



MENTAL  
HEALTH  
FIRST AID

# Mental Health First Aid

**Mental Health First Aid** is a public education program offered by the Fairfax-Falls Church Community Services Board that can help communities understand mental illnesses, seek timely intervention, and save lives.

About 1 in 5 adults in the U.S. in a given year has a diagnosable mental illness. Symptoms of mental illness can be difficult to detect – and even when friends and family can tell that something is wrong, they may not know how to help.

The 8-hour Mental Health First Aid certification course:

- Introduces risk factors and warning signs of mental health problems,
- Builds understanding of the importance of early intervention, and
- Most importantly, teaches how to help someone who is in crisis or experiencing a mental health or substance use challenge.

Our certified instructors teach six versions of the program throughout Fairfax County and cities of Fairfax and Falls Church:

- **Adult Mental Health First Aid**
- **Primeros Auxilios para Salud Mental** (Spanish Mental Health First Aid)
- **Youth Mental Health First Aid:** For adults – family members, caregivers, school staff, coaches, health and human services workers, etc. – who interact with young people ages 12-25, frequently the time of life when mental health challenges first arise.
- **Older Adults Mental Health First Aid:** For adults – family members, caregivers, nursing staff, health and human services workers, etc. – who interact with people over the age of 65.
- **Higher Education Mental Health First Aid:** For students 18 and older, resident advisors, faculty, and administration who work with college students.
- **Mental Health First Aid for Public Safety:** For police and others who work in public safety roles.

In addition to courses that are available for individual enrollment, you can also request a customized group Mental Health First Aid course.

There is a \$25 materials fee for these two-day courses. Fairfax County government employees attend free of charge.

**For more information, turn the page over or go to  
[www.fairfaxcounty.gov](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov) and search on “MHFA”**



Questions? Email [CSBMHFA@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:CSBMHFA@fairfaxcounty.gov)  
or call 703-559-3000.



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**Community  
Services Board**



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# Mental Health First Aid Frequently Asked Questions

## Who should take a Mental Health First Aid course?

Mental Health First Aid classes are intended for a variety of audiences: friends and family of individuals with mental illness or addiction, public safety, businesses and primary care workers, school and college leadership, faith communities, or anyone interested in learning more about mental illness and addiction. Not sure? Just ask us!

## Is there evidence to support the effectiveness of the program?

Yes, there is strong evidence of outcomes. MHFA USA is listed in the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's National Registry of Evidence-Based Programs and Practices.

Visit [www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org/about/research](http://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org/about/research) for more information.

## How long does it take to complete the Mental Health First Aid program?

The 8-hour class is usually conducted as a two-day seminar (two half-day classes). Certification lasts three years.

## Can I set up a customized class specifically for my job, church, organization, etc.?

Yes! Go to [www.fairfaxcounty.gov](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov) and search on "MHFA" to learn how to request a custom class.

## How many participants are needed to hold a class?

A minimum of 15 participants are needed to schedule a class, with a maximum of 25.

## What types of crisis interventions are covered?

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

Anyone, anywhere can be the one to make a difference in the life of someone with a mental health or substance use challenge – if they know what to do and say.



**Ready to take a class?**

**Go to [www.fairfaxcounty.gov](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov) and search on "MHFA"**