

# COMMUNITY SPECIFIC FOR MILITARY, VETERANS, AND THEIR FAMILIES MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID



## DESCRIPTION

Mental Health First Aid for Military, Veterans, and their Families is an evidence-based and early intervention training program developed for adults to learn how to assist and support members of their community who may be experiencing a mental health or substance use challenge.

This training specifically addresses

- the relevance of mental health to military culture.
- information on risk factors such as mental and physical trauma faced by many service members and their families.
- how to break down stigma.
- how to reach out to those who suffer in silence and are reluctant to seek help.

What Participants Learn

- The **relevance of mental health** to the community of military, veterans, and their families.
- **Risk factors and protective factors** specific to the community of military, veterans and their families.
- **A 5-step Action Plan** (ALGEE) to help someone in a developing a mental health or substance use challenge designed specifically for military, veterans and their families.
- National, regional and community mental health **resources** for service members, veterans and their families.

## BENEFITS OF Mental Health First Aid certification:

- **Expand your knowledge** of signs symptoms and risk factors of mental health and substance use challenges.
- **Identify** appropriate types of professionals and self-help resources for individuals with a mental health or substance use challenges.
- Have **Increased confidence** in and likelihood to help an individual in distress.
- Show increased mental wellbeing **yourself**.

## COURSE OVERVIEW

Mental Health First Aid for Military, Veterans, and their Families is an early intervention public education program. It teaches adults who how to recognize the signs and symptoms that suggest a potential mental health or substance use problem, how to listen nonjudgmentally and give reassurance to a person who may be experiencing a mental health or substance use problem, and how to refer a person to appropriate professional support and services.

Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) was created in Australia in 2000 by Betty Kitchener, an educator and mental health consumer, and Professor Tony Jorm, a mental health researcher. In 2008, the National Council for Mental Wellbeing, the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Health, and the Missouri Department of Mental Health brought MHFA to the United States.





## COURSE OBJECTIVES

The MHFA course for Military, Veterans, and their Families focuses on recognizing the patterns of thoughts, feelings, behaviors, and appearance that show there might be a mental health challenge. Learners are taught the MHFA Action Plan (ALGEE) that they apply to non-crisis and crisis scenarios.

### BY THE END OF THE COURSE, LEARNERS WILL:

- Describe the purpose of MHFA and the role of the Adult Mental Health First Aider.
  - Identify the impact of mental health and substance use challenges on the wellbeing of American adults.
- Explain that recovery from a mental health or substance use challenge is possible.
  - Describe the principles of safety and privacy for both the Mental Health First Aider and the person receiving first aid.
  - Explain the 5 steps of the Mental Health First Aid Action Plan (ALGEE).
  - Recognize the signs and symptoms of mental health challenges that may impact adults.
  - Evaluate the impact of early intervention on mental health and substance use challenges.
  - Apply the appropriate steps of the Mental Health First Aid Action Plan (ALGEE) to a non-crisis scenario where a person shows early signs of a mental health or substance use challenge.
  - Apply the appropriate steps of the Mental Health First Aid Action Plan (ALGEE) to a non-crisis scenario where a person shows worsening signs of a mental health or substance use challenge.
  - Apply the appropriate steps of the Mental Health First Aid Action Plan (ALGEE) to a crisis scenario where a person shows signs of a mental health or substance use challenge.
  - Choose appropriate methods for self-care following the application of Mental Health First Aid in a crisis or non-crisis situation.

## COURSE OUTLINE

The Mental Health First Aid for Military, Veterans, and their Families course is delivered IN-PERSON only. It is a 7.5 hour live, Instructor-led training consisting of 10 learning segments. The course may be taught in a single 7.5-hour session or broken into two sessions and delivered over two days.

### 1. WELCOME TO MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID

- Provide an overview of the course.
- Describe the purpose of Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) and the role of the Mental Health First Aider for Military, Veterans, and their Families.

### 2. MENTAL HEALTH AND MENTAL DISORDERS

- Identify the impact of mental health challenges on the well-being of individuals in the United States.
- Explain that recovery from a mental health challenge is possible.

### 3. ROLE OF THE MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AIDER AND SELF-CARE

- Describe the purpose of MHFA and the role of the Mental Health First Aider.
- Identify the importance of self-care.

4. **COMMON MENTAL DISORDERS IN THE UNITED STATES**
  - Increase awareness of common mental disorders in the United States.
  - Review the scope and role of a Mental Health First Aider.
5. **RECOGNIZING SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS**
  - Recognize the signs and symptoms of mental health challenges that may impact adults.
6. **ALGEE: MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID ACTION PLAN**
  - Learn the five steps of the MHFA Action Plan (ALGEE)
7. **MHFA FOR EARLY SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS**
  - Learn the impact of early intervention on mental health challenges.
  - Apply appropriate steps of the MHFA Action Plan (ALGEE) when a person shows early signs of a mental health challenge.
8. **MHFA FOR WORSENING SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS**
  - Apply appropriate steps of the MHFA Action Plan (ALGEE) when a person shows worsening signs of a mental health challenge.
9. **MHFA FOR CRISIS SITUATIONS**
  - Apply appropriate steps of the MHFA Action Plan (ALGEE) in crisis situations.
10. **SELF-CARE FOR THE MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AIDER**
  - Learn how to choose appropriate methods for self-care following the application of Mental Health First Aid in a crisis or non-crisis situation.

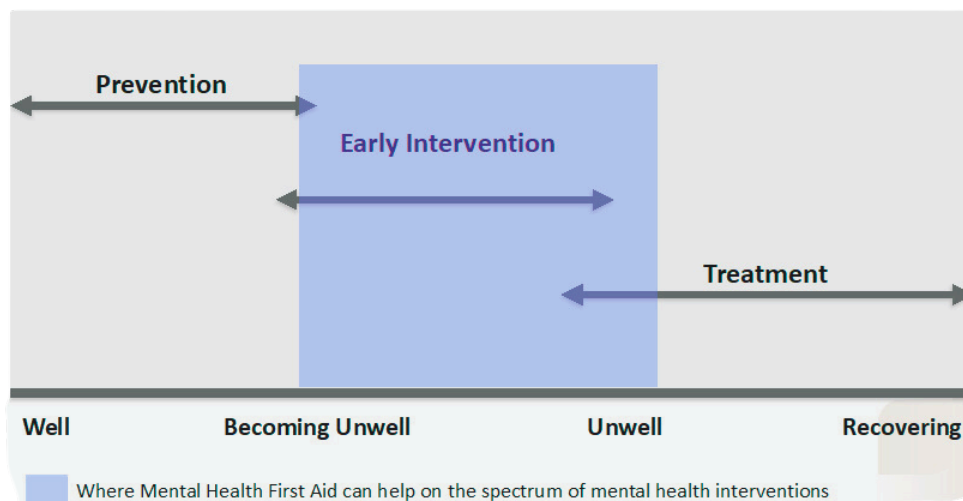
### **The MHFA Action Plan (ALGEE) the five steps, which can be used in any order.**

1. **A – Approach, assess for risk of suicide or harm.** Try to find a suitable time or place to start the conversation with the person, keeping their privacy and confidentiality in mind. If the person does not want to confide in you, encourage them to talk to someone they trust.
2. **L – Listen nonjudgmentally.** Many people experiencing a challenge or distress want to be heard first, so let the person share without interrupting them. Try to have empathy for their situation. You can get the conversation started by saying something like, “I noticed that …” Try to be accepting, even if you don’t agree with what they are saying.
3. **G – Give reassurance and information.** After someone has shared their experiences and emotions with you, be ready to provide hope and useful facts.
4. **E – Encourage appropriate professional help.** The earlier someone gets help, the better their chances of recovery. So, it’s important to offer to help this person learn more about the options available to them.
5. **E – Encourage self-help and other support strategies.** This includes helping them identify their support network, programs within the community, and creating a personalized emotional and physical self-care plan.



## How do we know MHFA is effective?

- Many people know to call 911 or administer CPR for a physical health emergency but hesitate to start conversations about mental health and substance use. MHFA provides the tools a person needs to take action.
- Studies show that MHFA training reduces stigma, improves knowledge and increases first aid actions toward people experiencing mental health and substance use challenges.
- MHFA is proven to be effective in teaching adults how to recognize and respond to signs and symptoms of mental health and substance use challenges. Peer-reviewed studies from around the world show that individuals training in MHFA:
  - Expand their knowledge of signs, symptoms and risk factors of mental health and substance use challenges.
  - Can identify appropriate types of professionals and self-help resources for individuals with a mental health or substance use challenge.
  - Have increased confidence in and likelihood to help an individual in distress.
  - Show increased mental wellbeing themselves.



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**Mental Health  
FIRST AID**  
from NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR  
MENTAL WELLBEING