

## MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID

### ***What is Mental Health First Aid?***

Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) is the help provided to a person developing a mental health problem or already in a mental health crisis. Just as first aid is administered to an injured person before medical treatment can be obtained, MHFA is given until appropriate treatment is found or until the crisis is resolved.

The MHFA program aims to improve mental health literacy, provide the skills and knowledge to help people better manage potential or developing mental health problems in themselves, a family member, a friend or a colleague. It shows people how to:

- Recognize the signs and symptoms of mental health problems
- Provide initial help
- Guide a person towards appropriate professional help

MHFA first originated in Australia and is now being delivered in Scotland, Hong Kong, Finland, Sri Lanka and the United States. The program was introduced to Canada in 2006 and brought to Winnipeg in January 2007.

### ***What are the similarities to traditional first aid?***

MHFA shares the same overall purpose as traditional first aid – to save lives. It aims to:

- Preserve life where a person may be a danger to themselves or others
- Provide help to prevent the mental health problem from developing into a more serious state
- Promote the recovery of good mental health
- Provide comfort to a person experiencing a mental health problem

### ***Why is Mental Health First Aid necessary?***

Vital reasons for why people should learn MHFA include:

- It is extremely likely that everyone will either develop a mental health problem or know someone who does. In Canada, one person in five will experience some form of a mental health problem in the course of a year and, over the course of a lifetime that number jumps to one in three.
- Stigma associated with mental health problems prevent people from seeking available treatment.
- Many people still don't know where to seek help or what kind of help might be useful when dealing with mental health issues.
- Professional help is not always on hand. As in medical emergencies, professional assistance is not always available when a problem first arises. This is the critical time period when people can provide immediate assistance until professional help is given.
- People often don't know how to respond to medical emergencies. Similarly, many are unsure about how to react to a mental health problem or crisis. Participants of the MHFA training program learn an action plan for appropriate response.

### ***Who should take Mental Health First Aid?***

Anyone can benefit from MHFA. It is open to members of the general public and families affected by mental illnesses, teachers, health service providers, emergency workers, frontline workers who deal with the public, volunteers, human resources professionals, employers and community groups, to name a few.

In Winnipeg, over 360 people have been trained as mental health first aiders since January 2007, and the response to the course has been extremely positive.

### ***What topics are covered during the Mental Health First Aid course?***

MHFA course content covers what is meant by mental health, mental illness and mental health problems; demonstrates how to recognize the signs and symptoms of common mental health problems and crisis situations; provides information about effective interventions and treatments; and shows people how to access professional help.

#### **The following mental health problems are covered:**

- Depression
- Anxiety disorders
- Psychosis
- Substance abuse

#### **The following mental health crisis situations are covered:**

- Suicidal behaviour
- Overdoses
- Panic Attacks
- Reactions to traumatic events
- Violence associated with psychosis

### ***How long is the program?***

MHFA is a 12-hour course (four 3-hour modules), generally delivered over two full days.

### ***How are the courses delivered?***

The MHFA course consists of a combination of presentations, activities and discussions. This is an interactive course that is provided in a supportive group learning environment. Practical skills are taught using a five-step model that is easy to remember and apply in real-life settings.

### ***What qualifications do the instructors have?***

Canadian MHFA instructors are selected for their knowledge of mental health and their skill in delivering course content. They have been trained and maintain their certification through the MHFA Canada program.

### ***Where can I take the course?***

Manitoba currently counts with 24 instructors who offer the course in several locations throughout the province. In Winnipeg, contact the WRHA-CMHA Winnipeg Region Instructor Team to register or obtain further information. (See below)

### ***What is the cost of the Mental Health First Aid course?***

The cost varies from region to region. In Winnipeg, the cost of the 12-hour Mental Health First Aid course is \$125 per person. Members of the CMHA Winnipeg Region receive a member's rate of \$99. Group rates are also available.

### ***To register or to obtain further information, please contact us.***

#### **WRHA/CMHA-Winnipeg Region MHFA Instructor Team**

Phone 204-982-6100 Fax 204-982-6128 [office@cmhawpg.mb.ca](mailto:office@cmhawpg.mb.ca) [www.cmhawpg.mb.ca](http://www.cmhawpg.mb.ca)

For more information on Mental Health First Aid Canada visit [www.mentalhealthfirstaid.ca](http://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.ca)