

Effectiveness of teen Mental Health First Aid in Improving Teen-to-Teen Support Among American Adolescents

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This study, reported in the peer-reviewed *Journal of School Health*, examined the effectiveness of teen Mental Health First Aid (tMHFA) on increasing first aid intentions and mental health literacy while reducing stigmatizing beliefs.

Study participants represented schools implementing tMHFA in 2019 and 2020 with a sample of instructors (n=130) and students (n=1915) in 44 high schools in 24 American states.

Key Findings

- Significant improvements in students' endorsement of helpful intentions, such as listening nonjudgmentally and telling an adult they were worried about a peer.
- Significant reduction in unhelpful/harmful intentions toward a peer, such as avoiding talking about suicidal thoughts.
- Significant increases in the number of adults rated as helpful.
- Significant decrease in stigmatizing beliefs.
- Improved confidence in helping peers across a range of mental health concerns.
- Moderate changes to the perceptions of adults as helpful.

The Bottom Line

tMHFA is an effective, feasible, and scalable training program for increasing mental health literacy and decreasing mental health stigma in adolescents in the short term.

Opportunities for Future Research

Although first aid intentions have been found to prospectively predict behaviors, the effectiveness of the tMHFA program should, ideally, determine whether improvements in knowledge, confidence and intentions translate into more supportive peer interactions, increased help-seeking and delivery of mental health services. Six-month survey data were collected but the lack of incentives, school email firewalls and pandemic school closures impacted data collection.

About

The [Journal of School Health](#) is a monthly peer-reviewed academic journal that addresses practice, theory and research related to the health and well-being of school-aged youth.

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The full study is available at <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/josh.13364#josh13364-bib-0036>.