



# Mental Health First Aid USA



A 12-hour certification course to help communities better understand mental illness and respond to psychiatric emergencies.

Contact Community Services, Inc. 6520 Basile Rowe, East Syracuse NY 13057 (315) 251-1400 www.contactsyracuse.org

**Mental Health First Aid** is the help given to someone developing a mental health problem or in a mental health crisis. The first aid is given until appropriate professional or other assistance (including peer and family support) can be engaged or until the crisis resolves. The Mental Health First Aid course is an empirically-backed public education and prevention tool that improves the public's knowledge of mental health problems *and* connects people with mental health problems with the appropriate services and care.

### Purpose

This 12-hour Mental Health First Aid course is designed to enhance mental health literacy, decrease stigmatizing attitudes in our communities, and increase appropriate and early help-seeking by people with mental health problems.

### Content

Participants will learn the warning signs and symptoms of the most common mental health problems, including depression, anxiety disorders, schizophrenia, eating disorders, self-injury and substance use disorders. It also covers how to handle crisis situations that arise. The course builds understanding of the impact of these problems and provides overviews of common treatment.

The course presents a five-step "first aid" plan:

- A**ssess for risk of suicide or harm
- L**isten nonjudgmentally
- G**ive reassurance and information
- E**ncourage person to get appropriate professional help
- E**ncourage self-help and other support strategies

### Who should take Mental Health First Aid?

The training will benefit any group who works in the public sector and the general public, but it is especially important for law enforcement and other first responders, nursing home staff, and school personnel, as well as faith communities, employers and state policymakers, mental health advocacy organizations and families.

### Background on Mental Health First Aid

Mental Health First Aid was originally created in Australia in 2001 and is now international with programs in United Kingdom, China, Canada, Finland, Singapore, and other countries. It was brought to the United States in 2008 with the goal of making it as common in ten years as traditional first aid and CPR.

### Mental Health First Aid in Our Community

The Mental Health First Aid program is an interactive 12-hour class. It can be conducted in increments of three to six hours for groups of 15 to 25 participants.

Certified instructors are now available in the Central New York area:

- Cheryl Giarrusso, M.Ed**
- Novelette Pierce, LMSW**
- Susan VanCamp, LCSW**
- Jeanne Elmer, LMSW**
- Laurie Best, MS**

Contact Community Services, Inc.  
Mental Health Association of Onondaga County

To learn more about the program or schedule a training, contact:  
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*Mental Health First Aid is brought to you by:*



Onondaga County  
Department of  
Mental Health