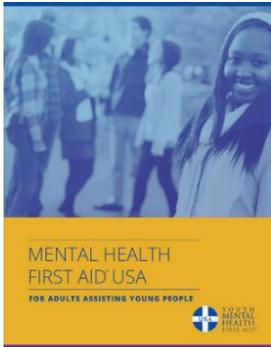


Youth Mental Health First Aid® in Schools



Suicide is now the second leading cause of death for adolescents ages 15-19 and half of all mental health problems begin by age 14.^{1,2} With one in five youth experiencing mental health and substance use problems, but less than one third of them accessing treatment, early intervention and support of young people experiencing emotional and substance use challenges is critical within school settings.^{2,3}

Studies demonstrate that early detection and treatment of mental health and substance use problems in adolescents can make a difference in not only emotional wellness, but also in their academic success⁴. Teachers and support staff need the appropriate tools to engage students who might be experiencing a mental health problem or crisis just as they would be trained to address physical health emergencies.

Every day, more than 1,500 schools across the country are making a difference in the lives of millions of adolescents because they have equipped their staff with the skills learned in Youth Mental Health First Aid®.

WHAT IS YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID®?

Youth Mental Health First Aid® USA is an 8-hour in-person training program — like traditional First Aid or CPR — designed to give participants the skills to help adolescents age 12-18 who are developing a mental health problem or experiencing an emotional crisis.

The course uses role-playing and simulations to demonstrate how to recognize and respond to warning signs and connect young people to professional, peer, social, and self-help care.

Participants do not learn to diagnose, nor how to provide any therapy or counseling – rather, they **learn to support** a youth by applying a five-step action plan, “ALGEE:”

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

Youth Mental Health First Aid® is operated in the United States by the National Council for Behavioral Health and was developed with experts at the National Technical Assistance Center for Children’s Mental Health at the Georgetown University Center for Child and Human Development.

More than 650,000 individuals have been certified in Mental Health First Aid® and Youth Mental Health First Aid® to date through a network of 10,000 instructors. **The training program is listed in the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration’s (SAMHSA) National Registry of Evidenced Based Programs and Practices** and has been demonstrated to:

- Increase **knowledge** of mental health problems and substance use disorders
- Increase **confidence** in and likelihood to help an individual in distress
- Increase participant **mental wellness**
- Decrease **social distance** (stigma)



*I found the **Youth Mental Health First Aid** course very beneficial in working with my students [who are dealing with] traumatic circumstances [like] unexpected deaths of classmates, death of a parent and having to move on short notice due to a sudden change in family income. Because of the information in the course, I feel **more prepared to help**, and I am **better equipped to identify** students that are struggling with mental health issues.*

--Karen M., Math Teacher

¹ Heron M. (2016). Deaths: Leading causes for 2013. National vital statistics reports; vol 65 no 2. Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics.

² Merikangas, K. R. et al. (2010). Lifetime prevalence of mental disorders in U.S. adolescents: Results from the National Comorbidity Study-Adolescent Supplement (NCS-A). Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry 49(10):980-9.

WHY YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID® IN SCHOOLS?

Youth Mental Health First Aid provides a common language regarding mental wellness for school personnel and expands the network of emotional support beyond the existing counseling and social work staff to the broader school community. Participants learn the risk factors and warning signs of a variety of mental health challenges common among adolescents including anxiety, depression, psychosis, eating disorders, AD/HD, disruptive behavior disorders, and substance use disorders.

The ability to recognize that a young person's lack of focus, bullying behaviors or failure to turn in assignments may be linked to an underlying mental health or substance use problem is an important step in supporting them effectively. The greater the number of teachers, coaches, youth group leaders, parents and school support staff trained, the more students will benefit from accessing the help that they need.



*Some days I feel like all I do is **ALGEE**... Youth Mental Health First Aid has **saved lives**, **changed minds**, and provided our staff with some sense of **confidence** to handle such a difficult event as suicide.*

*--Laura H.,
High School Coordinator*

School personnel trained in Youth Mental Health First Aid® can help to:

- **Identify** students experiencing emotional problems sooner
- **Improve** coordination with existing school-based mental health supports and resources
- **Inform** students and their families of local supports available in their community

Since 2012, Youth Mental Health First Aid® has been implemented in hundreds of middle and high schools and 27 state departments of education with overwhelmingly positive results. One of the drivers of recent growth in the secondary education sector was the appropriation of more than \$30 million in grant funding through SAMHSA's Now is The Time Project AWARE grant initiatives. This funding was made available following a 2013 New Freedom Commission Report by President Obama's Administration which recommended training for teachers in Mental Health First Aid®. Through three distinct programs awarded to state and local grantees in 2014 and 2015, more than 2,000 instructors have been certified and 60,000 first aiders trained to date in schools nationwide.

YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID® IN ACTION

Thousands of bus drivers, cafeteria staff, school safety officers, teacher's assistants and educators have already been trained through a variety of implementation models that serve traditional and alternative school settings, including:

Legislative Action:

In Texas, advocacy resulted in an appropriation of \$5 million dollars for thousands of educators to be trained in Youth Mental Health First Aid® statewide by hosting multiple instructor trainings and covering the cost of participant manuals.

Resource Alignment:

Using a combination of federal, state and local funding sources, as well as engaging existing certified Youth Mental Health First Aid® instructors from community behavioral health treatment organizations, Michigan has certified nearly 2,000 first aiders across school districts.

Community Collaboration:

A group of foundations and non-profit organizations in Coatesville, PA have helped to foster a connection between the school district, local behavioral health providers and school mental health professionals to deliver Youth Mental Health First Aid®, improve communication and create a "warm handoff" to professional help when needed.

Youth Mental Health First Aid® is a low-cost, high-impact program that helps young people and their families understand that mental health and substance use problems are real, common, and treatable and that it is okay to seek help. For more information, or to find out how Youth Mental Health First Aid can help in your school district and community visit www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org or email us at MHFAinfo@thenationalcouncil.org.

³Costello, E. J., He, J. P., Sampson, N. A., Kessler, R. C., & Merikangas, K. R. (2013). Services for adolescents with psychiatric disorders: 12-month data from the National Comorbidity Survey-Adolescent. *Psychiatric Services*, 65(3), 459.

⁴Baskin, T.W. et al. (2010). Does youth psychotherapy improve academically related outcomes? A meta-analysis. *Journal of Counseling Psychology* 57(3):290-296.