM GROWTH

Mental Health First Aid was introduced in the U.S. in 2008 and, to date, hundreds of thousands of 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. Approximately 400 people are trained each day, with that number expected to increase.

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. Specialized versions of Mental Health First Aid including the Veterans, Public Safety, Higher Education, Rural and Older Adults modules and a Spanish version of the Youth and Adult curriculum are also available.

Mental Health First Aid was included in the President's plan to reduce gun violence and increase access to mental health services. In 2014, Congress appropriated \$15 million to SAMHSA to train teachers and school personnel in Youth Mental Health first Aid; in 2015 an additional \$15 million was appropriated to support other community organizations serving youth. The Mental Health First Aid Act of 2015 (S. 711/H.R. 1877) has broad bi-partisan support and would authorize \$20 million annually for training the American public. Fifteen states have made Mental Health First Aid a priority by appropriating state funds, including Texas that has allocated \$5 million.

For more information or questions about Mental Health First Aid, please go to info@MentalHealthFirstAid.org. To find a course or contact an instructor in your area, visit www.MentalHealthFirstAid.org.

The National Council for Behavioral Health, the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and the Missouri Department of Mental Health coordinate Mental Health First Aid USA.

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