

# YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID



## BENEFITS OF YOUTH 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**.

## DESCRIPTION

Youth Mental Health First Aid is designed to teach parents, family members, caregivers, teachers, school staff, neighbors, health and human services workers, and other caring citizens how to help an adolescent (age 12-18) who is experiencing a mental health or addictions challenge or is in crisis. Youth Mental Health First Aid is primarily designed for adults who regularly interact with young people. The course introduces common mental health challenges for youth, reviews typical adolescent development, and teaches a 5-step action plan for how to help young people in both crisis and non-crisis situations. Topics covered include anxiety, depression, substance use, disorders in which psychosis may occur, disruptive behavior disorders (including AD/HD), and eating disorders.

Mental Health First Aid is a skills-based training course that teaches participants about mental health and substance-use challenges.

- Create a new path of resilience and wellbeing.
- Reduce stigma and discrimination.
- Improve overall psychological safety.
- Address mental health and substance use challenges.

## What Participants Learn

- Risk factors and warning signs of mental health and substance use challenges.
- Information on depression, anxiety, trauma, psychosis and substance use.
- A 5-step Action Plan to help someone in a developing a mental health or substance use challenge.
- Available evidence-based professional, peer and self-help resources.

## COURSE OVERVIEW

Youth Mental Health First Aid (YMHFA) is an early intervention public education program. It teaches adults who work with youth 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 Marland Department of Health and Mental Health, and the Missouri Department of Mental Health brought MHFA to the United States. The YMHFA curriculum was brought to the United States in 2012.

A number of MHFA USA courses and manuals have been developed to suit the needs of specific populations within the United States. The training courses are designed to teach people how to approach, assess, and assist a person who may be in early stages of developing a mental health problem or in a mental health crisis. YMHFA is best suited for adults who work with youth aged 12–18.

## COURSE OBJECTIVES



The 6.5-hour YMHFA course focuses on recognizing the patterns of thoughts, feelings, behaviors, and appearance that show there might be a problem rather than focusing on specific illness. Learners are taught the MHFA Action Plan (ALGEE) that they can apply to non-crisis and crisis scenarios.

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

- Describe the purpose of YMHFA and the role of the Youth Mental Health First Aider.
- Recognize the signs and symptoms of mental health or substance use problems that may impact youth.
- Explain the impact of traumatic experiences and the role of resilience on adolescent development.
- Apply the appropriate steps of the MHFA Action Plan (ALGEE) in a crisis and non-crisis scenario.
- Practice appropriate methods of self-care following the application of YMHFA in a crisis or non-crisis situation.

## COURSE OUTLINE

The YMHFA 6.5-hour Live, Instructor-led Training is comprised of seven learning segments.

- 1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION TO YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID**
  - Learners learn the purpose of MHFA and the role of the First Aider.
- 2. MENTAL HEALTH AND ILLNESS IN YOUTH**
  - Learners learn facts about the prevalence of mental health and substance use challenges in youth and the importance of early intervention.
  - Learners explore cultural considerations around mental health and barriers to treatment in their own communities.
- 3. TYPICAL ADOLESCENT DEVELOPMENT**
  - Learners use their prior knowledge to describe typical adolescent development.
  - Learners identify risk and protective factors for mental health and substance use challenges, paying particular attention to adverse childhood experiences, bullying and the impact of social media.

## 4. SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES IN YOUTH

- Learners learn signs and symptoms that are common to a variety of mental health and substance use disorders.
- Learners differentiate between typical behaviors and potential warning signs.

## 5. THE MHFA ACTION PLAN (ALGEE) IN A NON-CRISIS SCENARIO

- Learners learn the five steps of the MHFA Action Plan and apply them to a non-crisis scenario.

## 6. THE MHFA ACTION PLAN (ALGEE) IN A CRISIS SCENARIO

- Learners learn important considerations for using the five steps of the MHFA Action Plan in a crisis.

## 7. SELF-CARE FOR THE YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AIDER

- Learners learn how to choose appropriate methods for self-care following the application of Youth Mental Health First Aid.

### 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.

