



Mental Health First Aid

Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) Canada is a ground-breaking program that equips Canadians with the knowledge needed to comfortably and proactively respond to those who may require mental health assistance.

A New Kind of First Aid

From ergonomically correct office chairs to protective safety goggles, physical safety in the workplace has become a primary concern across all industries and occupations. If an incident does occur, many organizations have first aid attendants who can help until the paramedics arrive. And now they can train someone as a mental health first aider for mental health problems.

Employers and members of the community are taking note of the impact mental health problems have on society and are doing something about it. Human resource officers, teachers, front-line mental health professionals, the general public and people from many other disciplines are training in Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) Canada, a program spearheaded by the Alberta Mental Health Board.

MHFA Canada is an evidence-based training program that is designed, just like traditional first aid, to enable people to recognize symptoms and provide support until professional help can step in. It is an educational course for the public. No experience in mental health is necessary.

The goal of the course is threefold.

1. Educate participants and help them identify signs of mental health problems in co-workers, friends, family, strangers and even themselves.
2. Teach participants how to support the individual and to help seek appropriate treatment for them.
3. Reduce the stigma of mental illness. More than half of people with mental health problems will be too ashamed to seek treatment.

Excerpt from an article of the same title in "Minding the Workplace", an insert in the May 2007 edition of Venture Magazine.

Mental Health & the Canadian Workplace

- "In 2003, mental illness accounted for **30% of disability claims and 70% of the total costs** [of disability claims]."^{**}
- **Only 34%** of employees report having ready access to services and tools at work to help with mental health issues^{**}
- **35 million days** are lost each year due to mental health^{***}
- **\$33 billion** is lost in productivity each year due to mental illness in the Canadian labour force^{***}
- Mental health problems are common but many employees are not well informed about how to recognize the symptoms and provide appropriate assistance to their colleagues.
- The stigma associated with mental health problems often hinders employees from seeking appropriate help for themselves or others.

Sources:

*Government of Canada. (2006) The human face of mental health and mental illness in Canada. Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada. Page 41

**Desjardins Financial Security Survey, 2007

***Global Business and Economic Roundtable on Addiction and Mental Health

Contact us

Visit www.mentalhealthfirstaid.ca,
e-mail mhfacanada@amhb.ab.ca, or
call **1-866-989-3985** for more information on
how MHFA Canada can benefit your
organization.

See back for more...



Mental Health First Aid

With Mental Health First Aid, Anyone Can Help

MHFA Canada shares the same overall purpose as traditional First Aid – **to save lives**. You don't have to be a trained professional to offer initial help. With MHFA Canada trained employees, equip your organization to:

- Preserve life where an employee may be at risk of hurting themselves and/ or contributing to an unsafe work environment
- Recognize and understand the symptoms of mental health problems, including those related to substance abuse
- Provide help to prevent the mental health problem from developing into a more serious state
- Promote the recovery of good mental health by accommodating employees in distress or recovering from a crisis
- Increase productivity and reduce absenteeism and overall pressure on benefits

MHFA Canada Courses

Mental health problems will affect **one in three Canadians** at some point in their life. Chances are you know someone who needs help. Your employees' actions may determine how quickly a colleague with a mental health problem gets help and/ or recovers. Here's how your employees can get MHFA Canada trained:

MHFA Canada Training Course

This 12-hour training course teaches staff how to identify the signs and provide initial help to colleagues facing mental health problems or crises. Topics include what is meant by mental health, symptoms of common mental health problems, a step-by-step model on providing MHFA, information about effective interventions and treatments, and how to access professional help in your area. Mental health problems covered include depression, some mood disorders, anxiety disorders and disorders associated with psychosis and substance abuse.

Become a Certified MHFA Canada Instructor

MHFA Canada is also accepting applications from qualified individuals who would like to become certified MHFA Canada Instructors for their organization. Contact us or visit www.mentalhealthfirstaid.ca for more information about qualifications and the application process.

Proven Outcomes

Courses are taught by certified MHFA Canada Instructors with extensive experience in mental health.

MHFA was developed by the Centre for Mental Health Research at the Australian National University and has been adapted internationally in Australia, Europe and Asia.

Governments in Australia and Scotland have now made MHFA part of their national mental health strategy.

Research indicates that MHFA in Australia improved participants' knowledge of mental disorders, reduced stigma, increased the amount of help provided to others and enhanced participant awareness of their own mental health.



"When First Aid came into existence, the concept of teaching the average citizen to apply pressure to a wound saved people's lives. MHFA will do something similar, by assisting people in making the right kind of decisions."

*- Former Supervisor of the
Edmonton Police Service,
Police & Crisis Team*

Contact us

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