



Mental Health FIRST AID
from NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR MENTAL WELLBEING

YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID



As adults, we sometimes forget how hard it was being an adolescent. When we see a kid who is just miserable at school, we might think they choose to be that way — or that it's just part of adolescence. But in fact, they might be in a mental health crisis, one they certainly did not choose and do not want. When a teacher says, "How can I be helpful?" that is a powerful question."

— **Alyssa Fruchtenicht**,
school-based mental health counselor

WHY YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID?

Youth Mental Health First Aid teaches you how to identify, understand and respond to signs of mental illness and substance use disorders in youth. This 6-hour training gives adults who work with youth the skills they need to reach out and provide initial support to children and adolescents (ages 6-18) who may be developing a mental health or substance use problem and help connect them to the appropriate care.

64.1%

of youth with major depression **do not receive any mental health treatment.**

— *Mental Health America*

5.13%

of youth report having a **substance use or alcohol problem.**

— *Mental Health America*

1 IN 5

teens and young adults **live with a mental health condition.**

— *National Alliance for Mental Illness*

THREE LEARNING OPTIONS

- **VIRTUAL.** First Aiders will complete a 2-hour, self-paced online course, and then participate in a 4.5 to 5.5-hour, Instructor-led video conference.
- **BLENDED LEARNING.** After completing a 2-hour, self-paced online course, First Aiders will participate in a 4.5-hour, in-person, Instructor-led class.
- **IN-PERSON.** First Aiders will receive their training as an 8-hour, Instructor-led, in-person course.

WHO SHOULD TAKE IT

- TEACHERS
- SCHOOL STAFF
- COACHES
- CAMP COUNSELORS
- YOUTH GROUP LEADERS
- PARENTS
- PEOPLE WHO WORK WITH YOUTH

WHAT IT COVERS

- Common signs and symptoms of mental illness in this age group, including
 - » Anxiety
 - » Depression
 - » Eating disorders
 - » Attention deficit hyperactive disorder (ADHD)
- Common signs and symptoms of substance use
- How to interact with a child or adolescent in crisis
- How to connect the person with help
- **New:** Expanded content on trauma, addiction and self-care and the impact of social media and bullying

The course will teach you how to apply the **ALGEE** action plan:

- **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.





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:

- Assess for risk of suicide or harm
- Listen nonjudgmentally
- Give reassurance and information
- Encourage appropriate professional help
- Encourage 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, more than 1 million 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.

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. Just as CPR training helps a layperson without medical training assist an individual experiencing a heart attack, Mental Health First Aid training helps a layperson assist someone experiencing a mental health crisis.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The evidence behind Mental Health First Aid demonstrates that it makes people feel more comfortable managing a crisis situation and builds mental health literacy — helping the public identify, understand and respond to signs of mental illness. Specifically, studies found that those who were trained in Mental Health First Aid have greater confidence in providing help to others, greater likelihood of advising people to seek professional help, improved concordance with health professionals about treatments, and decreased stigmatizing attitudes.

Mental Health First Aid certification, which must be renewed every three years, teaches participants to:

- Recognize the potential risk factors and warning signs for a range of mental health problems, including: depression, anxiety/trauma, psychosis and psychotic disorders, substance use disorders, and self-injury. Youth Mental Health First Aid addresses mental health challenges common among adolescents, including: depression, anxiety, psychosis, eating disorders, AD/HD, disruptive behavioral disorders, and substance use disorders.
- Use a 5-step action plan to help an individual in crisis connect with appropriate professional help.
- Interpret the prevalence of various mental health disorders in the U.S. and the need for reduced negative attitudes in their communities.
- Apply knowledge of the appropriate professional, peer, social, and self-help resources available to help someone with a mental health problem treat and manage the problem and achieve recovery.
- Assess their own views and feelings about mental health problems and disorders.

MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID SCHEDULE

● SESSION 1 (four hours)

Part 1 (two hours)

- What is Mental Health First Aid?
- Mental Health Problems in the USA
- The Mental Health First Aid Action Plan
- Understanding Depression
- Understanding Anxiety Disorders

Part 2 (two hours)

- Crisis First Aid for Suicidal Behavior & Depressive symptoms
- What is Non-Suicidal Self-Injury?
- Non-crisis First Aid for Depression and Anxiety

● SESSION 2 (four hours)

Part 1 (two hours)

- Crisis First Aid for Panic Attacks
- Crisis First Aid for Traumatic events
- Understanding Disorders in Which Psychosis may Occur
- Crisis First Aid for Acute Psychosis

Part 2 (two hours)

- Understanding Substance Use Disorder
- Crisis First Aid for Overdose
- Crisis First Aid for Withdrawal
- Using Mental Health First Aid

YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID SCHEDULE

- SESSION 1 (four hours)
 - Part 1 (two hours)
 - What is Youth Mental Health First Aid?
 - Adolescent Development & Mental Health Problems in Youth
 - The Mental Health First Aid Action Plan
 - Signs & Symptoms
 - Part 2 (two hours)
 - Risk Factors & Protective Factors
 - Using the Mental Health First Aid Action Plan
 - Assess for Risk of Suicide or Harm
- SESSION 2 (four hours)
 - Part 1 (two hours)
 - Using the Mental Health First Aid Action Plan
 - In Non-Crisis Situations
 - Intensive Scenario Work
 - Part 2 (two hours)
 - Using the Mental Health First Aid Action Plan
 - In Crisis Situations
 - Intensive Scenario Work

EXPECTATIONS FOR CERTIFICATION

- Each participant must be present for the entire course and pass a final written exam.
- Each participant must receive a mandatory program manual and local resource information.

TENETS OF FIDELITY

The US program uses the term 'fidelity' to describe the core elements of the original Mental Health First Aid kept intact in its adaptation for American cultures. The elements outlined below are expected to be honored by those providing the program throughout the US.

- **Presentation:** The course is to be facilitated by one or two certified instructors. Facilitators should present to a group size which they are comfortable managing and which includes enough participants to foster group discussion. The recommended course size is 15-25 participants, although instructors do have flexibility based on their experience to determine a course size which fits the above criteria and works for their needs.
- **Delivery:** The Mental Health First Aid-USA Curriculum is specifically designed to appeal to adult learners. The teaching notes offer a variety of suggestions for discussion topics, exercises, and other activities designed to keep participants attentive and actively engaged in the course. This is specifically designed so the pace of the course changes on a regular basis and requires participants to be involved in the content. As such, instructors should not only focus on keeping the content and discussions moving forward at appropriate intervals, but also ensure that all participants are in an environment where they can be involved in discussion.
- **Content:** The curriculum is divided into four sessions covering six topic areas. While the program is not scripted, to allow for flexibility of discussion, instructors are expected to present all non-optional slides, exercises and program videos in the order which they are presented in the teaching notes. Additional content added for local purposes is allowed, but should be limited to helpful resources and minimal tailoring for audiences in exercises. Modifications or supplements to the curriculum slides are not permitted.
- **Spirit:** Mental Health and substance use issues can often be viewed as somber, serious or 'heavy' topics. The program itself is designed to give appropriate weight to the severity of certain mental illnesses and addiction disorders while still emphasizing hope for recovery and presenting the material in a relaxed, comfortable environment for course participants.