

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 illnesses, builds understanding of their impact, and overviews common supports. This 8-hour course uses role-playing and simulations to demonstrate how to offer initial help in a mental health crisis and connect persons to the appropriate professional, peer, social, and self-help care. The program also teaches the common risk factors and warning signs of specific types of illnesses, like anxiety, depression, substance use, bipolar disorder, eating disorders, and schizophrenia.

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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 in an emotional crisis:

- “ **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

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 take on the role of professionals ² they do not diagnose or provide any counseling or therapy. Instead, the program offers concrete tools and answers key questions, **What do I do?** 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 compliment the course material.

PROGRAM GROWTH

Mental Health First Aid was introduced in the U.S. in 2008 and, to date, more than 100,000 people from all 50 states, the District of Columbia,