

# Mental Health First Aid



Mental Health  
Commission  
of Canada

Commission de  
la santé mentale  
du Canada

**The Mental Health First Aid (MHFA)** training course was developed to help people provide initial support to someone who may be developing a mental health problem or experiencing a mental health crisis. MHFA Canada teaches mental health first aid skills. The course does not train people to be therapists, counselors, or mental health professionals. The philosophy behind MHFA Canada is that mental health crisis, such as suicidal and self-harming actions, may be avoided through early intervention. If a crisis does arise, then members of the public can take action that may reduce the harm that could result.

Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) is the help provided to a person developing a mental health problem or experiencing a mental health crisis. Just as physical 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 Canada program aims to improve mental health literacy and 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. MHFA Canada is a 12-hour training course delivered in four modules of three hours each. Participants will learn how to provide initial help to people who are showing signs of a mental health problem or experiencing a mental health crisis.

**The program does not teach people how to be therapists. It does teach people how to:**

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

**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.

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

Mood disorders, Anxiety disorders, Psychosis, and Substance Use Disorder

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

Suicidal behaviour, Overdoses, Panic Attacks, Reactions to traumatic events, and Psychotic episodes

## MHFA Canada for Adults who interact with Youth Course

**MHFA Canada for Adults Who Interact with Youth focuses** on mental health problems and first aid for youth ages 12 to 24. Mental health problems often first develop during adolescence or early adulthood, with half of all mental disorders beginning by age 14, and 75 percent beginning by age 24.

Most mental disorders develop gradually. The early signs and symptoms of developing mental health problems will be different from the more established clinical profiles which are reflected later in life. The social, educational, and familial environments in which mental disorders occur in young people are also different from those later in life. Therefore, the information in this course is designed to be sensitive to and assist the unique aspects of mental health problems in young people. It is meant to assist education professionals, health providers, parents, and other adults in the identification of mental health problems and appropriate first aid intervention strategies.