



Mental Health First Aid is an interactive 12-hour training course that presents an overview of mental illnesses and substance use disorders in the U.S. The course introduces participants to risk factors and warning signs of mental health problems, builds understanding of their impact, and reviews common treatments. ***The course offers easy to follow materials for non-clinicians to identify, understand, and provide initial help to individuals in crisis or showing symptoms of a mental illness or substance use disorder.***

The course is a terrific opportunity to bring people together across the community on a topic of importance to everyone. Organizing a Mental Health First Aid training in your rural community is easy to do. This Quick Start Guide will show you how.

Mental Health First Aid can:

- >> Enhance community level capacity to identify mental health and substance abuse issues early on;
- >> Increase awareness of and refer people to resources;
- >> Increase the confidence of natural rural helpers to intervene;
- >> Broaden the concepts of “workforce” and “first responders” to support the community as a whole;
- >> Decrease any negative opinions about individuals living with a mental health or substance use concern;
- >> Reinforce that mental health and substance abuse issues can be viewed in a health framework

WHO AM I GOING TO INVITE TO THE TRAINING?

You can provide Mental Health First Aid trainings to a broad community audience or to a specific organization.

The training is appropriate for a wide variety of audiences, and may include:

- >> Community health workers, tribal health workers, Promotoras/Promotores
- >> Employers and business leaders
- >> Law enforcement personnel
- >> Corrections officers and parole/probation officers
- >> EMS personnel
- >> School personnel and educators
- >> Members of faith communities and their leaders
- >> Medical providers (e.g., nurses, medical assistants)
- >> Employees of service-oriented businesses (dry cleaners, barber shops, etc)
- >> Librarians
- >> Policymakers
- >> Volunteers





>> Anyone interested in learning more about mental illness and addiction

Consider the likely level of interest, availability, and scope of the audiences you wish to train. Ask yourself the following questions when starting to plan:

>> How many people would I like to see trained in my community?

>> How many are likely to attend?

>> When is it most convenient for my target audience(s) to attend a training?

>> Did any of my target audiences already go through a similar training? If so, what would they gain from a Mental Health First Aid training?

HOW CAN I FIND AN INSTRUCTOR?

There are two ways to identify an instructor for your course(s):

Find one who can present in your community

Go to www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org/find_mhfa.php to search for instructors in your area. Click on an instructor's name in the search results to access their profile.

Search for instructors with specific knowledge of training in rural areas by looking for the blue "rural" icon on their profile.

If there is no instructor nearby, try locating a Mental Health First Aid instructor who may be able to travel to your location. Instructors will indicate if they are available to travel on their profile.

OR

Certify an instructor in your community

Identify someone in your community to become certified as a Mental Health First Aid instructor and send them to an instructor training course: www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org/current_instructor_courses.php.¹

Whenever possible, choose an instructor who is familiar with your community. Consider who will be able to relate to the audiences you plan to train.

WHAT WILL IT COST?

Training costs may vary from site to site, but the course can be delivered at a reasonable cost per trainee.

If planned in a budget conscious way, the costs of a room, AV, trainer time, and materials can average \$50-\$75 per person for up to 30 attendees.

For organizations bringing in an instructor from out of town, travel and lodging costs may also need to be covered.

1. For organizations certifying an instructor, the cost to attend the 5-day instructor training is \$2,000 per person, inclusive of the 5 days of instruction, breakfast and lunch for the week, all teaching materials for the program, and ongoing support after certification.





Some suggestions to consider:

- >> Hold the training at a free or low-cost location such as a hospital, health department, local human service organization, or library.
- >> Charge a minimal registration fee to cover the cost of a participant manual (\$15).
- >> Look into community sponsorship or grant funding to subsidize training costs (e.g., private state foundation, local businesses, chamber of commerce).

HOW DO I ORGANIZE MY TRAINING?

- A. **Partner with other local organizations** to market the training to a community-wide audience and reach your target class size (15-25 individuals).
- B. **Choose a training format** that best fits with the needs of audience members and your community. Possible training formats include: two 6-hour days; three 4-hour days; and four 3-hour days. Trainings can also occur on consecutive days or over multiple weeks.
- C. **Select a venue** available for public use such as a library, church, or school. Make sure the room is spacious enough to comfortably fit the size of your audience.

Mental Health First Aid trainings involve frequent group interaction. Provide tables to spread participants into equal small groups (3-5 people per group) throughout the training space.

- D. **Secure supplies and AV equipment** that you will need available at the training, including:

- Laptop with DVD player and Microsoft PowerPoint software
- Projector and screen
- Table for projector
- External speakers
- Wireless PowerPoint remote “clicker” (if possible)
- Extra tables for handouts
- Flipchart with stand or whiteboard
- Markers/crayons and pens/paper for participants
- Name badges

Training materials ordered or provided by the instructor:

- Mental Health First Aid USA Participant manuals (one per participant)
- Course handouts and exercises
- Evaluations
- Mental Health First Aid PowerPoint presentation





- Mental Health First Aid Course Films DVD
- Local resources guide*

E. Schedule food delivery in advance of each training session (i.e., breakfast/coffee for morning sessions; lunch for noon sessions; snacks and water throughout the day). Be conscious of individual dietary needs (e.g., vegetarian or gluten-free options).

Check to ensure that the venue allows participants to consume food and drinks.

HOW DO I MARKET MY TRAINING?

- >> Market the training through a local news outlet such as the daily paper, organization newsletters, posters, fliers, advertisements, email, and websites.
- >> Target your advertising efforts to popular venues where people gather (e.g., schools, coffee shop, library).
- >> Invite local media to report on the upcoming event.
- >> Create community buy-in by adjusting your materials to be relevant to your community (e.g., connect the need for the training to local events or interests).

WHY IS MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID IMPORTANT TO MY RURAL COMMUNITY?

Here's some useful information to use when inviting community organizations and individuals to participate in Rural Mental Health First Aid training.

- >> 20% of our nation's population lives in rural areas. Many health disparities exist for people who live in rural communities.
- >> The most substantial barriers to an individual's ability to obtain mental health and substance abuse services are:
 - Availability – limited number of providers;
 - Accessibility – distance, transportation, financing of services; and
 - Acceptability – willingness to seek services given stigma surrounding mental health and substance abuse.
- >> Rural communities have a chronic shortage of behavioral health providers. Approximately 57% of the federally designated mental health professional shortage areas are in non-metropolitan counties.

WHO CAN I CONTACT FOR MORE INFORMATION?

Have more questions? Contact us at info@mentalhealthfirstaid.org or 202.684.7457 for help with the necessary steps to organize a training.

* Prior to the course, encourage non-local instructors to familiarize themselves with your community and its local mental health and substance abuse resources.

