

Mental Health First Aid for Public Safety

Mental Health First Aid USA is an 8-hour course that teaches a 5-step action plan encompassing the skills, resources, and knowledge to help an individual in crisis connect with appropriate professional, peer, and self-help care. The course teaches the unique risk factors and warning signs of mental health problems, builds understanding of the importance of early intervention, and, most importantly, teaches individuals how to help someone in crisis or experiencing a mental health challenge.

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

The course is taught to police, first responders, corrections officers, and other public safety audiences around the country. Mental Health First Aid for Public Safety provides officers with more response options to help them deescalate incidents and better understand mental illnesses so they can respond to mental health related calls appropriately without compromising safety. Approximately 20,000 public safety professionals have taken the course, including at police academies in Philadelphia, DC, Seattle, and numerous smaller and rural departments.

“Public Safety Officers, regardless of rank or position, may find themselves confronted with a mental health crisis. My Mental Health First Aid training helped me save a life, and regular incidents serve as reminders of how public safety officers fall back on their training in times of crisis.”

- Captain Joseph Coffey,
Rhode Island Municipal Police Academy
Mental Health First Aid National Trainer



“What struck me most about Mental Health First Aid is the interest it generates among people who don’t have a direct connection to the mental health field. This is a program that can move us beyond usual constituencies to truly build a healthy community.”

-David Johnson, CEO, Bert Nash Center, Lawrence, Kansas

WHO CAN BE A MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AIDER?

- Law enforcement
- Corrections officers
- Other first responders
- 911 Dispatch Staff
- Human resources professionals
- Business leaders
- Nurses and other primary care workers
- School and college workers
- Faith community leaders
- Caring citizens

- Defusing crises
- Promoting mental health literacy
- Combating stigma of mental illness
- Enabling early intervention through recognition of signs and symptoms
- Connecting people to care

To see who is already providing the course in your community, visit www.MentalHealthFirstAid.org.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the difference between the 8 hour Mental Health First Aid for Public Safety Program and the 40 hour Crisis Intervention Team [CIT] Training?

CIT training is an excellent in-depth program that enjoys widespread adoption across the country, but not every department has the resources to train all officers or staff in the CIT program, nor is every officer or staff member ready for this intensive certification. The goal of most departments is to have at least 25% of their force CIT Certified.

Mental Health First Aid for Public Safety is a good compliment to CIT training – a one day course for the 75% of officers or staff who are not yet CIT certified or may never be. Also, some police departments use Mental Health First Aid for Public Safety as a complement to their CIT program, training newer officers and those who express interest in joining the CIT team in Mental Health First Aid as a first step.

What Law Enforcement, Corrections and Public Safety organizations are already using Mental Health First Aid for Public Safety?

Overall, more than 20,000 Police Officers, Corrections Officers, and other Public Safety Staff have taken the course across the country.

A few specific organizations with particularly comprehensive programs:

- State of Rhode Island Police Training Academy: Cadet elective
- Washington, DC Police Academy: Cadet requirement
- City of Philadelphia Police Academy: Officer elective
- City of Philadelphia Fire and Rescue Academy: Staff elective
- City of Philadelphia Department of Probation and Parole: all staff requirement (400 staff)
- Pennsylvania Department of Corrections: all staff requirement (16,000 staff)
- Washington State Criminal Justice Training Center – Seattle – Officer elective

How would a State or Local law enforcement agency adopt Mental Health First Aid for Public Safety?

The course is taught by certified instructors with a public safety designation. These instructors are required to have a background in Law Enforcement, Corrections or Public Safety and are usually members of their specific audience. Mental Health First Aid has thousands of instructors in all 50 states, but often counties or local police academies find it makes sense to train their own instructors when they launch the program – often individuals who also teach the CIT program at the police or corrections academy. Instructors are certified at a five day intensive train-the-trainer course offered around the country.

Once certified to teach the course, the instructor can teach as many individuals they like at a very low incremental cost – simply the price of the course materials per student. The program is designed to be affordable and sustainable to reach the widest possible audience.