



teen Mental Health First Aid

Frequently Asked Questions

About teen Mental Health First Aid

What is teen Mental Health First Aid?

teen Mental Health First Aid (tMHFA) is an evidence-based program 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 to have supportive conversations with their friends and how to get help from a responsible and trusted adult.

How was tMHFA developed?

teen Mental Health First Aid (tMHFA) is an evidence-based training program for teens that originated in Australia. The National Council for Mental Wellbeing, in partnership with Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health, conducted an evaluation of tMHFA in the United States to measure the skills, knowledge and confidence in providing tMHFA to a peer and actual usage of tMHFA by young people after taking the course.

How do I deliver tMHFA?

There are multiple ways to teach and learn tMHFA.

- In-person — Lessons are conducted in person in six 45-minute sessions or three 90-minute sessions.
- Blended – Teens complete 6 sessions consisting of a 20–30-minute self-paced online lesson followed by a 30 minute live, Instructor-led session. The Instructor-led portion can be online or in-person.

What are the course learning objectives?

After the course, teens will be able to:



- Recognize early warning signs that a friend is developing a mental health or substance use challenge.
- Recognize warning signs that a friend may be experiencing a mental health or substance use crisis.
- Describe how to talk to a friend about mental health and seeking help.
- Explain when and how to get a responsible adult involved.
- Discuss where to find appropriate and helpful resources about mental health challenges and professional help.
- Apply the tMHFA Action Plan to help a friend with a mental health or substance use challenge or crisis.

Who are tMHFA Instructors?

teen Mental Health First Aid Instructors are ADULTS certified to teach the course in their communities. tMHFA Instructors are on the frontlines of the program, training teens in their communities how to assess, respond and bring in a trusted adult if a peer seems to be having a mental health or substance use challenge. Instructors teach from a national curriculum, tailor discussions to their participants, and compile a list of local resources for help.

Is this program available in any languages aside from English?

Currently, tMHFA is available in English and Spanish. Request additional information at teen@mhfamissouri.org.

Talking to Administration and Parents

How can I pitch this program to my administration and leadership?

In addition to information on our website, you can also share this [infographic](#) with your leadership. To learn more, set up a call with a member of our team by emailing teen@mhfamissouri.org.

What resources do you have for parents/guardians?

Once certified, tMHFA Instructors will have access to templates, including informational slides, that can be used to present the program to school staff, parents, and guardians.



Can parents/guardians opt their child out of tMHFA?

tMHFA is offered to an entire grade level or group of teens and does not require parental consent. Therefore, we encourage sites to offer parent information sessions and send informational letters home so there is a greater understanding about the program and what students are learning. We recommend including your site's contact information in any communication. A teen may be opted out of the program at the discretion of your site.

Becoming a tMHFA Site

What are the requirements for implementing tMHFA?

Any school or youth-serving organization (YSO) in partnership with a school that wants to bring tMHFA training to their teens must apply and be accepted to become a tMHFA Site.

When funding is awarded, a school or YSO will sign a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to agree to the implementation requirements and become a tMHFA Site.

Requirements:

- The program must be taught to teens in grades 10, 11, or 12. At this time, grade 9 is not permitted.
- If teaching at a school, the course should be taught to an entire grade level of teens (not individuals) in the school. If teaching at a YSO, the course should be taught to an entire group of teens at the YSO or program.
- Schools or organizations should have approximately 10% of staff at the site trained in YMHFA (for adults assisting young people) before teaching tMHFA to teens. This ensures that adults are available and prepared to help young people facing a crisis or challenge. Sites are encouraged to offer YMHFA training to parents/guardians as well.
- The school or organization offering the training must have a protocol in place to ensure teen safety, including how to respond to a teen who's in distress and indicates they would like to be seen. Sites must also commit to using tMHFA Exit Tickets to provide teens with a discreet way of asking for help for themselves or a friend after every session of the course. Sites must establish a protocol to have Instructors and/or a site staff person read every tMHFA Exit Ticket and contact every teen who requests help.



- The course should be taught in classes of approximately 5 to 30 teens on non-consecutive days. The program is not intended for large, assembly-style sessions.
- Sites are encouraged to provide YMHFA training to parents and caregivers before the tMHFA course begins or concurrently with the tMHFA course.

What costs are associated with tMHFA?

Missouri currently has funding available to assist with tMHFA implementation. Funding covers the cost of a participant manual for each teen and may cover the cost of training Instructor/s for your site. tMHFA is designed to be an ongoing program, educating a unique group of teens each year. We encourage you to choose Instructors who are committed to your site, your youth, and to mental health. Funding opportunities will be available on our website.

We are a youth-serving organization or community site; we do not know where we will train teens yet. What are our first steps?

If you are a community organization or YSO interested in partnering with a school or providing tMHFA through your organization, please apply through our website. A member of our team will reach out with additional information.

tMHFA Implementation Questions

What if my school does not have grade levels?

In this case, teach teens ages 15-18.

- 10th grade: 15-16 years old
- 11th grade: 16-17 years old
- 12th grade: 17-18 years old

How do I train 10% of my staff in YMHFA?

We have several options to help you bring this training to your site.

- If you are a public school in Missouri, please complete a [request form](#) on our website.



- If you are a YSO or a private school, we have open public courses available on our [events page](#) or you can email teen@mhfamissouri.org for further assistance.

Sites must train their adult staff in YMHFA prior to implementing tMHFA.

Why can't I train teens in the ninth grade?

While we recognize that for some schools ninth grade health education is an optimal time to train an entire grade level of teens, at this time, we are not able to make exceptions to our requirements that the course only be taught to the intended age group. We hope to create training for young people in grade 9 in the future.

Can you share best practices for scheduling courses to ensure that an entire grade level of teens is trained?

Existing tMHFA sites schedule the training using a variety of courses, incorporating tMHFA in health, English, history, and art classes. It often depends on which classes the majority of one grade level is taking. Many sites choose to train half of a grade level in the fall semester and the second half of the grade level in the spring semester. We recommend that you have these conversations early in your planning for tMHFA.

Can I teach all six or three sessions of tMHFA on the same day?

No, tMHFA must be taught on non-consecutive days. There must be at least one day, but no longer than two weeks, between sessions.

Why is it important to teach on non-consecutive days?

To allow time to respond to students' exit tickets and any request for follow-up from a mental health professional, we require at least one day between sessions.

Is there a required number of teens I must train per year?

Yes, you are required to offer the program to the entire grade level you indicated in your application. The number of projected students reflects the number of teen manuals shipped to your site. (For example, if you say you will teach 200 students, we will ship 200 manuals.) Significant discrepancies will require explanation and can affect future funding.



What if there are a few teens who are absent when I teach tMHFA? Do I need to find a way for them to make up the course?

We recommend that you provide a brief review at the beginning of each session, no more than 5 minutes. While make-up sessions are not required, please make sure that you follow up with any teen who is absent after the session that discusses suicide.

What are the qualifications for the mental health professional that must be available?

The mental health professional must be a credentialed professional, such as a school nurse, social worker, or counselor, who is available to see a young person who may be in distress while the training is taking place.

What are the reporting requirements?

tMHFA Instructors will use the MHFA learning management system to enter course information. Sites will also be asked to report the number of students trained each school year for Missouri.

Does the National Council collect personal identifying information on teens?

All course and evaluation data gathered from tMHFA courses are submitted through the MHFA Connect Submit-a-Course feature and do not include any PII from learners.

Teen Safety

How do tMHFA Sites account for teen safety?

Sites must have a protocol in place for responding to a learner experiencing distress. Mental Health First Aid provides a sample protocol if you do not already have one. At a minimum, the protocol should include:

- Following up immediately with a teen who says they are or have been suicidal, utilizing the mental health professional on staff and site's safety protocol.



- Discussing course content with any individual teens who may be at increased risk, such as those who have been touched by suicide.
- Utilizing Exit Tickets after each session allows teens a discrete way to ask for additional support.

Are mental health professionals available for teens taking the course?

Sites must have adults available during the course to provide additional support:

- A site/school mental health professional must be available during the class.
- At least two adults must be always in the training room (virtual or in-person). Only 1 must be a certified tMHFA Instructor. The classroom teacher and school counselor are both great options to help Instructors manage the class.
- Sites may ask local mental health professionals or other social service staff from outside the school or organization to be available while the program is being taught.

Becoming a tMHFA Instructor

I am interested in tMHFA, but not connected to a school or organization. Can I apply to attend a tMHFA Instructor training?

You must have a school or a YSO on board before becoming trained as a teen Instructor. There is not an individual instructor application for tMHFA. A school or YSOs may apply to become a “site” and then identify potential instructor candidates. If you have additional questions, email us at teen@mhfamissouri.org.

What can I anticipate in the tMHFA Instructor training?

The VIRTUAL 3-day Instructor training is a live, interactive training presented by tMHFA National Trainers. Each day of instruction will run 6-8 hours. In addition, each training requires 5 hours of pre-work prior to the training, where candidates will watch a series of modeling videos of the training and complete assignments in an Instructor Processing Guide. On the third day, Instructor candidates will present a portion of the curriculum to the entire class and receive feedback from the National Trainers. Instructor candidates must pass this presentation and be present during the entire three days of training to receive certification.



Can I get continuing education (CE) credits for the tMHFA Instructor training?

Currently, CEs are not being offered for the 3-day tMHFA Instructor training.

Who makes the best tMHFA Instructor candidates?

All tMHFA Instructors must have experience working with youth in a personal or professional setting. They also must have experience delivering presentations and facilitating discussions. A working knowledge or interest in mental health is recommended.

Once I am a tMHFA Instructor, what are the requirements for maintaining my certification?

To maintain your tMHFA Instructor certification, you are required to teach one multi-session course per year. Two Instructors can co-teach a course, and both receive credit.