Mental Health First Aid

Want to better understand mental illness, learn how to help someone experiencing a crisis and possibly save a life? Take a Mental Health First Aid class!

What is Mental Health First Aid?

Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) is an 8-hour training course designed to give community members key skills to help someone who is developing a mental health problem or experiencing a mental health crisis. The first aid is given until appropriate professional treatment is received or until the crisis resolves.

The program expands mental health "literacy" and reduces the social distance created by negative attitudes and perceptions of individuals with mental illnesses. The standard course is based on the international MHFA Guidelines and adapted for the U.S. These guidelines were developed using consensus of mental health consumers and professionals.

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.

Questions? Contact Lori Naveda at 703-538-7476 or Lori.Naveda@fairfaxcounty.gov

MHFA Outcomes

Individuals trained in the program:

- Increase their knowledge of signs, symptoms and risk factors of mental illnesses and addictions.
- Can identify multiple types of professional and self-help resources for individuals with a mental illness or addiction.
- Have more confidence that they can and are more likely to help an individual in distress.
- Better understand the impact mental illnesses have on a person, their family, and communities.
- Help to reduce stigma associated with mental illnesses.

Ready to take a class?
Go to www.fairfaxcounty.gov and search on "MHFA"

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Community Services Board

www.fairfaxcounty.gov/community-services-board

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Mental Health First Aid Frequently Asked Questions

Who should take a Mental Health First Aid course?

Mental Health First Aid is intended for a variety of audiences: friends and family of individuals with mental illness or addiction, public safety, businesses and primary care workers, school and college leadership, faith communities, or anyone interested in learning more about mental illness and addiction. Not sure? Just ask us!

Is there evidence to support the effectiveness of the 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 for more information.

How long does it take to complete the Mental Health First Aid program?

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

Can I set up a customized class specifically for my job, church, organization, etc.?

Yes! Visit our MHFA page to learn how to request a custom class: 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 training provides the opportunity to practice the intervention strategy rather than to just hear about it. This simple experience can make it easier to actually apply the knowledge in a real-life situation.

Is there a cost to take the class?

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

Other Mental Health First Aid courses available…

- Youth Mental Health First Aid (for adults who live or work with adolescents)
- Mental Health First Aid for Older Adults (for adults who live or work with older adults)
- Primeros Auxilios para Salud Mental (Spanish Mental Health First Aid)
- Mental Health First Aid for Public Safety (for police and others who work in public safety roles)

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and search on "MHFA" to learn more!

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Fairfax County is committed to nondiscrimination on the basis of disability in all county programs, services and activities. To request this information in an alternate format, call 703-324-7000, TTY 711.

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