

What Parents/Guardians Need to Know About teen Mental Health First Aid

Our school will conduct teen Mental Health First Aid (tMHFA) training for 10th graders beginning on May 11, 2022. This is an evidence-based training that teaches teens in grades 10-12, or ages 15-18, how to identify, understand and respond to signs of mental health and substance use challenges in their friends and peers. The training gives teens the skills they need to have supportive conversations with their friends and emphasizes the importance of getting help from a responsible and trusted adult.

Young people often turn to each other when stressed or upset and try to help, sometimes taking on too much. tMHFA teaches them they don't have to take these problems on alone. The course discusses issues that some teens may find distressing, like school violence and suicide. You may wish to discuss these subjects with your teen before or after the training.

Mental health challenges are very common in adolescents, and this course is not being introduced because of any specific problems at our location. In the event of a suicide here, be aware the specific suicide will not be discussed during the class, nor will any individual teen.

The course is being taught by school staff or staff from a partnering organization. All instructors teaching the course have received special training and are certified to teach the course by Mental Health First Aid USA®, a division of the National Council for Mental Wellbeing.

The course is taught in six 45-minute sessions or three 90-minute sessions, depending on your youth's schedule. The following is an overview of what will be addressed.

Session 1
Mental health in general, what mental health challenges are, how common they are in teens.
Session 2
The impact of mental health challenges on teens, how people with mental health challenges can get better, professionals who can help.
Session 3
Helping a friend who is in crisis because they are suicidal, introducing the tMHFA Action Plan ("Look, Ask, Listen, Help Your Friend") and how it can be used in a crisis situation. A video shows a teen helping a friend who is experiencing suicidal thoughts.

Session 4
Helping a friend who is in another type of crisis, such as threatening violence or harm to others, engaging in nonsuicidal self-injury, or experiencing a traumatic event such as bullying, abuse or assault. Practice using the tMHFA Action Plan (“Look, Ask, List, Help Your Friend”) in these types of crisis situations.
Session 5
How to help a friend who may be in crisis due to substance use, how to help when a friend might be developing a mental health challenge. The course does not teach teens how to diagnose! It’s information about being a supportive friend, encouraging friends to seek help, and knowing when it’s time to get someone else involved.
Session 6
Recovery, resiliency and all final activities to complete the tMHFA course.

Teens who participate in tMHFA will receive a certificate of completion for taking the course and a manual to use during the course that they can take home after the last session. There are resources for further information in the manual that you may want to explore with your child. If you want to learn more now, the following resources are provided.

RESOURCES

National Helplines

If you or someone you know needs immediate help, call 911.

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

Call 800-273-TALK (8255)

Visit www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org

Crisis Text Line

Text “MHFA” to 741-741 for free 24/7 crisis counseling.

Visit www.crisistextline.org

Learn more about mental health problems

Teens Health

http://teenshealth.org/teen/your_mind

National Alliance on Mental Illness

www.nami.org/Find-Support/Teens-and-Young-Adults

National Institute of Mental Health

<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/child-and-adolescent-mental-health/index.shtml>.

Learn more about Mental Health First Aid

Mental Health First Aid USA

www.MentalHealthFirstAid.org/

You can also encourage your teen to talk to their school mental health professional for additional information and support.

SCHOOL CONTACTS

Training will begin on May 11, 2022. If you have any questions about tMHFA or concerns about your teen's participation in the training, please contact our school Coordinator.

Dr. Alexander