

MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID

Talking Points

Top-line Messages

- People who enroll in local Mental Health First Aid courses learn a five-step action plan to help loved ones, colleagues, neighbors and others cope with mental health or substance use problems.
- Similar to traditional First Aid and CPR, Mental Health First Aid is help provided to a person developing a mental health problem or experiencing a crisis until professional treatment is obtained or the crisis resolves.
- Mental Health First Aid is an evidence-based public education and prevention tool – it improves the public’s knowledge of mental health and substance use problems *and* connects people with care for their mental health or substance use problems.

Talking Points

- Mental Health First Aid was originally created in Australia in 2001 under the auspices of the University of Melbourne, and is now international with programs in countries such as the United Kingdom, China, Canada, Finland and Singapore.
- The National Council for Behavioral Health – a national trade group with more than 2,500 member organizations serving millions of Americans nationwide – helped bring Mental Health First Aid to the United States in 2008 with the goal of making it as common as traditional First Aid and CPR are today.
- In the U.S., community behavioral healthcare providers are the natural center stone of Mental Health First Aid implementation – with their unique position in communities and access to those who would benefit most from trainings.
- Mental Health First Aid has strong evidence backing it. Three quantitative and one qualitative studies have shown that the program: (1) improves people’s mental health, (2) increases understanding of mental health issues and treatments, (3) connects more people with care, and (4) reduces stigma.
- Trainees go through an 8-hour training program that teaches them a five-step action plan to (1) assess a situation, (2) select and implement appropriate interventions, and (3) secure appropriate care for an individual experiencing a mental health or substance use problem.
- Trainees also learn risk factors and warning signs of mental illness and addiction, and about available treatments. Upon completion, participants better understanding the impact mental illnesses and addictions have on a person, their family and communities.
- Trainees are from all walks of life and include school personnel, law enforcement, faith-based communities, hospital and nursing home staff, families and young people.
- As of 2016, there are more than 550,000 people trained in Mental Health First Aid in the U.S. by a network of more than 9,000 instructors.