

## 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 10,000 public safety professionals have taken the course, including at police academies in Philadelphia, DC, Seattle, and numerous smaller and rural departments.

### WHO TAKES THE TRAINING?

- Law enforcement
- Sheriff's office staff
- Corrections officers
- Other first responders (fire, EMS, etc.)
- 911 Dispatch Staff
- Parole and probation professionals
- Warrant officers
- Juvenile justice professionals
- Non-profit reentry program staff
- Other related audiences

### GOALS OF MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID FOR PUBLIC SAFETY

- Defuse crises
- Promote mental health literacy
- Combat stigma of mental illness
- Enable early intervention
- Connect people to care

### TESTIMONIALS

"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



"It was exciting to deliver Mental Health First Aid for Public Safety yesterday to a room full of detention officers, correction officers, program staff, and leadership with the Mecklenburg County Sheriff's Office.

The feedback was overwhelmingly positive regarding its relevancy, content, and support for other initiatives (i.e., CIT). We've been asked to present at least two trainings per month at the county jail training center to train new recruits and current hires."

-Kathryn Falbo-Woodson, Director of Advocacy & Outreach  
Mental Health Association of Central Carolinas, Inc.

## *Frequently Asked Questions*

### **WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID FOR PUBLIC SAFETY AND CRISIS INTERVENTION TEAM (CIT) TRAINING?**

CIT training is an excellent in-depth 40-hour program with widespread adoption across the country. The goal of most departments is to have at least 25% of their force CIT certified, as not every officer or staff member is ready for this intensive certification. Not every department has the resources to train all officers or staff in the CIT program.

Mental Health First Aid for Public Safety is a good complement 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 ORGANIZATIONS ALREADY PROVIDE MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID FOR PUBLIC SAFETY?**

Overall, more than 10,000 police officers, corrections officers, and other public safety professionals have taken the course across the country.

Agencies with particularly comprehensive programs include:

- Rhode Island Municipal 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
- Pennsylvania Department of Corrections: All staff requirement
- Washington State Criminal Justice Training Center: Officer elective

### **HOW CAN 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.

To see who is already providing the course in your community, visit [www.MentalHealthFirstAid.org](http://www.MentalHealthFirstAid.org).