



Implementing  
Mental Health First Aid (MHFA)  
at  
Community Counseling Centers  
of Chicago (C4)  
2008 – 2010

Viviana Ploper, LCPC, Associate Director  
Claudia Kottwitz, LCSW, Site Director



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# What Is Mental Health First Aid?

**Mental Health First Aid** is the help offered to a person developing a mental health problem or experiencing a mental health crisis. The first aid is given until appropriate treatment and support are received or until the crisis resolves.



# Why Mental Health First Aid?

- + Mental health problems are common.
- + Stigma is associated with mental health problems.
- + Many people are not well informed about mental health problems.
- + Professional help is not always on hand.
- + People often do not know how to respond.
- + People with mental health problems often do not seek help.



# The Mental Health First Aid Action Plan

- + **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



# What Is a Mental Disorder?

A **mental disorder** or **mental illness** is a diagnosable illness that:

- + Affects a person's thinking, emotional state, and behavior
- + Disrupts the person's ability to
  - Work
  - Carry out daily activities
  - Engage in satisfying relationships



# U.S. Adults with a Mental Disorder in Any One Year

Type of Mental Disorder	% Adults
Anxiety disorder	18.1
Major depressive disorder	6.7
Substance use disorder	3.8
Bipolar disorder	2.6
Eating disorders	2.1
Schizophrenia	1.1
<b>Any mental disorder</b>	<b>26.2</b>



## Recovery from Mental Illness

“Recovery is the process in which people are able to live, work, learn, and participate fully in their communities.”

“For some, this is the ability to live a fulfilling and productive life despite a disability.”

“For others, recovery implies the reduction or complete remission of symptoms.”

— *President’s New Freedom Commission on Mental Health, 2003*



## By the Numbers

- + 12,000+ Mental Health First Aiders
- + 800+ community trainings
- + 950+ instructors certified
- + 43 states and counting!





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# How MHFA was implemented at C4



- + Start-Up
- + Collaboration
- + Implementation
- + Sustainability
- + Marketing
- + Successes
- + Where are we now?



## Start-Up

- + **Community Counseling Centers of Chicago (C4):**  
Selected as one of fourteen organizations from 6 States that participated in the first U.S. Instructor training, piloted by the National Council in February 2008
- + Together with North Central Behavioral Health Services were selected as the two Illinois agencies, each sent two staff to be trained
- + Gave a lot of initial feedback then and for the next year in terms of the US Instructor and Participant manual



# Start-Up and IL Collaboration

- + During the Instructor training C4 staff had an opportunity to brainstorm different strategies and audiences
- + Planned a partnership between the two Illinois agencies: ***MHFA of Illinois*** was developed
- + For the first year, North Central assigned one MHFA instructor to coordinate ***MHFA of Illinois***

# Start-Up and IL Collaboration



- + Shared a summer Marketing Intern who was key in developing FAQs to different audiences and flyers to advertise MHFA of Illinois
- + Collaborated in developing a brochure and a marketing plan
- + Started phone conference meetings between both agencies to share tips, resources and information and promote each other
- + Jointly sponsored another MHFA Instructor Training (Dec 2009) and added 6 more instructors to each organization



# Claudia Kottwitz, LCSW, Site Director

Site Director

Community Counseling Centers of Chicago  
(C4)



# Implementation

- + In March 2008 C4 started delivering MHFA trainings to internal staff (front office, clinical records, building services, business office and other administrative staff)
- + Examined expenses and costs for MHFA to set fees for training
- + At the same time started meeting with state administrators and other organizations to educate them about MHFA and brainstorm strategies to promote MHFA statewide.



# Implementation

- + MHFA was added to the state website for the *Say It Out Loud Campaign* promoting mental health awareness (2008)
  
- + Partnered with Asian Health Coalition of Illinois to provide trainings to community health workers of their mutual aid associations (2008)
  
- + Started community based trainings:
  - Center on Halsted (2009)
  - Chicago Middle School –teachers and their School Health Center staff (2009)
  - Shelter staff (2010)

# Implementation



- + Started one hour bimonthly meetings among the instructors to debrief trainings, look at quality improvement, work out glitches and provide support to each other.
- + Secured 12 hours a month for an administrative assistant to support MHFA.
- + Developed roles and responsibilities for MHFA Coordinators, Administrative Assistant and Instructors (*see attached*)



# Mental Health First Aid Guide to Roles and Responsibilities



## + Coordinators (Claudia & Viviana)

- Market MHFA
- Set-up schedule and assure availability of instructors and classes
- Assure quality control
- Communicate changes in training material
- Assure quality and fidelity to MHFA
- Make MHFA known in Illinois



## **Administrative Assistant/Program Assistant (Marta) (12 hours per month)**

- +** Gathers contact information (e-mail addresses), designs e-invitation and sends announcements of upcoming trainings.
- +** Registers participants, maintains waiting list and registration spreadsheet, tracks and receives payments, and answers phone inquiries about training.
- +** Keeps records of MHFA documents such as sign-in sheets and training evaluations. Also responsible for grading post-exams and recording results in Excel spreadsheet.



- + Makes preparation for trainings by making room reservations, preparing participant training folders and copies of materials being utilized in trainings. Also creates signage for trainings and arranges for manuals to be created by Office Services at Clark.
- + Responsible for keeping inventory of supplies needed for training and ordering when necessary.
- + Ordering and shopping for all food/snacks/beverages used for trainings.

**\*\*\* Please note: when training is held outside of Clark, Marta will only be available from 8:00 AM – 9:00 AM for registration purposes and set-up of morning snacks).**



## Instructors:

- + Prepare for and do trainings.
- + Communicate to Marta if any changes are to be made to training packets or if any additional material needs to be included/duplicated.
- + Make sure your log-in/Power Point presentation is working properly.
- + Make sure training certificates are distributed to participants on the last day of training. Trainers must also sign/date all certificates as the instructors administering the training.
- + Responsible to return to Marta the Instructor's "box" with supplies/media upon completion of training, and all materials collected from training (**sign-in sheets, post exams and evaluations**).

# Marketing



Developed and provided several presentations describing MHFA at:

- Community Behavioral Healthcare Association of IL Conference (MHFA and Psychological First Aid) (2008)
- HR directors of non-profits (2009)
- Annual School Based Health Centers Conference (2010)
- Child Welfare Annual Asian-American Institute Day (2010)
- Latino Behavioral Health Conference (2010)



# Marketing

- + Talk up MHFA in committees and groups that agency participates
- + Help recruit participants by obtaining approved certification status from professional licensing bodies



# Implementation Successes

- ✦ C4 has been approved as a provider of the MHFA course and is now able to offer:
  - 12 Continuing Professional Development Units (*CPDUs*) hours for Illinois educators
  - 12 Contact Hours from the Illinois Nursing Association (*INA*)
  - 12 Continuing Education Units (*CEUs*) for LCSW and LCPC
  - 12 Continuing Education Units (*CEUs*) for substance abuse professionals (IODAPCA)
  - Plus the HR certification



# Sustainability

- + Submitted five applications for funding (private foundations)
- + Were unsuccessful in four but got one grant funded in 2009, to train the LGBT population
- + Worked with partner agency to ensure LGBT issues addressed
- + As part of grant, worked w/consultant to design evaluation tool.



# Implementation Success

- + Secured Title XX Grant (August 2010)
  - Will train 600 individuals a year (for three years)
  - Target organizations working with at-risk individuals, consumers and families of consumers
  - Trained and certified 3 more MHFA Instructors
  - Secured a Resource Developer to provide support to Instructors and participants
  - Evaluation Component



# Viviana Ploper, LCPC

Associate Director  
Community Counseling Centers of Chicago  
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# Where are we now?

- + Ten C4 certified MHFA Instructors
- + All Master level mental health professionals, most licensed, three bilingual, 4 child and adolescent expertise
- + 26 trainings since 2008
- + 398 certified trainees from over 105 different organizations

# What helped us succeed in Implementing MHFA?



- Being one of the pilot agencies, we felt an ownership in MHFA
- C4 embraced it as a worthwhile endeavor and gave us some time to do it (although it may not have felt like it at the time)
- Our first internal training was successful and getting detailed feedback from staff increased the agency's ownership
- Doing trainings early on with the Asian Health Coalition demonstrated usefulness with other cultures
- Having experienced clinicians as trainers has given us consistent positive feedback



Questions?

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# Mental Health First Aid in your Community



- + A recording of this webinar & the power point will be available on the National Council website 48 hours after it has ended.
- + Visit [www.MentalHealthFirstAid.org](http://www.MentalHealthFirstAid.org) for further information on the course and to find an instructor near you.
- + Become a fan of Mental Health First Aid USA on Facebook & get updates and information on a variety of mental health topics.
- + For any further questions, contact Bryan Gibb at [bryang@thenationalcouncil.org](mailto:bryang@thenationalcouncil.org) or Susan Partain at [susanp@thenationalcouncil.org](mailto:susanp@thenationalcouncil.org) or 202.684.3732.