



MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID IN THE HIGHER EDUCATION ENVIRONMENT

College and university students have unique stress and risk factors related to the demands of school; balancing academic, social, and employment responsibilities while being independent and away from family, friends, and other supports — often for the first time.

Forty percent of young adults age 18-24 are enrolled in a two or four year educational institution. Statistics show that 75% of mental illnesses develop before age 25, making colleges ideal locations for early identification. However, the number one reason students say they do not use mental health resources is lack of knowledge that those resources even exist.

MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID

Mental Health First Aid USA is a training — like regular First Aid or CPR — designed to give people the skills to help someone who is developing a mental health problem or experiencing a mental health crisis.

Mental Health First Aid for Higher Education is designed with colleges' and universities' unique culture and resources in mind. The course prepares faculty and staff in higher education settings to recognize and respond to the warning signs of illnesses. Assisting young adults in a mental health crisis can help lessen the severity and impact of these illnesses. The course includes:

- Discussion of campus culture and its relevance to mental health
- Discussion of the specific stress and risk factors faced by the higher education population
- Using an action plan in scenarios designed specifically for faculty, administration and students
- Identifying mental health resources available on campus and in the community

Mental Health First Aid helps people understand that mental illnesses and addictions are real, common, and treatable and that it's OK to seek help. Research demonstrates this program's effectiveness in improving knowledge of mental illnesses and substance use, reducing fear and

misunderstanding and enabling mental health first aiders to offer concrete assistance. Individuals trained in Mental Health First Aid can help:

- Raise awareness of the stigma associated with mental illness
- Reach out to those who suffer in silence and are reluctant to seek help
- Let students know that support is available
- Provide information on self-help strategies and campus and community resources
- Make mental health care and treatment accessible to thousands in need

WHO SHOULD TAKE THE COURSE?

Mental Health First Aid for Higher Education is ideal for anyone who regularly interacts with students, both on and off campus, including:

- Faculty
- Resident Advisors
- Campus clergy
- Campus law enforcement
- Academic advisors
- Financial aid employees
- Coaches and athletic personnel
- Administrators
- Event staff
- Librarians

“ *I think it was great – I learned a lot and feel much more confident in my ability to help others in a crisis.*

– UNC Chapel Hill training participant

“ *I felt this was incredibly valuable professionally for my competence and personally for self-awareness.*

– UNC Chapel Hill training participant

“ *Important knowledge to have that should be mandatory.*

– UNC Chapel Hill training participant

TO FIND FREE ON-CAMPUS TRAINING, VISIT:

<http://ssw.unc.edu/sswevents>

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Mental Health First Aid USA is coordinated by the National Council for Behavioral Health, the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, and the Missouri Department of Mental Health.