



# MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID

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One in four Americans lives with a mental health problem each year. Yet, far too many – up to two-thirds – go without treatment. Just as CPR training helps a layperson without medical training assist an individual following a heart attack, Mental Health First Aid training helps a layperson assist someone experiencing a mental health crisis.

## Background

In 2001, the University of Melbourne published five studies in Australia showing that the program saves lives, improves the mental health of the individual administering care *and* the one receiving it, expands knowledge of mental illnesses and their treatments, increases the services provided and reduces overall stigma by improving mental health “literacy”. For further evidence supporting the implementation of Mental Health First Aid, please see the Australian Mental Health First Aid website: <http://www.mhfa.com.au/>.

In order to increase public understanding of these disorders and improve treatment for those affected by them, the National Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare piloted Mental Health First Aid in 2008. The program has been replicated in England, Scotland, Canada, Hong Kong, Ireland, and Singapore in addition to the United States.

## About the Course

The Mental Health First Aid program is an interactive session which runs 12 hours. It can be conducted as one two-day seminar, two one day events spaced over a short period of time or as four 3-hour sessions. Mental Health First Aid certification must be renewed every three years, and introduces participants to risk factors and warning signs of mental health problems, builds understanding of their impact, and summarizes common treatments.

Specifically, participants learn:

- The potential risk factors and warning signs for a range of mental health problems, including: depression, anxiety/trauma, psychosis and psychotic disorders, eating disorders, substance use disorders, and self-injury
- An understanding of the prevalence of various mental health disorders in the U.S. and the need for reduced stigma in their community
- 5-step action plan encompassing the skills, resources and knowledge to assess the situation, to select and implement appropriate interventions, and to help the individual in crisis connect with appropriate professional care
- The appropriate professional, peer, social, and self-help resources available to help someone with a mental health problem.

## Who should become a Mental Health First Aider?

Specific audiences for each training vary, but include hospitals and federally qualified health centers, state policymakers, employers and chambers of commerce, faith communities, school personnel, state police and corrections staff, nursing home staff, mental health authorizes support staff, young people, families and the general public. In other words, EVERYONE!

## Mental Health First Aid in your Community

Meridian and the National Council envision that Mental Health First Aid will become as common as CPR and First Aid training during the next decade. The National Council certifies community providers, like Meridian, to implement Mental Health First Aid in communities throughout the United States. Each Mental Health First Aid site develops individualized plans to reach their communities, but all deliver the core 12-hour program and each participating site undergoes tight credentialing to guarantee fidelity to the original, tested model, while also maintaining the flexibility necessary to reach its unique citizens’ needs and demographics.

For more information about the program or to request a training for your agency or group, please visit <http://www.mbhci.org/index.php/community-projects.html> or contact Dr. Joe Munson, VP Residential Services at (352) 374-5600 x8270 or [joe\\_munson@mbhci.org](mailto:joe_munson@mbhci.org).