



MHFA Maryland

MENTAL
HEALTH
FIRST AID

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Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) training has arrived in Maryland, with the first trainings for the public held in September 2008. This much needed initiative seeks to ensure that Maryland residents receive a compassionate and effective response when experiencing a mental health emergency.

An evidence-based initiative originally developed in Australia in 2001, MHFA provides training to enable individuals to respond to psychiatric emergencies in the same way that individuals are trained by the Red Cross to respond to somatic emergencies before appropriate medical care is available. DHMH Secretary John Colmers launched this initiative in Maryland, and is leading the effort to form a national partnership to establish MHFA throughout the United States.

Australian founders Betty Kirchner and Tony Jorm have traveled to Maryland twice this year to train and certify MHFA Instructors. Regional coordinators housed at local Mental Health Associations are responsible for marketing the program, scheduling public trainings, and coordinating the activities of the Instructors in their region. With another Instructor certification program scheduled in mid November, Maryland MHFA will soon have 40 Instructors available to respond to community requests.

Response to MHFA from communities throughout the State has demonstrated significant interest in and need for this program. The Western Maryland region has received requests for training from police departments in two counties, and has upcoming trainings scheduled at Hood College and the Frederick Library.

In the Washington Metropolitan region,

there has been widespread interest in the education arena, with trainings scheduled for the public school system and Montgomery Community College.

On the Eastern Shore, strong interest from the higher education community has resulted in trainings at Salisbury University, Washington College and the University of Maryland, as well as a program for the Caroline County 4H.

In Metropolitan Baltimore, trainings are being conducted for a wide range of local government agency staff in Baltimore City, Baltimore County and Harford County including the Department of Aging, Public Schools, Department of Social Services and Homeless Services. In addition, trainings are scheduled at UMBC and for private sector substance abuse and disability service provider agencies.

Each region also has or will be scheduling trainings for the general public. By early 2009, over 500 individuals will have received MHFA training from Maryland's Instructor Corps.



"I just got a call from a participant in my training last week. She called her friend this morning who has been feeling bad and because of the course was able to determine that her

friend was suicidal. She assessed the severity, called police and even stayed on the phone with her friend until police arrived. Now her friend is in the emergency room and a life has been potentially saved due to MHFA!"

*Rachel Larkin, LCSW
MHFA Regional Coordinator
Mental Health Association of Montgomery Co.*

ABOUT THE COURSE

The MHFA course is a 12-hour program that teaches people how to give first aid to individuals experiencing a mental health crisis situation and/or who are in the early stages of a mental health disorder. Participants learn the signs and symptoms of the most common mental health problems, where and when to get help, and what type of help has been shown to be effective. Australia's nationwide effort to improve mental health literacy has been shown through research to improve recognition of mental health problems, increase understanding and use of evidence-based treatments, reduce stigma and increase help provided to others.

Maryland's federal Mental Health Transformation grant has funded the development of MHFA and is currently underwriting the cost of training Maryland's Instructors during this pilot year. In the future, a standard nationwide fee for Instructor Training will be established by the national partnership that is developing the program in the U.S.

To find out how to become a MHFA Instructor or to schedule a training, contact:

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