



Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation

People who have taken a Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) course know what to do if someone becomes unconscious and goes into cardiac arrest. Survival depends on immediately getting CPR and support from someone nearby until emergency medical staff arrive. Have you ever wanted to help someone who was developing or experiencing a mental health or substance use crisis but didn't know what to do?

Mental Health First Aid

Similar to CPR, a Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) course is a public education program. MHFA began in Australia in 2001, and came to the United States in 2008. MHFA teaches you how to identify, understand, and respond to help individuals with a mental illness or substance use problem in both crisis and non-crisis situations. MHFA responders may be the first line of support. Providing timely assistance can avert serious injury or even suicide. Participants are trained how to connect individuals in

distress to the appropriate professional, peer, social, and self-help resources. The course includes role-playing, group activities, and opportunities to practice new skills. MHFA responders are not clinicians and do not provide counseling or therapy. At the center of MHFA is a five-step action plan, ALGEE. The letters are used as a memory aid to remember how to respond when providing assistance and support to individuals in distress. ALGEE stands for:

- **A**ssess for risk of suicide or harm
- **L**isten nonjudgmentally
- **G**ive reassurance and information
- **E**ncourage appropriate professional help
- **E**ncourage self-help and other support strategies

Who Should Take Mental Health First Aid?

Mental Health First Aid is intended for anyone who lives in a community and regularly interacts with a lot of people. Police officers, teachers, students, health care workers, veterans, peer specialists, friends and family of individuals with



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behavioral health conditions, and others have completed the course. There is evidence that individuals trained in MHFA are more likely to offer assistance. Studies show that a MHFA course reduces stigma created by negative attitudes and perceptions of individuals with mental illnesses and substance use disorders. According to the National Council for Behavioral Health, as of April 2017, over 1 million people have been trained in the United States ([National Council for Behavioral Health, 2018](#)).

Many organizations and instructors charge a fee for MHFA courses. Please contact specific organizations for information about their policies. Visit [National Council for Behavioral Health, 2018](#) Website to locate courses in the United States and learn more about MHFA.

How to Find a Mental Health First Aid Course

Beacon Health Options will be offering a limited number of MHFA courses in 2018. No dates are set yet, but the courses are free, and peers and family members will receive first priority. More Information will become available soon and will be posted on the Beacon Health Options Maryland Website.

<http://maryland.beaconhealthoptions.com>.

