

# Mental Health First Aid for Public Safety



MENTAL  
HEALTH  
FIRST AID

Do you work in law enforcement or another area of public safety and security? Want to better understand mental illness, learn how to help someone experiencing a crisis and possibly save a life?

“Mental Health First Aid for Public Safety” is the class for you!

## What is Mental Health First Aid?

**Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) for Public Safety** is an 8-hour training course designed to give public safety personnel key skills to help someone who is developing a mental health problem or experiencing a mental health crisis. The training helps participants better understand mental illnesses and provides various options for responding to mental health-related calls appropriately by deescalating incidents without compromising safety.

The Wellness, Health Promotion & Prevention staff of the Fairfax-Falls Church Community Services Board is training our County government workforce and our community members in Mental Health First Aid.

## Course Content

### Developing mental health problems covered:

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Traumatic events
- Psychosis
- Substance abuse

### Mental health crises covered:

- Suicidal thoughts and behaviors
- Non-suicidal self-injury
- Panic attacks
- Severe psychotic episodes
- Effects from substance and alcohol use
- Aggressive behavior

Participants will learn the signs and symptoms of these mental health problems, where and how to get help and what sort of help has been shown by research to be effective.

## MHFA Outcomes

Individuals trained in the program:

- Increase their knowledge of signs, symptoms and risk factors of mental illnesses and addictions.
- Better understand the impact mental illnesses have on a person, their family, and communities.
- Learn how to de-escalate crises.
- Find out how to connect people to care and resources in the community.

Ready to take a class? Go to  
[www.fairfaxcounty.gov/csb/mental-health-first-aid](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/csb/mental-health-first-aid)  
to request a custom class!

Questions? Contact Lori Naveda at  
703-538-3215 or [Lori.Naveda@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:Lori.Naveda@fairfaxcounty.gov)



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[www.fairfaxcounty.gov/csb/mental-health-first-aid](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/csb/mental-health-first-aid)

Turn over →

# Mental Health First Aid for Public Safety Frequently Asked Questions

## Who should take a Mental Health First Aid for Public Safety course?

Law enforcement, Sheriff's Office staff, corrections officers, security officers, 911 dispatch staff, parole and probation staff, warrant officers, juvenile justice staff, and reentry program staff. Not sure? Just ask us!

## What's the difference between MHFA for Public Safety and Crisis Intervention Team Training?

Mental Health First Aid for Public Safety is a good complement to Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) training. CIT training is an in-depth, 40-hour program with widespread adoption across the country. MHFA for Public Safety is an 8-hour course for staff who are not yet CIT certified. Some departments use Mental Health First Aid for Public Safety as training for newer officers as well as a first step for those who express interest in joining the CIT team.

## Is there evidence to support the effectiveness of the MHFA program?

Yes, there is strong evidence of outcomes. MHFA USA is listed in the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices.

Visit [www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org/cs/about/research](http://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org/cs/about/research) for more information.

## How long does it take to complete the Mental Health First Aid for Public Safety program?

The 8-hour class is usually conducted as a two-day seminar (two half-day classes). Certification lasts three years.

## How do I set up a class?

You can request a customized class for yourself and your co-workers. Visit our MHFA page to request a custom class: [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/csb/mental-health-first-aid](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/csb/mental-health-first-aid).

## How many participants are needed to hold a class?

A minimum of 15 participants are needed to schedule a class, with a maximum of 25.

## What types of crisis interventions are covered?

Trainees are taught how to apply a 5-step strategy in situations such as helping someone through a panic attack, engaging with someone who may be suicidal, or assisting an individual who has overdosed. Mental Health First Aid for Public Safety training provides the opportunity to practice the intervention strategy rather than to just hear about it.

## Is there a cost to take the class?

The class fee is \$25 per person which covers materials. Fairfax County Government employees may attend free of charge.

## Other Mental Health First Aid courses available...

- Mental Health First Aid
- Primeros Auxilios para Salud Mental (Spanish Mental Health First Aid)
- Youth Mental Health First Aid – for adults who live or work with adolescents

**Go to [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/csb/mental-health-first-aid](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/csb/mental-health-first-aid) to learn more!**

**Questions? Contact Lori Naveda at 703-538-3215 or [Lori.Naveda@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:Lori.Naveda@fairfaxcounty.gov).**



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