

## **Other States' Mental Health First Aid Initiatives**

Mental Health First Aid is a groundbreaking public education program that helps the public identify, understand, and respond to signs of mental illnesses and substance use disorders. Mental Health First Aid USA is managed, operated, and disseminated by three national authorities — the National Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare, the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, and the Missouri Department of Mental Health.

Arizona, Colorado, Georgia, Maryland, and Missouri already have statewide programs requiring some people to complete this training as part of their job. In Rhode Island the course is part of police officer training. Austin, Texas, offers it to every public library employee. (Mental Health First Aid, accessed 2/15/13)

### **Mental Health First Aid Colorado – A National Leader**

Mental Health First Aid is a program that teaches first aid skills for mental illness and crises. It is taught in fifteen countries around the world and throughout the US, including Colorado. In fact, our program here in Colorado program has distinguished itself as a national leader with more instructors per capita than anywhere else in the country – currently there are 163 instructors who have trained nearly 5,000 certified Mental Health First Aiders in Colorado!

Mental Health First Aid was developed in Australia in 2001 where it has an impressive track record. Five published studies conducted in Australia show that the program saves lives and increases the awareness and understanding of mental illnesses and treatment options, while improving the mental health of the individual administering care and the one receiving it.

Mental Health First Aid was brought to the US through a collaborative effort between the National Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare, the Maryland State Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, and the Missouri Department of Mental Health. The program was brought to Colorado in 2008 by the Colorado Behavioral Healthcare Council.

Mental Health First Aid Colorado is implemented in an innovative and effective way through a statewide private-public partnership of local mental health centers, the Colorado Department of Public Safety, the Colorado Sheriff's Association, the Colorado Division of Behavioral Health, Mental Health America of Colorado, and the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education which ensures that the course is taught, supported and recognized in and by communities throughout Colorado.

Mental Health First Aid USA and the National Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare agrees that Colorado's Mental Health First Aid Program is one of the best in the nation. They awarded Mental Health First Aid Colorado the 2012 Mental Health First Aid Best Community Impact in April 2012 in recognition of the way the program has leveraged Mental Health First Aid for maximum community impact.

Mental Health First Aid Colorado is the local chapter of the national program, Mental Health First Aid USA. Introduced in Colorado in 2008, the program has grown to include 136 Instructors reaching a variety of audiences statewide. We are an organization driven by community and state agencies across Colorado with leadership from the Colorado Behavioral Healthcare Council in partnership with the Colorado Division of Behavioral Health.

Colorado has a unique and valuable approach to implementing the program that brings together consumer advocates, providers, state agencies, criminal justice professionals, and statewide provider associations to serve as a formal MHFA Advisory Committee. Organizations include:

- Colorado Behavioral Healthcare Council
- Colorado Division of Behavioral Health
- Colorado Sheriff's Association
- Community mental health and substance abuse providers
- Colorado Providers Association (substance abuse)
- Colorado Department of Public Safety
- Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health – Colorado (Family Advocates)
- Mental Health America of Colorado (Consumer Advocates)
- National Alliance on Mental Illness – Colorado (Consumer Advocates)
- Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education

Mental Health First Aid Colorado is committed to realizing the program's goals to improve participants' knowledge of behavioral health disorders, to reduce stigma, and to increase the amount of help provided to those who may need it. In accomplishing these goals, MHFA helps to prevent the onset and reduce the progression of mental health and substance use disorders while promoting acceptance, dignity and social inclusion of people experiencing behavioral health problems.

To take part in this statewide movement and become a certified Mental Health First Aider or a Mental Health First Aid Instructor, go to our website at [www.MHFACO.org](http://www.MHFACO.org) or contact [director@mhfacolorado.org](mailto:director@mhfacolorado.org).  
(Mental Health First Aid, accessed 2/15/13)

### **Colorado Mental-Health First-Aid Program Wins National Award**

Just as CPR can help someone save the life of a friend or neighbor, so will training in behavioral-health skills help protect people from serious mental-health issues in an increasingly stressed-out world. That's the plan at Mental Health First Aid Colorado, a statewide effort that combines public and private partnerships to train people in detecting emotional crises.

Started in 2008, it is now a national leader, having just won the 2012 Best Community Impact Award from Mental Health First Aid USA, which will be presented in April at the National Council Mental Health and Addictions Conference in Chicago. The news is a boost for the state's behavioral-health community because headlines usually focus on the state's fragmented and underfunded mental-health system. Colorado ranks 32nd in the nation for funding mental-health care.

"Our goal is lofty — to increase mental-health literacy in the state of Colorado," said George DelGrosso, executive director of the Colorado Behavioral Healthcare Council, at a news conference on Tuesday. "We hope that as you see people getting their first-aid classes in how to bandage an arm or take care of a burn, they will also receive training in how to impact someone who has a mental-health or substance abuse disorder."

Colorado has 136 instructors in its program — more per capita than anywhere else in the United States — and they have trained more than 3,000 others across the state, including people in law enforcement, fire departments, prisons and community centers.

Paul Siska, retired undersheriff of Adams County, has taught the classes to law enforcement professionals in Fort Collins, Glenwood Springs and Montrose. "They're tools you can use on a daily basis," he said. Mental Health First Aid is a 12-hour training course that teaches people how to provide initial help to someone developing a mental-health problem or experiencing an emotional crisis. They learn warning signs, how to listen without judgment and a five-step action plan to connect people in crisis to local support systems.

In Colorado, member organizations include the Colorado Department of Public Safety, the Colorado Sheriff's Association, the Colorado Division of Behavioral Health and the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education.

"The reality is that all of us need help at some time," said state Rep. Ken Summers, R-Lakewood, a supporter, at the new conference. "We live in such a challenging world, where there are stresses of almost historic proportions, and where there are issues of grief and loss that individuals confront on almost a daily basis. "If we're able to elevate the awareness that these issues are just part of the ups-and-downs of life, just like our physical health is, then hopefully we'll be more proactive in seeking help." (Denver Post, 3/29/12)

### **The Arizona MHFA Program**

The Arizona Department of Health Services' Division of Behavioral Health Services (ADHS/DBHS), the National Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare and Arizona's Regional Behavioral Health Authorities (RBHAs), which include Community Partnership of Southern Arizona (CPSA), Magellan of Arizona, Northern Arizona Regional Behavioral Health Authority (NARBHA), and Cenpatico, partnered since 2011 to launch a statewide, extensive training campaign in Mental Health First Aid (MHFA). As part of this initiative, ADHS/DBHS and partners above conducted a total of 3 TOT sessions from which close to 80 new people were certified to become instructors of MHFA. The MHFA TOT (training of trainers) is a 5-day training for community members from around the state to become instructors in Mental Health First Aid. These State-trained instructors have been training thousands of community members ever since. (Arizona Department of Health Services, accessed 2/15/13)

### **Mentally Ill Focus Of Arizona Bills**

Lost in the clamor over gun-control legislation in the wake of the Newtown, Conn., school massacre are several bills designed to prevent people with severe mental illness from committing violent acts against others or themselves.

As with gun bills introduced into the state Legislature, the measures targeting the mentally ill were prompted, in part, by mass shootings in the U.S. perpetrated by young men who struggled with behavioral-health problems.

Lawmakers want the state to spend more money training people to intervene when someone is in crisis, require teachers and health-care workers to call police if they believe someone could be dangerous, and give law-enforcement more power to detain people in hopes of preventing another mass shooting.

Mental-health experts say the bills, together with a new willingness on the part of majority Republicans to talk about additional funding for mental-health services and the prospect of Medicaid expansion, are encouraging signs that the state is willing to do more for people with mental illness, even if some believe the bills themselves may need some work.

House Bill 2570, sponsored by freshman Tucson Reps. Victoria Steele and Ethan Orr, would provide \$500,000 to expand an existing training program at the state Department of Health Services that teaches people how to recognize and intervene when someone is suicidal or could pose harm to others.

Two bills sponsored by Rep. John Kavanagh, R-Fountain Hills, would put a greater burden on counselors, teachers and other education and health professionals to get police involved if they believe someone might harm themselves or others, make it easier for police to detain people whom witnesses said were dangerous and extend to two days from one the length of time someone can be detained without being involuntarily committed.

Steele, a Democrat, and Orr, a Republican, represent the northside Tucson district that includes the Safeway where former U.S. Rep. Gabrielle Giffords and 18 others were shot two years ago, and the home of the shooter, Jared Loughner, who is now serving a life sentence.

"(We) live within a mile from where that shooting occurred. It's real personal to us," said Steele, a mental-health counselor. "We've seen how tremendously our entire community has been impacted."

Arizona launched the Mental Health First Aid program weeks after the Tucson shooting and has since trained more than 2,600 people how to intervene in a mental-health crisis.

HB 2570 would expand the program, which can cost the state up to \$2,000 per person for the 12-hour course, beyond the mental-health field to the broader community and reduce the stigma of mental illness.

Participants are trained on a checklist of responses to potentially volatile situations, including assessing the risk for suicide or harm, listening non-judgmentally and encouraging professional help and self-support strategies.

The idea is to broaden the pool of people educated in the signs and symptoms of a mental-health crisis and are able to respond, potentially heading off a tragedy and getting people the attention and treatment they need.

"We are much better prepared to help someone who's having a heart attack than someone who's having a panic attack," Steele said. "If more people knew how to help, they would." Steele said she's concerned that legislative responses to recent mass shootings could further stigmatize people with mental illness and leave the mistaken impression that they're dangerous or violent, when in fact they're far more likely to be victims themselves than to victimize others.

House Bill 2158 would amend state law to allow police to detain people deemed to be a danger to themselves or others, even if they didn't observe the behavior themselves. That would enable police to take the word of witnesses, such as parents, as they do in criminal cases, to determine whether to take someone into custody. Kavanagh said Arizona is one of few states that doesn't allow police to take witness statements into account. The measure also extends to two days from one the length of time a person can be detained without beginning proceedings to have him or her involuntarily committed for a court-ordered evaluation at psychiatric hospital.

House Bill 2555 would require counselors, teachers, professors and other licensed health-care professionals who have "reasonable cause" to believe a client or student is a danger to themselves or others to notify a law-enforcement agency "as soon as practicable." Kavanagh said he's confident police have sufficient training to judge whether someone needs to be detained. The worst option, he said, is to do nothing.

"We missed Jared Loughner. We've missed all these shooters. The common thread which runs throughout all these mass shootings is mental illness. And it appears to be males in their early 20s," Kavanagh said. "You need to give police the ability to take these people in for evaluation."

Some mental-health advocates say HB 2158 could help diffuse volatile situations and get needed attention for more people in crisis. It passed the House Public Safety, Military and Regulatory Affairs Committee unanimously last week.

"I think this gives an opportunity to truly step in and really, truly calm things down," said Vicki Johnson, former longtime director for Mentally Ill Kids in Distress, a non-profit service and advocacy center. "I realize that some people believe there's a chance that it could be abused," she said. "But right now, I believe the window is too narrow, and I believe sometimes, people are put at risk."

Mary Lou Brncik is the founder of David's Hope and director of the Arizona Mental Health and Criminal Justice Coalition, which works to increase treatment and reduce incarceration for people with behavioral-health issues. She said that she doesn't believe police or teachers are trained well enough to implement Kavanagh's bills and fears that more people would be thrown into the criminal-justice system. "I have a bad feeling about increasing law-enforcement involvement in our mental-health system. We have too much now," she said.

Kavanagh said he's generally supportive of the expanded training in Steele's bill and agrees with mental-health advocates that more early intervention and treatment is needed. He and other key Republican lawmakers have voiced support for additional mental-health funding for fiscal 2014. (Arizona Republic, 2/12/13)

**Contact: Rep. Victoria Steele – 602-926-5683**

**Contact: Emily Jenkins, CEO Arizona Council of Human Services Providers**

### **HB 2570**

Introduced by  
Representatives Orr, Steele

AN ACT

MAKING AN APPROPRIATION TO THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES FOR THE MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID PROGRAM.

AN ACT

AMENDING TITLE 36, CHAPTER 5, ARIZONA REVISED STATUTES, BY ADDING ARTICLE 8; RELATING TO MENTAL HEALTH REPORTING. 1 Be it enacted by the Legislature of the State of Arizona: Section 1. Appropriation; department of health services; mental health services The sum of \$500,000 is appropriated from the state general fund in fiscal year 2013-2014 to the department of health services for the expansion of the mental health first aid program.

### **HB 2555**

Introduced by  
Representative Kavanagh

Be it enacted by the Legislature of the State of Arizona:

Section 1. Title 36, chapter 5, Arizona Revised Statutes, is amended by adding article 8, to read:

ARTICLE 8. MENTAL HEALTH REPORTING

36-547.01. Potentially violent persons; reporting; immunity; definition

A. NOTWITHSTANDING ANY LAW TO THE CONTRARY, IF A HEALTH PROFESSIONAL WHO IS LICENSED PURSUANT TO TITLE 32, CHAPTER 14, 15, 17, 19.1, 25 OR 33, A TEACHER WHO IS EMPLOYED BY A SCHOOL DISTRICT OR CHARTER SCHOOL, A TEACHER'S AIDE WHO IS EMPLOYED BY A SCHOOL DISTRICT OR CHARTER SCHOOL AND AN INSTRUCTOR IN A POSTSECONDARY EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION HAS REASONABLE CAUSE TO BELIEVE THAT A CLIENT OR STUDENT IS A DANGER TO SELF OR OTHERS, THE HEALTH PROFESSIONAL, TEACHER, TEACHER'S AIDE OR INSTRUCTOR MUST REPORT THIS INFORMATION TO THE APPROPRIATE LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCY AS SOON AS PRACTICABLE.

- B. A PERSON WHO MAKES A REPORT REQUIRED PURSUANT TO SUBSECTION A OF THIS SECTION IN GOOD FAITH IS NOT SUBJECT TO CRIMINAL OR CIVIL LIABILITY.
- C. FOR THE PURPOSES OF THIS SECTION, "REASONABLE CAUSE" MEANS THAT THE PERSON WHO HAS A DUTY TO REPORT PURSUANT TO THIS SECTION EITHER:
1. BELIEVES, THROUGH PERSONAL OBSERVATION, THAT A CLIENT OR STUDENT IS A DANGER TO SELF OR OTHERS.
  2. IS AWARE THAT A CLIENT OR STUDENT HAS COMMUNICATED A THREAT OF HARM TO SELF OR OTHERS AND HAS THE INTENT AND ABILITY TO CARRY OUT THAT THREAT.

### **President's Obama's Plan – Now Is The Time**

The following is a quote from the President's plan regarding the goal to "Make sure students and young adults get treatment for mental health issues:"

Three quarters of mental illnesses appear by the age of 24, yet less than half of children with diagnosable mental health problems receive treatment. To increase access to mental health services for young people, we should:

- Provide "Mental Health First Aid" training to help teachers and staff recognize signs of mental illness in young people and refer them to treatment.
- Support young adults ages 16 to 25, who have the highest rates of mental illness but are the least likely to seek help, by giving incentives to help states develop innovative approaches.
- Help break the cycle of violence in schools facing pervasive violence with a new, targeted initiative to provide their students with needed services like counseling.
- Train 5,000 more social workers, counselors, and psychologists, with a focus on those serving students and young adults. (Now Is The Time, (White House, 1/16/2013)

Mental Health First Aid USA is coordinated nationally by the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, the Missouri Department of Mental Health and the National Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare in partnership with the Mental Health Association of Maryland. <http://www.mhamd.org/mhfa/>  
[http://www.mhamd.org/mhfa/Documents/MHFA\\_JUNE\\_NEWS.pdf](http://www.mhamd.org/mhfa/Documents/MHFA_JUNE_NEWS.pdf)

#### General Inquiries

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Mental Health First Aid Materials (ordering, etc)

Lisa Cinelli, Mental Health Association of Maryland  
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Mental Health First Aid in Missouri  
Brendolyn Bailey-Burch, Missouri Institute of Mental Health

**Virginia MHFA**

HB2287, would require school boards to partner with their local Community Service Board to offer mandatory mental health first aid training to teachers. The 12-hour interactive course would provide information on risk factors, symptoms and treatment of various mental health disorders, including depression, anxiety, trauma and substance abuse. (The Roanoke Times, 1/28/13)

HOUSE BILL NO. 2287  
AMENDMENT IN THE NATURE OF A SUBSTITUTE  
(Proposed by the House Committee on Education on January 28, 2013)  
(Patron Prior to Substitute--Delegate Krupicka)

A BILL to amend the Code of Virginia by adding a section numbered 22.1-271.1:1, relating to local school boards; Mental Health First Aid training plan.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That the Code of Virginia is amended by adding a section numbered 22.1-271.1:1 as follows:

§ 22.1-271.1:1. Mental Health First Aid training plan. Each local school board, in conjunction with the local community services boards, shall develop a Mental Health First Aid training plan for such teachers and pupil personnel services employees employed in public schools as the local school board may identify. With such funds as may be appropriated to the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services for this purpose, Mental Health First Aid training shall be initially provided by community services board staff members in each health planning region, as defined in § 32.1-102.1, who shall deliver a 12-hour interactive certification course to train such teachers and pupil personnel services employees in the risk factors, warning signs, and communication and referral skills for individuals developing a mental health problem or experiencing a mental health crisis.

2. That each local school board shall seek to complete development of its Mental Health First Aid training plan no later than July 1, 2014.

3. That such training plans and their implementation shall only occur if funds are appropriated for such purposes.