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Mental Health First Aid

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Agenda

- What is Mental Health First Aid (MHFA)?
- Texas Health and Human Services (HHS) Legislative Initiative
- Why Is MHFA Important?
- MHFA Courses
- How Is MHFA Different?
- Employee Initiative



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What is MHFA?

- A skills-based training course
- Teaches signs and symptoms of mental health and substance use problems
- Builds understanding of impact
- Reviews common treatments
- Provides an action plan to follow



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Texas HHS and MHFA

- Legislative Initiative
 - ▶ Based on the 83rd Legislature, Regular Session, 2013 through 88th Legislature, Regular Session, 2023 legislation
 - ▶ HHS contracts with 39 Texas Local Mental Health and Behavioral Health Authorities
 - ▶ Goal: To maximize the number of Texans who have direct contact with a person who successfully completed a MHFA training program



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Why Is MHFA Important?

(1 of 2)

- Texas has higher rates of mental illness and lower rates of access to care compared to other states.
- Community members learn about mental illness and substance use disorders, which potentially saves lives.
- Many people are reluctant to seek help.
- Many people don't know how to offer help or intervene.
- MHFA aims to reduce stigma of mental illness and substance use disorders.



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Why Is MHFA Important?

(2 of 2)

- Youth with emotional or mental health problems are misidentified as having behavioral issues.
- Substance use problems typically begin in adolescence and early adulthood; early intervention is critical.
- 49.5 percent of adolescents ages 13-18 have a mental disorder.
- Suicide is the second leading cause of death among adolescents ages 15-18.



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MHFA Delivery Options

- In-person
- Blended
- Virtual



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MHFA Courses

- Instructor
- Adult
- Youth
- Teen



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Adult MHFA

- Teaches adults how to recognize signs of mental health or substance use challenges in adults ages 18 and older
- Teaches participants how to offer and provide initial help, using a five-step action plan
- Teaches participants how to guide a person toward appropriate care if necessary
- Builds understanding to reduce stigma



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Youth MHFA

- Intended for adults to learn how to help young people experiencing mental health or substance use challenges
- Reviews unique risk factors for youth ages 12-18 years
- Emphasizes the importance of early intervention
- Shows differences between youth and adult display of symptoms



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How Is MHFA Different?

- Taught by a live instructor
- Hands-on experience through real-life scenarios
- Offers concrete tools
- Provides resources in local area
- Provides a three-year certification with a manual and processing guide to keep upon completion



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MHFA Employee Initiative

- State agency employee instructors train other state employees in youth or adult MHFA.
- There are approximately 45 youth and adult MHFA instructors across the state.
- In-person and virtual classes are offered.
- Between 2015 to 2023, 5,082 employees have been trained.



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How Can I Take a Class?

- Contact Jondell Lafont-Garcia, MHFA Coordinator:
MentalHealthFirstAid@hhsc.state.tx.us
- Interest list for general courses offered by the Office of Mental Health Coordination
- Customized courses for your unit or division



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Thank you

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