

# **MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID**

## **What is Mental Health First Aid?**

Mental Health First Aid is a 12-hour training course designed to give members of the public key skills to help someone who is developing a mental health problem or experiencing a mental health crisis. The evidence behind the program demonstrates that it does build mental health literacy — helping the public identify, understand and respond to signs of mental illness.

## **How many days does it take to complete the Mental Health First Aid program?**

The Mental Health First Aid program runs 12 hours. It can be conducted as one two-day seminar, two one day events spaced over a short period of time, or as four 3-hour sessions.

## **What do Mental Health First Aid training participants learn?**

Just as CPR training helps a layperson with no clinical training assist an individual following a heart attack, Mental Health First Aid training helps a layperson assist someone experiencing a mental health crisis, such as contemplating suicide. In both situations, the goal is to help support an individual *until appropriate professional help* arrives. Mental Health First Aiders learn a single 5-step strategy that includes assessing risk, respectfully listening to and supporting the individual in crisis, and identifying appropriate professional help and other supports. The goal of Mental Health First Aid is to increase mental health literacy. Participants are also introduced to risk factors and warning signs for mental health or substance use problems, engage in experiential activities that build understanding of the impact of illness on individuals and families; and learn information about evidence-supported treatment and self-help strategies.

## **What types of crisis interventions are covered?**

Trainees are taught how to apply the 5-step strategy in a variety of situations, such as helping someone through a panic attack, engaging with someone who may be suicidal, or assisting an individual who has overdosed. An important component of the Mental Health First Aid training is the opportunity to practice the intervention strategy rather than to just learn about it. This simple experience can make it easier to actually apply the knowledge in a real-life situation.

## **Where did Mental Health First Aid start?**

Mental Health First Aid was created in Australia in 2001 by Professor Tony Jorm, a respected mental health literacy professor, and Betty Kitchener, a nurse specializing in health education. ([www.mhfa.com.au](http://www.mhfa.com.au))

**Yolo County ADMH Mental Health First Aid contact:**

**Justin Hall**

**[justin.hall@yolocounty.org](mailto:justin.hall@yolocounty.org)**

**530-666-8712 or via MHSA 530-666-8547**