



# Veterans Mental Health First Aid Training

## What is Veterans Mental Health First Aid?

Veterans Mental Health First Aid is a valuable resource that can make a difference in the lives of the more than 22 million veterans, their families, and the communities they live in. Family members and personnel working with military and families are often not aware of how to engage veterans with mental illnesses and addictions. In addition to the impact of military service on the veteran, each has a circle of family (significant other, children, parents, siblings, etc.) and friends impacted by military service. Thirty percent of active duty and reserve military personnel deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan have a mental health condition requiring treatment – approximately 730,000 men and women, with many experiencing post-traumatic stress disorder and major depression. Sadly, less than 50 percent of returning veterans in need receive any mental health treatment. The Veterans Administration reports that approximately 22 veterans die by suicide every day.

Like CPR training helps a non-medical professional assist an individual following a heart attack, Mental Health First Aid training helps an individual who doesn't have clinical training assist someone experiencing mental health issues of concern. The goal of Mental Health First Aid is to help support an individual until appropriate professional help or support strategies are available.

## Mental Health First Aid training teaches a 5-step process to

- assess a situation
- select and implement appropriate interventions, and
- help an individual connect with appropriate care.

## Participants learn

- risk factors and warning signs of specific illnesses - anxiety, depression, psychosis, addiction
- engage in activities that build understanding of the impact of illness, and
- receive information about effective treatment programs.

## Mental Health First Aiders learn to use a single strategy approach

Trainees learn to apply a simple approach to specific types of situations such as helping someone through a panic attack, engaging with someone who may be anxious, depressed or even suicidal, supporting a person experiencing psychosis, and helping an individual who has overdosed. An important component of the MHFA training is trainees practice the intervention strategy rather than just learn about it. This experience can make it easier to actually apply the knowledge in a real-life situation.

## Key Components of Veterans Mental Health First Aid include

- discussion of military culture and its relevance to the topic of mental health
- discussion of specific risk factors faced by many service members and their families, such as trauma, both mental and physical, stress, separation, etc.
- applying the MHFA action plan in scenarios designed specifically for veteran's concerns
- review of common mental health resources for service members

## Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) Program Effectiveness

The National Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare chose to help bring Mental Health First Aid to the U.S. due to the strong evidence supporting the program's effectiveness. Mental Health First Aid has been replicated in countries throughout the world and is becoming as common as CPR and First Aid training. The program has been shown to positively impact the health, well-being, and safety of individuals and the community, including specialty modules such as Veterans MHFA and Youth MHFA.

## Certified Trainers conduct Veterans MHFA

Instructor Donna Dover, LICSW, CDP, KMHS Community Services Director brings her lived experience as a Veteran and understanding of the military environment to the Course.



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## Course Objectives

- Understand the definition and goals of Mental Health First Aid.
- Learn and practice the Action Plan for Mental Health First Aid using the *Five Basic Steps*:
  1. Assessing risk of suicide or harm
  2. Listening non-judgmentally
  3. Giving reassurance and information
  4. Encouraging person to get appropriate professional help
  5. Encouraging self-help strategies.
- Receive an overview of mental health problems and types of treatment available.
- Learn about mental illnesses; their definitions, causes, risk factors, warning signs and symptoms.
- Obtain information on resources (websites/ organizations) for continued study and reference.

## Training Modules Cover:

Key components include discussion of military culture and relevance to mental health, specific risk factors faced by service members and their families. Modules address (1). What is Mental Health First Aid; (2). Mental health problems; (3). Recognizing Depression; (4). Anxiety Disorders; (5). What is Psychosis; (6). Understanding Substance Use Disorders; (7). Harming Behaviors: Deliberate Self-injury; (8). Resources and References.

## Program Structure and Fees

To make Mental Health First Aid readily available to the public, the program is offered at minimal cost.

- A minimum of 12 participants and maximum of 32 participants per session.
- \$35 per participant fee includes Mental Health First Aid Manuals.
- Payment must be received 5 days prior to training. Cancellations made less than 5 days prior to training are non-refundable.
- Mental Health First Aid is an Evidence Based Practice, and participants must attend the full 8-hour class to receive MHFA Certification. If a participant is unable to complete the full training and wishes to become certified, attendance at a later training date to complete the missing portion is possible. A new \$35 participant fee will be charged.
- Scheduling priority is for organizations located in Kitsap County.

## KMHS Offers Training in the Community and on our Campus:

- To schedule Veterans MHFA for your group, contact [jacquem@kmhs.org](mailto:jacquem@kmhs.org) or call 360-415-5801.
- Training is provided as a day-long single 8-hour training or in two 4-hour training sessions (please see [www.kitsapmentalhealth.org](http://www.kitsapmentalhealth.org) for specific training dates and times of scheduled trainings.)
- For trainings at KMHS, snacks are provided; lunch 30 minutes. Participants to bring sack lunch.

## How to Register for Veterans Mental Health First Aid Training

The 8 hour course is designed for family members, friends, and personnel working with military or veterans. Law enforcement, first responders, shelter and social service workers, and educators, may find the course of special interest. For more information and to register for an upcoming training visit [www.kitsapmentalhealth.org](http://www.kitsapmentalhealth.org). For registration questions, or if you wish to schedule a training contact Jacki Marson at [jacquem@kmhs.org](mailto:jacquem@kmhs.org) or by phone: 360-415-5801.