

MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID

Facts

Messages

- Members of the public who enroll in local Mental Health First Aid trainings learn a five-step action plan to help loved ones, colleagues, neighbors and others cope with mental health 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 empirically-backed public education and prevention tool – it improves the public's knowledge of mental health problems *and* connects people with care for their mental health problems.

Points of Information

- 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 Community Behavioral Healthcare – a national trade group with 1,300 member organizations serve six million Americans nationwide – brought Mental Health First Aid to the United States in 2008 with the goal of making it as common in 10 years 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.
- Within Mental Health First Aid's first year, the National Council and its members successfully implemented the program in seven states nationwide – with plans for steady expansion.
- The National Council originally selected the program because of its rigorous research backing.
- 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 eight-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 problem.
- Trainees also learn risk factors and warning signs of mental illness and about available mental health treatments. Upon completion, participants better understanding the impact mental illnesses have on a person, their family and communities.
- Trainees are from all walks of life and include school personal, law enforcement, faith-based communities, hospital and nursing home staff, families and young people.
- The National Council, which oversees Mental Health First Aid nationally and credentials trainers, will ensure the U.S. program continues to have a strong empirically-backing by ongoing evaluation in this country.