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# Reading Public Schools

*Instilling a joy of learning and inspiring the innovative leaders of tomorrow*

## **Local Professionals Certified as Youth Mental Health First Aid™ Instructors** ***Mental health literacy program certifies 10 instructors representing Reading, Massachusetts***

Reading, MA (January 12, 2015)— The Reading Public Schools is pleased to add 10 new instructors from Reading, Massachusetts to the Mental Health First Aid™ team from the Pittsburgh, PA training session (November 2014) and Foxboro, MA training session (January 2015).

“We are thrilled to bring Youth Mental Health First Aid™ to Reading,” says John Doherty, Superintendent of Reading Public Schools. “Most people know how to recognize and appropriately react to medical emergencies, but there is less knowledge about what to do in a youth mental health crisis.”

Youth Mental Health First Aid™ is an 8-hour training course designed to give members of the public key skills to help someone who is developing a mental health problem or experiencing a mental health crisis. The 10 instructors recently certified to teach the 8-hour program include

Sara	Burd	Reading Public Schools	District Administrator of Support Services
Thomas	Zaya	Reading Memorial High School	Assistant Principal of Athletics & Activities
Jennifer	Hagopian	Reading Memorial High School	Guidance Counselor
Nicole	Brett	Joshua Eaton Elementary School	School Psychologist
Harlan	Kroff	Reading Memorial High School	Social Worker
Susan	Hooper	Reading Memorial High School	Social Worker
Anna	Kyritsis	Birch Meadow Elementary School	School Psychologist
Erica	McNamara	Reading Coalition Against Substance Abuse	Grant Project Director
Michael	Muolo	Reading Police Department	School Resource Officer
Michelle	Halloran	Reading Police Department	Detective

The instructor certification training was conducted by the National Council for Behavioral Health, who manages the program across the US along with the states of Maryland and Missouri.

“We’re enthused to welcome Reading Public Schools as a partner in extending mental health first aid across the country,” says Linda Rosenberg, MSW, president and CEO of the National Council. “We anticipate the new instructors will have a great impact throughout the town of Reading, and will be key players in improving mental health literacy.”

The new instructors join more than 3,700 U.S. instructors already certified by MHFA-USA as instructors in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. Instructors come from a variety of backgrounds,

including behavioral healthcare, law enforcement and public safety, universities, faith communities, and primary care.

Included on SAMHSA's National Registry of Evidence Based Programs and Practices, studies show that training in Mental Health First Aid™ builds confidence in helping an individual experiencing a mental health challenge, reduces negative or distancing attitudes towards individuals with mental illnesses, and increases mental health literacy – being able to identify, understand and respond to signs of mental illnesses and substance use disorders.

The team of instructors from Reading will offer trainings to staff in the district later this year. The instructor training is made possible by SAMHSA Project AWARE (Advancing Wellness & Resilience in Education), Reading Public Schools Grantee#: 1H79SM061993-01

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*Mental Health First Aid™ USA is a collaboration between the National Council for Behavioral Health, the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, and the Missouri Department of Mental Health.*

*The National Council for Behavioral Health (National Council) is the unifying voice of America's community mental health and addictions treatment organizations. Together with our 2,000 member organizations, we serve our nation's most vulnerable citizens — the more than eight million adults and children living with mental illnesses and addiction disorders. We are committed to ensuring all Americans have access to comprehensive, high-quality care that affords every opportunity for recovery and full participation in community life. The National Council pioneered Mental Health First Aid™ in the U.S. and has trained nearly 100,000 individuals to connect youth and adults in need to mental health and addictions care in their communities.*

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