

Mental Health First Aid in Higher Education

College and university students have unique stress and risk factors related to the demands of school; balancing academic, social, and employment responsibilities while being independent and away from family, friends, and other supports — often for the first time.

Today, 40% of young adults age 18-24 are enrolled in a two or four year educational institution. Statistics show that 75% of mental illnesses develop before age 25, making colleges ideal locations for early identification. However, the number one reason students say they do not use mental health resources is lack of knowledge that those resources even exist.



WHAT IS MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID?

Mental Health First Aid USA is a training — like regular First Aid or CPR — designed to give people the skills to help someone who is developing a mental health problem or experiencing a mental health crisis. The course uses role-playing and simulations to demonstrate how to recognize and respond to the warning signs of specific illnesses.

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:

- Assess for risk of suicide or harm
- Listen nonjudgmentally
- Give reassurance and information
- Encourage appropriate professional help
- Encourage self-help and other support strategies

“Very timely. My office has seen an increase in students experiencing mental health problems. I feel more prepared to assist students in finding the proper resources and identifying their personal coping skills.”

- Counseling Center Staff

MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

Mental Health First Aid for Higher Education is designed with colleges’ and universities’ unique culture and resources in mind. Training students, faculty and others in higher education settings how to recognize the symptoms of emerging mental illnesses or to assist young adults in a mental health crisis can help lessen the severity and impact of mental illnesses.

The course includes:

- A discussion of campus culture and its relevance to the topic of mental health
- A discussion of the specific stress and risk factors faced by the higher education population
- Applying the ALGEE action plan in a number of scenarios designed specifically for faculty, administration and students
- A review of the mental health resources available on campus and through partnerships in the community

WHY MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID?

Mental Health First Aid helps people know that mental illnesses and addictions are real, common and treatable and that it's OK to seek help. Research demonstrates this program's effectiveness in improving knowledge of mental illnesses and substance use, removing fear and misunderstanding and enabling those trained to offer concrete assistance.

Individuals trained in Mental Health First Aid can help:

- Raise awareness and encourage understanding of the ways in which one's cultural background can impact the discrimination associated with mental illness
- Reach out to those who suffer in silence, reluctant to seek help
- Let students know that support is available on campus and in the community
- Provide information on self-help strategies and campus and community resources
- Make mental health care and treatment accessible to thousands in need

The program is listed in SAMHSA's National Registry of Evidenced Based Programs and Practices. Mental Health First Aid is a low-cost, high-impact program that generates tremendous community awareness and support.

Since 2008, 300,000 people have been trained in Mental Health First Aid through a network of more than 6,000 certified instructors.

WHO SHOULD TAKE THE COURSE?

Mental Health First Aid for Higher Education is ideal for anyone who regularly interacts with students, both on and off campus, including:

- Students
- Faculty
- Resident Advisors
- Campus clergy
- Campus law enforcement
- Academic advisors
- Counselors
- Financial aid employees
- Coaches and athletic personnel
- Administrators
- Event staff
- Librarians

"This was very useful to understand more about what mental health problems look like and what really goes on. It was especially good to get rid of the stigma that surrounds this subject. I found it very useful as a resident advisor."

- Campus Resident Advisor

"Excellent, informative and important. This course should be mandatory for all faculty and student services staff."

- Faculty Member

To find a course or contact an instructor in your area, visit www.MentalHealthFirstAid.org

Mental Health First Aid USA is coordinated by the National Council for Behavioral Health, the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, and the Missouri Department of Mental Health.