Mental Health First Aid in the States: A Toolkit for Action

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Agenda

- Overview of MHFA
- Update on Federal Legislation
- State Action: Current Efforts
  - Texas
  - Arizona
  - Other states
- MHFA State Toolkit
- Strategy Checklist: How to get started
- Questions
What Is Mental Health First Aid?

- Help offered to a person developing a mental health problem or experiencing a mental health crisis
- Given until appropriate treatment and support are received or until the crisis resolves
- Not a substitute for counseling, medical care, peer support or treatment
Why Mental Health First Aid?

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

Spectrum of mental health interventions from wellness to mental disorders and through to recovery, showing the contribution of MHFA.
What You Learn

- Overview of mental health problems
  - Depressive/Mood disorders
  - Anxiety disorders
  - Disorders in which psychosis occurs
  - Substance use disorders
  - Eating disorders

- Mental Health First Aid for crisis situations

- Mental Health First Aid for non-crisis situations
MHFA ACTION PLAN

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

- Created in Australia in 2001
  *(University of Melbourne)*
- Currently in 20 countries
- Piloted in the U.S. in 2008
- Youth program Pilot in 2012
MHFA: Overview of Research and Evidence

- **Proven efficacy:** Five published studies in Australia show MHFA saves lives, improves the mental health of individuals administering care and those receiving it, expands knowledge of mental illnesses and their treatments, increases the services provided and reduces overall stigma by improving mental health literacy.  [https://www.mhfa.com.au/cms/evaluation-publications/](https://www.mhfa.com.au/cms/evaluation-publications/)

- **Evidence-base:** MHFA is now listed in the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration’s National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices (NREPP). NREPP is a searchable database of mental health and substance abuse interventions to help the public find programs and practices that may best meet their needs and learn how to implement them in their communities.  [http://nrepp.samhsa.gov/ViewIntervention.aspx?id=321](http://nrepp.samhsa.gov/ViewIntervention.aspx?id=321)

- **National Efforts:** In Alaska, Chicago, Colorado, Philadelphia, Kansas and other cities and states across the country, academic institutions and other organizations are partnering to evaluate the impact of MHFA in their communities.
Federal Policy Update

Where is MHFA in Congress?
Mental Health First Aid Act  
(S. 157/H.R. 274)

- $20 million in grants for MHFA training programs
- Eligible entities: states, political subdivisions of states, tribes, tribal organizations, nonprofits
- Grants will be distributed across geographical regions, with a focus on rural areas
- 15 bipartisan Senate cosponsors; 46 bipartisan House cosponsors

Rep. Ron Barber, D-AZ  
Rep. Lynn Jenkins, R-KS  
Sen. Mark Begich, D-AK  
Sen. Kelly Ayotte, R-NH
Mental Health Awareness & Improvement Act (S. 689)

- Reauthorizes existing mental health programs (suicide prevention, child trauma, etc.)
- Provides $20 million for “mental health awareness training”
  - Defined as evidence-based programs for recognizing the signs and symptoms of mental illness, providing education regarding treatment resources available in the community, and the safe de-escalation of crisis situations
- 22 bipartisan cosponsors in Senate; no House companion bill
$15 million proposed for Youth Mental Health First Aid
Goal: reach 750,000 students, teachers, and other people who work with youth
Budget unlikely to pass this year
Arizona Success
Texas Success
Other States in Action

- **Virginia**: Introduced request for $2.5 Million; Received $600,000
- **Illinois**: State agencies will administer MHFA; Mental Health First Aid Act of Illinois is being signed by Governor on August 7, 2013
- **Michigan**: MHFA had $1.5 million appropriated for MHFA
- **Connecticut**: Measure called for the state’s mental health and education commissioners to administer a mental health first aid training program. The law also allows boards of education to require teachers, school nurses, counselors and other school employees to participate in mental health first aid training.
- **Maryland**: Governor issued supplemental budget appropriation including $300,000 for MHFA
- **Florida**: Passed Florida Senate; died in calendars committee on May 3, 2013
- **Washington**: SB 5333 providing MHFA to teachers and educational staff did not pass public hearing and was sent back to the Senate Ways and Means Committee
State Legislative Tool Kit:
MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID
Toolkit in Review

MHFA as Evidenced Based Practice

Contents:

+ Building a Coalition of Support
+ Program Description and Research
+ Choosing the Mechanism for Change: Sample Language
+ Tools to Build Your Case: Sample Legislative Letters of Support, Media Outreach, One-Pagers, Talking Points, Public Speaking Tips
+ Testimonials
Ready… Set… Go!

- Strategies for action
- Now is the time to prepare for 2014 legislative sessions
Define your goals

+ What is your ask for policymakers? Pick one solution!
  - Are you seeking a training mandate?
  - Grant funding?
  - Other?
+ Who are your allies?
+ Who are your opponents?
+ What is your timeline?
Figure out the human element

- What impact is this issue having on the community?
  - Can you quantify the impact?
- What **personal story** can you tell as an example?
- How will your solution solve the problem?
Know your audience

- What do they already know about you? Your issue?
- What is their position on your ask?
- What motivates them?
- Why is your ask in the public interest? What is the ROI for the policymaker?
Identify and recruit allies

- What is their interest in the issue?
- What can you do for them?
- What can they do for you?
- Are any other groups in your state working on this issue already?
Identify key policymakers

- Legislative champions
- Committee members
- House/Senate leadership
- Others?
  - Governor, school board, state accreditation bodies… and more
- Target efforts towards policymakers who can make or break your bill
Decide how to reach key policymakers

- Activating your advocates
- In-person meetings
- Phone calls, letters, emails, petitions
- Town hall meetings
- Community events
- Media
Get creative

INSTEAD of thinking OUTSIDE THE BOX,

GET RID OF THE BOX.

-DEEPAK CHOPRA

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Questions?

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