

# Mental Health First Aid Grant Writing Toolkit

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## About This Toolkit

When you teach Mental Health First Aid (MHFA), you perform a vital service for your community. You train loved ones, peers, neighbors and colleagues to identify, understand and respond when someone in their life is experiencing a mental health or substance use challenge.

Grant funding can help you grow your MHFA program and ensure more people in your community

get the help they need when they need it. This toolkit offers you information, guidance and language for securing grants from philanthropies and from federal, state and local governments.

As you write a grant application, remember that each grantor has its own requirements and style specifications. Refer to the grant's request for applications (RFA) or request for proposals (RFP) for guidance. Failure to meet the specifications laid out in the RFA/RFP may disqualify your application.

## About Mental Health First Aid

Mental Health First Aid is provided by the National Council for Mental Wellbeing. Founded in 1969, the National Council is a membership organization that drives policy and social change on behalf of over 3,200 mental health and substance use treatment organizations and the more than 15 million children, adults and families they serve. The National Council advocates for policies to ensure access to high-quality services; builds the capacity of mental health and substance use treatment organizations; and promotes greater understanding of mental wellbeing as a core component of comprehensive health and health care.

In 2008, the National Council introduced MHFA to the United States. MHFA is an international, evidence-based public education program that teaches learners about risk factors and warning signs of mental health and substance use challenges, builds understanding of the importance of early intervention and shares resources for national and local mental health support. MHFA, which originated in Australia in 2000, provides programs for adults helping adults, adults helping youth, and teens helping teens. Community-specific courses dig deeper into the needs of specific populations, including law enforcement, older adults, veterans and higher education. Today, the U.S. program is active in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, American Samoa, the Federated States of Micronesia, Guam, the Marshall Islands, the Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Notably, MHFA programs in the U.S. were the first in the world to pivot to virtual instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The National Council for Mental Wellbeing is the sole entity providing MHFA program materials in the United States. These materials include Manuals, curriculum products, consultation and training, and ancillary products. The National Council is also the sole entity providing MHFA Instructor trainings in the United States and U.S. territories, with the exception of Maryland and Missouri.

Since 2008, more than 4.5 million people in the U.S. have been trained in MHFA. The course teaches the 5-step Mental Health First Aid Action Plan (ALGEE), which can be used to navigate situations in which someone appears to be experiencing a mental health or substance use challenge or crisis:

- Assess for risk of suicide or harm.
- Listen nonjudgmentally.
- Give reassurance and information.
- Encourage appropriate professional help.
- Encourage self-help and other support strategies.

The goal of the MHFA Action Plan is to connect people to appropriate professional, peer, social and

self-help resources. MHFA teaches common risk factors for mental health and substance use challenges, as well as signs and symptoms of specific illnesses such as depressive disorders, anxiety disorders, eating disorders, post-traumatic stress disorder, bipolar disorder and psychotic disorders. Just as learning physical first aid does not make someone a doctor, learning Mental Health First Aid does not qualify anyone to diagnose mental health challenges or provide therapy.

## MHFA Efficacy and Impact

Research proves MHFA is effective. [Peer-reviewed studies](#) show that individuals trained in MHFA:

- Increase their knowledge of signs, symptoms and risk factors of mental health and substance use challenges.
- Can identify multiple types of professional and self-help resources for individuals with a mental health or substance use challenge.
- Have increased confidence to help an individual in distress and are more likely to do so.
- Show increased personal mental wellness.

Likewise, Teen MHFA training offered for teens in grades 9-12 (ages 14-18) has been shown to result in:

- Increased mental health literacy
- Increased confidence
- Increased positive view of mental health professionals
- Decreased psychological distress

Importantly, the Teen MHFA program explicitly stresses the importance of reaching out to a parent, guardian or trusted adult for help and guidance.

MHFA offers a crucial response to barriers to access. Mental Health First Aiders learn to meet individuals where they are in their lived experience, using intervention and referral assistance to bridge the gap between the emergence of a crisis and its resolution. (The term “referral” can include clinical referrals as well as referrals to other supports, including self-help resources.) By providing tools, awareness, knowledge and links to services, MHFA creates a network of people who can support those who may have previously faced barriers to access.

With thousands of Instructors training First Aiders around the country, the impact of MHFA expands every day. The [Case Studies page](#) on MHFA.org presents real examples of [how MHFA has touched lives](#).

## Program Descriptions

Use the program descriptions here as needed in your applications.

## Core curricula

The core MHFA curricula serve three general populations and can be delivered in an in-person or virtual format. (See the Instruction Modalities section later in this toolkit.) Adult, Youth and Teen MHFA are available in both English and Spanish. All MHFA courses must be taught by MHFA Instructors who are certified to teach that course.

### Mental Health First Aid

MHFA is a skills-based training that teaches adults how to identify, understand and respond to signs and symptoms of a mental health or substance use challenge in adults 18 and older. The course is offered to individuals 18 and older.

### Youth Mental Health First Aid

Youth MHFA is a skills-based training that teaches adults — such as parents, family members, caregivers, teachers, school staff, peers, neighbors, and health and human services workers — how to identify, understand and respond to an adolescent (ages 12-18) who may be experiencing a mental health or substance use challenge. The course is offered to individuals 18 and older.

### Teen Mental Health First Aid

Teen MHFA is a skills-based training that teaches young people in grades 9-12 (ages 14-18) how to identify, understand and respond to signs and symptoms of a mental health or substance use challenge among their friends and peers. The program equips young people with the knowledge and skills they need to take care of their own mental health and to support each other, with an emphasis on how to get help from a parent, guardian or trusted adult.

## Community-specific courses

Mental Health First Aid's community-specific courses are tailored to the unique needs of specific populations. MHFA Instructors must have the additional designation for any community-specific course they teach.

### Mental Health First Aid at Work

MHFA at Work is a skills-based training program that teaches adults how to identify, understand and respond to someone who is experiencing a mental health or substance use challenge in a work environment, and to connect them with appropriate employee resources. The program benefits businesses of all sizes and in all sectors by empowering employees with mental health awareness tools and skills.

### Mental Health First Aid for Public Safety

MHFA for Public Safety is a skills-based training that teaches law enforcement officers and staff how to de-escalate incidents and identify, understand and respond to someone who may be experiencing a mental health or substance use challenge without compromising safety. The program focuses on

the unique experiences and needs of public safety personnel and is a valuable resource that can make a difference in their lives and the lives of their coworkers, their families, and the communities they serve.

## **Mental Health First Aid for Fire/EMS**

MHFA for Fire/EMS is a skills-based training that teaches firefighters and EMS personnel how to identify, understand and respond to someone who may be experiencing a mental health or substance use challenge. The program focuses on the unique experiences and needs of firefighters and EMS personnel, including how to intervene in the field and among their peers.

## **Mental Health First Aid for Military, Veterans and Their Families**

MHFA for Military, Veterans and Their Families is a skills-based training that teaches adults how to identify, understand and respond to a military veteran or service member who may be experiencing a mental health or substance use challenge. The training places a focus on cultural factors related to military life.

## **Mental Health First Aid for Older Adults**

MHFA for Older Adults is a skills-based training that teaches adults how to identify, understand and respond to someone who may be experiencing a mental health or substance use challenge. The program addresses mental health challenges specific to older adults.

## **Mental Health First Aid for Rural Communities**

MHFA for Rural Communities is a skills-based training that teaches adults how to identify, understand and respond to someone who may be experiencing a mental health or substance use challenge. The training emphasizes cultural and environmental factors related to life in rural areas.

## **Mental Health First Aid for Higher Education**

MHFA for Higher Education is a skills-based training that teaches adults how to identify, understand and respond to someone who may be experiencing a mental health or substance use challenge. The program emphasizes the unique challenges faced by college students and is designed for students, faculty and staff.

## **Youth Mental Health First Aid for Tribal Communities and Indigenous Peoples**

Youth MHFA for Tribal Communities and Indigenous Peoples is a skills-based training that teaches adults how to identify, understand and respond to an Indigenous adolescent (ages 12-18) who may be experiencing a mental health or substance use challenge or crisis. The program provides a strong cultural connection and early intervention in a context-aware course designed to acknowledge and honor tribal communities' and Indigenous peoples' practices.

## Instruction modalities

### Adult and Youth MHFA

- In-person courses:
  - Instructors scheduling a course must allow for the designated number of hours for instruction, plus breaks and lunch. Courses scheduled over multiple days must not occur more than two weeks apart. Please see the timing guide in your teaching notes for in-person course scheduling suggestions.
- Virtual courses:
  - Instructors scheduling a course must allow the designated number of hours for the Instructor-led training (ILT) portion of their virtual course, and they should also include time for breaks or lunch.
    - Virtual Adult MHFA — Courses include approximately 2 hours of pre-work and 5.5 hours of ILT content; allow 1 additional hour for breaks.
    - Virtual Youth MHFA — Courses include approximately 2 hours of pre-work and 4.5 hours of ILT content; allow 1 additional hour for breaks.
    - Virtual courses can be scheduled as a maximum of two separate sessions.

### Teen MHFA

There are two in-person learning options for Teen MHFA:

- Eight 30-minute sessions conducted on nonconsecutive days with no more than two weeks between sessions.
- Four 60-minute sessions conducted on nonconsecutive days with no more than two weeks between sessions.

Completion of the course is defined as completion of all components of the course, including self-paced work, Instructor-led sessions and skill-building scenarios. Only teens who attend all Instructor-led sessions will receive a Teen MHFA certificate, so scheduling makeup sessions for teens who are absent is strongly encouraged.

## Budgeting for Costs Associated With MHFA Programs

Successful grant applications include relevant information on how funds will be allocated and the impacts of holistic program implementation. The following sections include resources on budgeting for the costs of conducting MHFA programs, what training could be most valuable to a target population, and the impact of MHFA.

## Instructor and First Aider training

When designing a program that includes MHFA instruction, grantees should consider whether they will include costs associated with MHFA Instructor training.

Instructors are individuals certified to deliver a specific MHFA curriculum (e.g., Adult, Youth or Teen). Instructor candidates become certified in a program after their application is accepted and they complete the registration process, attend and fully participate in the self-paced coursework and National Trainer-led certification training, and successfully complete an evaluated presentation.

Instructor training is available in person or virtually. Each Instructor course models First Aider course content and delivery, summarizes adult learning styles and teaching strategies, and provides detailed instruction on implementing and managing the program with fidelity to the curriculum.

### Course learning objectives

By the end of a MHFA Instructor training, Instructors will be prepared to do the following:

- Implement the MHFA curriculum with fidelity.
- Create a safe and supportive learning environment to teach MHFA to varied audiences.
- Teach all sections of the MHFA training in a virtual environment and in person.

Following certification, Instructors are permitted to teach the course and certify Mental Health First Aiders. Certification must be renewed annually and requires teaching three courses per year.

Mental Health First Aid courses are commonly referred to as First Aider courses or trainings. Adult MHFA and Youth MHFA address adult learners, and Teen MHFA is specifically for teens in grades 9-12 (or ages 14-18). Adult, Youth and Teen MHFA trainings are available in English and Spanish. Adult and Youth MHFA can be delivered via in-person or virtual learning options that combine self-paced coursework with virtual Instructor-led training.

All MHFA trainings must be taught by an Instructor who is certified in that MHFA course type.

## Adult Mental Health First Aid

The Adult Mental Health First Aid course uses role-playing scenarios and simulations to demonstrate how to assess a mental health challenge or crisis, select interventions, provide initial help, and connect people to professional, peer and social support and self-help resources. The course does not teach learners to diagnose. Rather than looking for specific mental health disorders, learners focus on recognizing the patterns of thoughts, feelings and behaviors that indicate someone might be experiencing a mental health challenge. Learners are introduced to the MHFA Action Plan (ALGEE), which they can apply to noncrisis and crisis scenarios.

When you are budgeting for Adult MHFA, please keep in mind the cost of Instructor trainings and learner and materials fees.

## Instructor training costs

- Public Training: Train a small group of Instructor candidates.
  - \$2,400 per Instructor candidate for a virtual course
- Private Training: Train a group of 6-16 Instructor candidates.
  - \$31,000 for an in-person course
  - \$27,000 for a virtual course

## Teaching costs

To teach an Adult MHFA course, an organization or Instructor must purchase Seats for their learners. Each learner will need a Seat in the course, so organizations or Instructors should budget for the number of learners they anticipate teaching. Seats come with a digital Manual and Participant Processing Guide. One Adult MHFA course can accommodate 5-30 learners.

- \$19.95 for an in-person Seat
- \$24.95 for a virtual Seat

*Virtual courses include 2 hours of self-paced pre-work available in our accessible learning management system and around 5 hours of live, Instructor-led learning.*

## Youth Mental Health First Aid

Youth MHFA is designed for adults who regularly interact with young people (ages 12-18). The program teaches parents, family members, caregivers, teachers, school staff, peers, neighbors health and human services workers, and other caring adults how to help an adolescent who may be experiencing a mental health or substance use challenge or crisis. Youth MHFA introduces mental health challenges that are common among youth, reviews typical adolescent development, and teaches the 5-step Mental Health First Aid Action Plan (ALGEE) to help young people in crisis and noncrisis situations.

When you are budgeting for Youth MHFA, please keep in mind the cost of Instructor training and learner and materials fees.

## Instructor training costs

- Public Training: Train a small group of Instructor candidates.
  - \$2,400 per Instructor candidate for a virtual course
- Private Training: Train a group of 6-16 Instructor candidates.
  - \$31,000 for an in-person course
  - \$27,000 for a virtual course

## Teaching costs

To teach a Youth MHFA course, an organization or Instructor must purchase Seats for their learners. Each learner will need a Seat in the course, so organizations or Instructors should budget for the number of learners they anticipate teaching. Seats come with a digital Manual and Participant Processing Guide. One Youth MHFA course can accommodate 5-30 learners.

- \$19.95 for an in-person Seat
- \$24.95 for a virtual Seat

*Virtual courses include 2 hours of self-paced pre-work available in our accessible learning management system and around 5 hours of live Instructor-led learning.*

## Teen Mental Health First Aid

Teen MHFA teaches young people in grades 9-12 (or ages 14-18) how to identify, understand and respond to signs of mental health and substance use challenges among their friends and peers. The training gives teens the skills to have supportive conversations with their friends and connect them with a responsible and trusted adult for further support. Schools are required to train an entire grade level, and youth-serving organizations must teach Teen MHFA to an entire group of teens in a particular program. Schools and organizations offering the training are also required to train at least 10% of their adult staff in Youth MHFA.

When you are budgeting for Teen MHFA, please keep in mind the cost of Instructor trainings and learner and materials fees.

## Instructor training costs

- Public Training: Train a small group of Instructor candidates.
  - \$1,900 per Instructor candidate for a virtual course
- Private Training: Train a group of 6-16 Instructor candidates
  - \$31,000 for an in-person course
  - \$27,000 for a virtual course

## Teaching costs

To teach a Teen MHFA course, an organization must purchase Seats for its learners. Each learner will need a Seat in the course, so organizations should budget for the number of learners they anticipate teaching. Teen Seats come with a printed Workbook. One Teen MHFA course can accommodate 5-30 learners. Teen MHFA is only taught in person.

- \$13.95 for an in-person Seat

# Data Collection and Performance Measurement Guidance

## Outcome and performance measurement

We recommend using the following resources to establish a baseline against which you'll measure impact:

- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) [National Survey on Drug Use and Health](#) (data estimates for prevalence of substance use and mental health challenges at the national, state and sub-state levels)
- [SAMHSA National Survey on Drug Use and Health Interactive State Estimates](#)
- [Behavioral Health Barometer](#) (based on the 2021-2023 National Surveys on Drug Use and Health)

## Writing Your Grant Proposal

The National Council for Mental Wellbeing is not responsible for writing grants, providing funding or offering specific guidance to organizations seeking grant funding. The National Council will share information about grant opportunities as available.

The following section includes contributions from organizations that have funded MHFA through grants, including information for outlining, developing and submitting grant proposals for MHFA. This is not an exhaustive list of resources. We recommend researching additional grant information or application guidance for specific grants.

## Budget guidance and spreadsheet

Budget spreadsheets are tools that can be used to customize required federal or state budgets, but they must be adapted per the guidance outlined in the RFA notice to which you're responding. Sample numbers are provided; you will need to customize them to reflect your proposed project costs and the allowable/required limits for the specific program.

The following is an example of a cost estimate of MHFA implementation. We suggest using it to budget costs.

Item	Estimated Cost
Private Adult MHFA or Youth MHFA Instructor Training	In-person: \$31,000 for up to 16 Instructor candidates (\$27,900 for National Council Members) Virtual: \$27,000 (\$24,300 for National Council)

	<p>Members)</p> <p>3-day training, pre- and post-work, plus the Instructor materials kit</p> <p>*4-day training bundle is available (for Adult MHFA, Youth MHFA and Community-specific Courses) that includes 1 day of MHFA certification and 3 days of Instructor certification. In-person: \$37,500 Virtual: \$32,500</p>
Public Adult MHFA or Youth MHFA Instructor Training	<p>Virtual: \$2,400 (\$2,160 for National Council Members)</p> <p>3-day training, pre- and post-work, plus the Instructor materials kit</p>
Additional Instructor Training for Community-specific Courses	<p>\$50 per community-specific course (Adult Instructor training is a prerequisite) — self guided digital courses that take about one hour to complete</p>
Private Teen MHFA Instructor Training	<p><b>In-person: \$31,000</b></p> <p><b>Virtual: \$27,000</b></p> <p><b>3-day training, pre- and post-work, plus the Instructor materials kit</b></p>
Public Teen MHFA Instructor Training	<p>Virtual: \$1,900</p> <p>3-day training, pre- and post-work, plus the Instructor materials kit</p>
Adult MHFA or Youth MHFA Certification Training	<p>Organizations and Instructors are invited to set their own prices. Plan to cover the cost of the learner’s Seat, the training space, and any Instructor or learner supplies you purchase from the MHFA Store.</p>
Adult MHFA or Youth MHFA Seats	<p>In-person Seat: \$19.95 Virtual Seat: \$24.95</p>
Teen MHFA Seats	<p>In-person Seat: \$13.95</p>
Adult MHFA or Youth MHFA Recertification	<p><b>Virtual: \$30.95</b></p>

Once you have developed your program costs based on the RFA guidance, you can transfer the line

items to the required format. For federal grants, you'll find the format within the electronic Grants.gov application.

More information about writing a grant proposal is in Appendix A: Sample Grant Application.

## The Need for Mental Wellbeing

Mental wellbeing can have different meanings for different people. For the National Council, mental wellbeing is a state of thriving. It is the foundation of living a strong, healthy and fulfilling life. We believe that mental wellbeing is achievable for everyone — including individuals living with or recovering from a mental health or substance use challenge. Providing MHFA fosters mental wellbeing by offering support to someone experiencing a mental health or substance use challenge or crisis and connecting them to resources — often leveraging the person's existing connections and support systems. MHFA trains learners to recognize warning signs and gives them the skills to understand and direct the person to appropriate support, whether that's self-help resources or a mental health professional. First Aiders learn how to respond to individuals where they are and provide the "glue" between existing relationships.

The "approach" section of a grant proposal typically describes how your proposed approach addresses identified needs and gaps in the community, by:

- Describing the impact and prevalence of mental health and substance use challenges in the community and/or population of focus.
- Including local and state statistics, as well as national data.
- Outlining the needs of those impacted by imbalances in the prevalence of mental health and substance use challenges and access to treatment, where applicable.

To do that, you need data. This section of the toolkit guides you to some useful resources. We recommend including at least five key data points.

### National data sources

The Adult MHFA and Youth MHFA Manuals include helpful resources and additional statistics. The [U.S. Reach page on MHFA.org](#) maps the number of First Aiders and Instructors in each state.

The following websites are great resources for population-specific mental health and substance use statistics:

- [National Council for Mental Wellbeing](#)
  - [2022 Access to Care Survey](#)
- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)
- [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration](#)
- [National Institute of Mental Health](#)
- [Office of Minority Health](#)

- [National Alliance on Mental Illness](#)
- [National Federation of Families](#)

These resources can help you demonstrate the need for MHFA. Most grant applications include a statement of need: a short but crucial component that must demonstrate how MHFA will be an asset for your state or community. Concise summaries of important data that highlights or compares your local needs with the national picture help to build a compelling case and create a powerful first impression for the reviewer.

## Guidance to support your search for local data sources

Paint a picture of state and local needs that highlights the importance of your proposal and makes it stand out in comparison to other submissions. Here are some ideas for finding state and local data:

- [Demographic data by state, county and city](#)
- [National and state-level data on mental health](#) (view by state, census bureau and metro area)
- [The Annie E. Casey Kids Count Data Center](#) (demographic, physical health and mental health data by groupings, including state, county, city, congressional district and topic area)
- [The Annie E. Casey Kids Count Data Center's data by topic area](#), including demographics, economic wellbeing, education, health, family and community, safety and risky behaviors
- [Community Commons](#) (allows you to create a community health needs assessment and/or a vulnerable population footprint)
- [State Medicaid agencies/Children's Health Insurance Program annual enrollment reports](#)
- [State adolescent and child health data](#)

Other resources to consider include your state education agency — which may have data/demographic profiles for school-aged youth listed by Local Education Agency and community — and your state mental health authority. Look for the state mental health plan that's submitted to SAMHSA and any other regional and/or county data it collects. You can expect to find descriptions of service needs and system gaps (e.g., prevalence rates or incidence data, service utilization) and extent of need in your state's plans for SAMHSA.

# About the National Council for Mental Wellbeing

Many grantors value supporting organizations whose experiences, demographics and characteristics align with their philanthropic vision. This section includes information that could be valuable for grant writers who need information about the National Council as a 501(c)(3). This public information is included here for convenience.

## National Council for Mental Wellbeing staff leaders

The National Council's executive staff includes the executives who are responsible for setting the strategic direction of the organization. President and CEO Charles Ingoglia has been with the organization since 2007 and in his current role since 2019. Executive staff members can be found on the [Leadership page](#) of the National Council website.

## About the National Council for Mental Wellbeing Board of Directors

The Board of Directors represents the National Council's membership and is committed to promoting excellence in mental health and substance use treatment. Board members are volunteers drawn from the staff and community boards of National Council member organizations. They are elected to the Board by National Council member organizations in each of 10 regions that comprise the

U.S. The most up-to-date descriptions of regions, officers, at-large directors and regional directors can be found on the [Board of Directors page](#) of the National Council website. Appendix A: Sample Grant Application

## Executive summary

In this section, summarize what MHFA is, the need for it and your specific grant request based on what you propose to do.

*Example:*

For too long, mental health challenges have been treated as separate and tangential to our overall health and wellbeing. Because of this, accessing mental health services is not as simple as making an appointment with your family doctor. The stigma surrounding mental illness often prevents people from seeking treatment, and those who do want help are not sure where to turn.

[The National Council for Mental Wellbeing](#) brought [Mental Health First Aid](#) (MHFA) to the

United States in 2008. MHFA is a course that teaches individuals how to identify, understand and respond to signs and symptoms of mental health and substance use challenges. The training gives people in our communities the skills needed to reach out and provide initial help and support to someone who may be developing a mental health or substance use challenge or experiencing a crisis. Since MHFA was introduced in the U.S., more than 4.5 million people have been trained by thousands of certified Instructors.

[*Organization Name*] requests a grant in the amount of [*amount*] to support MHFA in our community. MHFA is a high-impact program that generates tremendous community awareness and support, enabling thousands of individuals to be trained with a small investment.

## Needs assessment

Include about five local, regional or state statistics, in addition to the statistics noted here.

*Example:*

In 2024, more than 1 in 5 American adults had experienced any mental illness in the past year (SAMHSA, 2025). In 2022, nearly 108,000 people died from drug overdose (Spencer et al., 2024). Mental illnesses are just as treatable as other health conditions, and yet the World Health Organization reports that mental illness accounts for more disability in developed countries than any other group of illnesses, including cancer and heart disease. In 2024, 52.1% (or 32 million) adults aged 18 or older with any mental illness had received professional mental health treatment in the past year (SAMHSA, 2025).

Having a mental health or substance use challenge can have damaging and costly effects on a person's life, such as job loss, school dropouts and relationship issues. Beyond the impact on the individual experiencing the illness, the cost and consequences of untreated mental illness affect families/caregivers, employers and taxpayers. The economic impact of mental illness in the United States is substantial — about \$283 billion annually (Abramson et al., 2024). Much of this is due to lost productivity in the workforce, but it also includes the use of emergency services, involvement of the justice system and other social supports.

There are many reasons that people do not seek help for these concerns. They may not know where, or if, they can get help. They may feel ashamed of their condition because of widespread stigma toward people with mental health and substance use challenges. Mental Health First Aid addresses these barriers directly, offering a forum for understanding and discussing mental health and substance use challenges, providing resources for help, and encouraging people to be the much-needed first line of support for so many of their friends, colleagues and neighbors. The effects of untreated mental illness and addiction need not be so widespread.

## Program overview

Include specific information on MHFA's presence and presentation in your organization, as well as some

information on the national program overall.

*Example:*

Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) teaches individuals the skills to help someone who appears to be experiencing a mental health or substance use challenge or crisis, by providing initial help and support until professional help is obtained. Participants learn the 5-step MHFA Action Plan (ALGEE), which summarizes the steps to help connect an individual in crisis with appropriate professional, peer, social and self-help care.

MHFA is proven to improve mental health literacy and reduce the stigma surrounding mental illness. Peer-reviewed studies show that individuals trained in the program:

- Increase their knowledge of signs, symptoms and risk factors of mental health and substance use challenges.
- Can identify multiple types of professional and self-help resources for individuals with a mental health or substance use challenge.
- Show reduced stigma and increased empathy toward individuals with mental health challenges.
- Increase their confidence and likelihood to help an individual in distress.
- Use the skills and information they learn in MHFA to manage their own mental wellbeing.

More than 4.5 million people from all 50 states, all U.S. territories and the District of Columbia have completed the training. MHFA has broad applications with a wide range of audiences, including law enforcement, schools, primary care, veterans and members of the military, and employers. The program is available in both English and Spanish. Youth MHFA, which launched in fall 2012, specifically addresses strategies for assisting youth ages 12-18. Teen MHFA, which launched in 2019, provides tools that teens in grades 9-12 (ages 14-18) can use to support their friends, with an emphasis on getting the help of a trusted adult.

## Organizational capacity and administration

In this section, present an overview of your organization and its history, including examples of its successes.

*Example:*

Founded in 1969, the National Council for Mental Wellbeing is a membership organization that drives policy and social change on behalf of over 3,200 mental health and substance use treatment organizations and the more than 15 million children, adults and families they serve. The National Council advocates for policies to ensure access to high-quality services; builds the capacity of mental health and substance use treatment organizations; and promotes greater understanding of mental wellbeing as a core component of comprehensive health and health care. Through its Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) program, the National Council has trained more than 4.5 million people in the U.S. to identify, understand and respond to signs and symptoms of mental health and substance use challenges