

# 2014 STATE POLICY TOOLKIT EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2008, the National Council, the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, and the Missouri Department of Mental Health brought Mental Health First Aid® to the United States, with the ten-year goal of making Mental Health First Aid training as common as CPR. As follow-up to our 2013 State Legislative Toolkit, the National Council conducted a legislative scan, a survey of National Council members, and in-depth interviews with selected policy experts and advocates to assess progress and learn about successful policy strategies toward that goal.

## Significant Policy Success in 2013 – 2014

**In the 2013-2014 legislative session, 21 states passed legislation or initiated executive programs related to Mental Health First Aid.** Mental Health First Aid continues to receive broad support from policymakers, advocates, and participants in the trainings. In addition to standard legislative efforts, states and community advocates have collaborated to find creative approaches to implement Mental Health First Aid, including applying for federal and private grants and finding new partners (such as religious leaders, public safety entities, social service agencies, librarians, veteran's organizations, and college health services).

Our research this year confirmed the following core components exist in a well-constructed state Mental Health First Aid initiative:

- ✚ Clearly communicated need for increased knowledge about mental illness and addiction, and related services in the community.
- ✚ Specific reference to the Mental Health First Aid program, including the need for certified Mental Health First Aid instructors.
- ✚ Dedicated funding to sustain the Mental Health First Aid program.
- ✚ Specified agency leadership to oversee the Mental Health First Aid program, including evaluation of the impact and reach.
- ✚ Key stakeholders and agencies included in policy development, including a legislator or executive willing to champion the Mental Health First Aid cause.

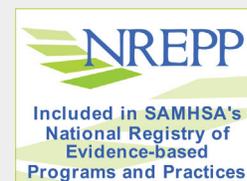
1 Kitchner, Betty A. and Jorm, Anthony. Mental Health First Aid Training: A review of evaluation studies. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry* 2006; 40:6-8.  
2 Jorm, Anthony F, Kitchener, Betty A., O'Kearney, Richard, and Dear, Keith BG. Mental health first aid training of the public in a rural area: a cluster randomized trial. *BMC Psychiatry* 2004, 4:33.  
3 Full list of studies can be accessed at [www.mhfa.com.au/evaluation](http://www.mhfa.com.au/evaluation).  
4 SAMHSA National Registry of Evidence-Based Programs. <http://nrepp.samhsa.gov/ViewIntervention.aspx?id=321>.

## What Is Mental Health First Aid?

Mental Health First Aid USA® is an, 8-hour in-person training designed for anyone to learn about mental illnesses and addictions, including risk factors and warning signs. Similar to CPR, participants learn a 5-step action plan to help people who are developing a mental health problem or in crisis. It is a low-cost, high-impact program that emphasizes the concept of neighbors helping neighbors.

## Mental Health First Aid is an Evidence-based Practice

Mental Health First Aid has a strong evidence base.<sup>1,2</sup> Detailed studies have been completed and journal articles published on Mental Health First Aid's impact on public awareness, stigmatizing attitudes about mental illness and application of helping "first aid" behaviors.<sup>3</sup> In 2013, SAMHSA added Mental Health First Aid to their National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices (NREPP).<sup>4</sup>



## Strategies for Success

The strongest and most compelling advocates for the value and impact of Mental Health First Aid are the individuals who complete the training (known as First Aiders) and the people who teach it (Instructors). It is their passion and creativity that has helped spread this program effectively to date. Other key strategies include:

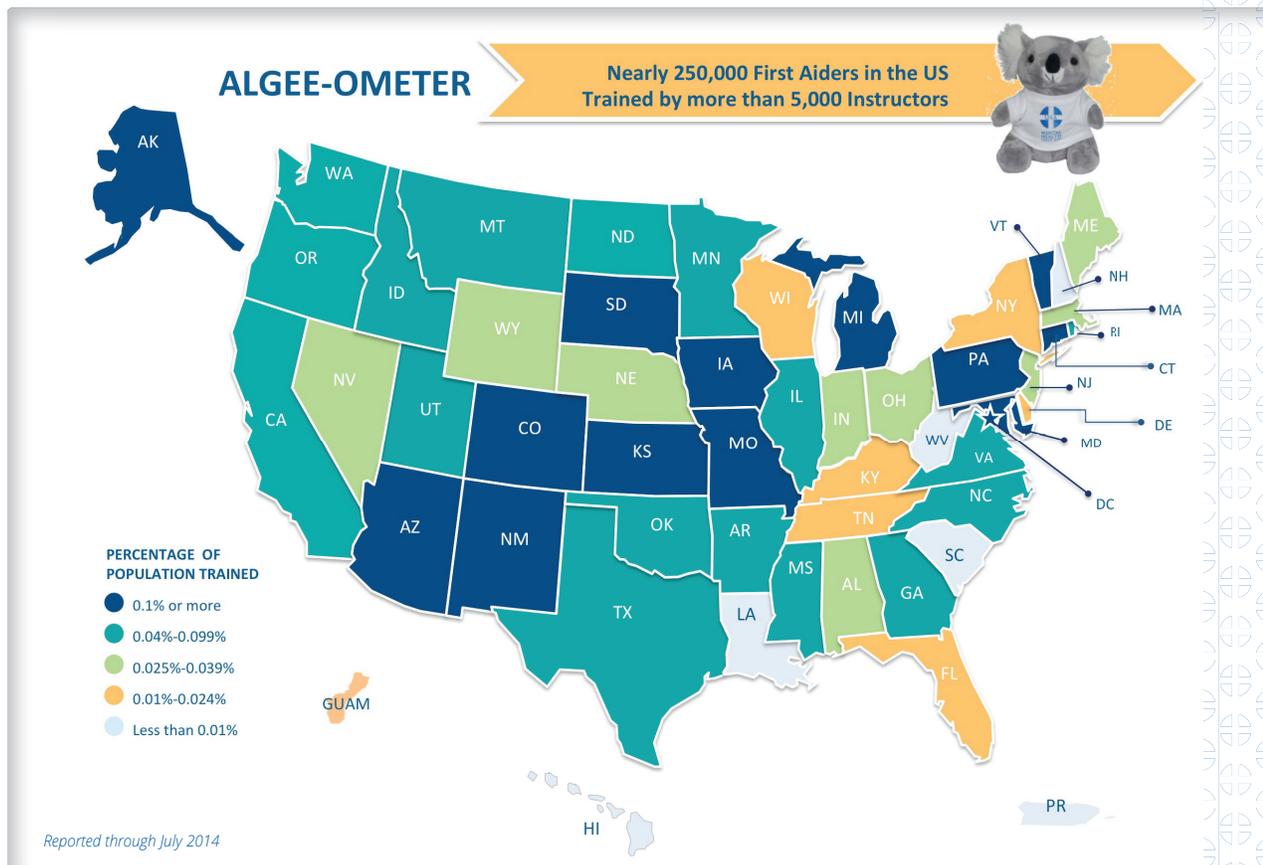
- ✚ Identify champions both in the legislature and in the community.
- ✚ Connect to community organizations and agencies that can benefit from Mental Health First Aid.
- ✚ Focus on specific needs of the community in designing the scope and frequency of Mental Health First Aid programs
- ✚ Use data to demonstrate value and program effectiveness.
- ✚ Collaborate with government, businesses, foundations, and community-based organizations to implement and market Mental Health First Aid.

Mental Health First Aid is taking hold throughout the country, and now is the time to ensure that every state has an effective program in place.

### Model Legislation

The 2014 Mental Health First Aid State Policy Toolkit identifies several legislative “models” that may benefit other state advocates and policy-makers, specifically:

- *Nebraska LB 901 (2014)*
- *Colorado HB 1248 (2014)*
- *Washington HB 1336 (2013)*
- *Illinois HB 1339 (2014)*
- *Texas SB 955 (2013) and SB 460 (2014)*



Stay up-to-date on the latest Mental Health First Aid policy news and download the 2014 Mental Health First Aid State Policy Toolkit at: [www.MentalHealthFirstAid.org/cs/about/legislation-policy/](http://www.MentalHealthFirstAid.org/cs/about/legislation-policy/)