

# Teen Mental Health First Aid

## Frequently Asked Questions

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## About teen Mental Health First Aid

### 1. What is teen Mental Health First Aid (tMHFA)?

teen Mental Health First Aid (tMHFA) is an evidence-based program that teaches teens in grades 10-12, or ages 15-18, how to identify, understand and respond to signs of mental health and substance use challenges in their friends and peers. The training gives teens the skills to have supportive conversations with their friends and how to get help from a responsible and trusted adult.

There are three ways to teach and learn tMHFA.

- In-person — Lessons are conducted in person in six 45-minute sessions or three 90-minute sessions.
- Blended – Teens complete a self-paced online lesson, then participate in six live, Instructor-led sessions. These Instructor-led sessions can be:
  - Video conferences.
  - In-person classes.

### 2. How was tMHFA developed?

teen Mental Health First Aid is an evidence-based program developed in Australia in 2015 by Dr. Laura Hart at the University of Melbourne and Dr. Claire Kelly at Mental Health First Aid Australia. The program was developed based on guidelines created with the expert consensus of mental health professionals and people who have experienced mental health challenges.

The National Council for Mental Wellbeing brought tMHFA to the United States in partnership with Born This Way Foundation. The National Council adapted it to make it relevant for American teens with input from experts in adolescent mental health and young people across the country.

### 3. What are the course learning objectives?

After the course teens will be able to:

- Recognize early warning signs that a friend is developing a mental health or substance use challenge.
- Recognize warning signs that a friend may be experiencing a mental health or substance use crisis.
- Describe how to talk to a friend about mental health and seeking help.
- Explain when and how to get a responsible adult involved.
- Discuss where to find appropriate and helpful resources about mental health challenges and professional help.
- Apply the tMHFA Action Plan to help a friend with a mental health or substance use challenge or crisis.

### 4. What is the tMHFA course outline?

There are three ways to teach and learn tMHFA.

- In-person – Lessons are conducted in person in six 45-minute sessions or three 90-minute sessions.
- Blended – Teens complete a self-paced online lesson, then participate in six live, Instructor-led sessions. These Instructor-led sessions can be:
  - i. Video conferences.
  - ii. In-person classes.

The course includes lectures, films, group activities, creative expression through writing and drawing, discussions, and skill-building practice through case studies and role play. It **does not** teach teens how to diagnose — instead, teens learn information about being a supportive friend, encouraging friends to seek help and knowing when it's time to get an adult involved.

### Components

- **tMHFA Self-paced Courses:** Instructors help teens in Blended classes access these sessions via Mental Health First Aid Connect, our online learning platform. Each self-paced course directs teens to reference additional content in the tMHFA manual and prepares them for the corresponding Instructor-led session with the base knowledge to support the discussion and activities. Lessons introduce teens to foundational content including an overview of the tMHFA Action Plan and key definitions such as mental health and mental health challenge.
- **tMHFA Instructor-led Sessions:** Instructors facilitate these sessions in person or via videoconference. Instructors use the tMHFA Blended Teaching Notes to guide the session, which builds on the content teens learned in the self-paced course. Instructors can review the content, respond to questions and then facilitate discussions that make the information relevant to the teens. Instructors guide teens through activities that allow them to practice skills such as having a supportive conversation with a friend and using the tMHFA Action Plan.

- **Skill-building Scenarios:** Three animated skill-building scenarios help teens apply and practice their tMHFA skills. Teens “meet” virtual peers and use the tMHFA Action Plan to help them navigate difficult situations.

#### **Outline of teen Mental Health First Aid**

- I. Mental health in general, what mental health challenges are and how common they are in teens.
- II. Impact of mental health challenges on teens, how people with mental health challenges can get better, professionals who can help.
- III. Helping a friend who is in crisis because they are suicidal, introducing the tMHFA Action Plan (Look, Ask, Listen, Help Your Friend) and learning how it can be used in a crisis situation. A video shows a teen helping a friend who is experiencing suicidal thoughts.
- IV. Helping a friend who is experiencing another type of crisis, such as threatening violence or harm to others, engaging in non-suicidal self-injury or experiencing a traumatic event such as bullying, abuse or assault. Practice using the tMHFA Action Plan (Look, Ask, Listen, Help Your Friend) in these types of crisis situations.
- V. Helping a friend who may be in crisis due to substance use and helping a friend who’s developing a mental health challenge.
- VI. Recovery and resilience

#### **5. Who are tMHFA Instructors?**

Mental Health First Aid Instructors are individuals certified to teach the course in their communities. tMHFA Instructors are on the frontlines of the program, training teens in their communities how to assess, respond and bring in a trusted adult if a peer seems to be having a mental health or substance use challenge. Instructors teach from a national curriculum, tailor discussions to their participants and compile a list of local resources for help.

The National Council requires that adults who teach the tMHFA program to teens attend a tMHFA Instructor training to be certified in the curriculum. Instructor candidates can be certified to teach tMHFA in-person or online.

If you are interested in applying for a tMHFA Instructor training, [complete this form to get in touch with a member of our team](#). Whether you are still looking for a site to teach tMHFA, or you have an organization in mind, you must speak with a member of our team before you can apply to become a tMHFA Instructor.

#### **6. Is tMHFA an evidence-based program?**

Yes. Researchers at the University of Melbourne, Australia conducted two studies to demonstrate the effectiveness of the tMHFA program. Two evaluations of the Australian teen Mental Health First Aid program, including one randomized, controlled trial showed that teens who completed the tMHFA training:

- Demonstrated increased mental health literacy.
- Were more confident helping a peer with a mental health problem.
- Viewed seeking help from mental health professionals (e.g., school counselors, therapists) more positively.
- Reported less psychological distress.

The two studies can be found here:

1. Hart, L. M., Mason, R. J., Kelly, C. M., Cvetkovski, S., & Jorm, A. F. (2016). teen Mental Health First Aid: a description of the program and an initial evaluation. *International Journal of Mental Health Systems*, 10(1), 3.
2. Hart, L. M., Morgan, A.J., Rossetto, A., Kelly, C. M., Mackinnon, A., Jorm, A.F. (2018). Helping adolescents to better support their peers with a mental health problem: a cluster-randomized crossover trial of teen Mental Health First Aid. *Australia and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry* 52(7), 638–651.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0004867417753552>.

The National Council, in partnership with Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health, is currently conducting research to measure the skills, knowledge and confidence in providing teen Mental Health First Aid to a peer and actual usage of teen Mental Health First Aid by young people after taking the course. The study is measuring the following:

- Adolescents' knowledge of the general warning signs that a mental illness may be developing
- Skills and confidence in providing Mental Health First Aid to a peer
- Actual usage of teen Mental Health First Aid skills with peers six months after the training.

**7. Is this program available in any languages aside from English?**

At this time, tMHFA is only available in English and can only be taught in English. Mental Health First Aid is committed to increasing accessibility of this training and will explore the option of offering tMHFA in other languages in the future. Keep an eye out for future communications with more information.

## Bringing tMHFA to Your Community

**8. How can I pitch this program to my administration and leadership?**

In addition to all the information found in the FAQs, we also have developed PowerPoint presentations that you can use to explain the program to your leadership. This includes information about what the program covers, why it's important and the evidence-base for the program. To learn more, [visit the Mental Health First Aid website](#) and set up a call with a member of our team.

**9. What resources do you have for parents/guardians?**

We provide tMHFA sites with a template parent/guardian letter that can be sent home to provide parents and guardians with information about the program. It also allows parents and guardians to reach out to someone at the school or organization if they have questions or concerns. We also provide tMHFA sites with a PowerPoint presentation that can be used to present on the program to parents and guardians.

In addition, an important component of the tMHFA program is encouraging teens to reach out to a trusted adult. For this reason, sites are encouraged to provide Youth Mental Health First Aid (YMHFA) training — our course for adults who work with youth — to parents and caregivers

before the tMHFA course begins or concurrently with the tMHFA course.

## Becoming a tMHFA Site

### 10. I would like to teach tMHFA at my school or youth-serving organization. What do I do?

Any school, youth-serving organization or organization in partnership with a school that wants to bring tMHFA training to their teens can apply to become a tMHFA Site. Interested schools and organizations must be accepted to teach tMHFA.

If you are interested in bringing tMHFA to teens in your community, [visit the Mental Health First Aid website to complete the tMHFA Interest Form](#). A member of the MHFA team will reach out to schedule a call with you to discuss the program and begin your application.

When speaking to a member of the MHFA team, you will be asked if you are able to meet a set of requirements (below). Interested schools and organizations will need to sign a contract to show their commitment to teaching the program with fidelity and adhering to the implementation requirements. The contract will also allow sites to pay for Instructor trainings, tMHFA manuals and other materials.

#### Requirements:

- The program must be taught to teens in grades 10, 11 or 12. At this time, grade 9 is not permitted.
- If teaching at a school, the course should be taught to an entire grade level of teens (not individual classes) in the school. If teaching at a youth-serving organization or program, the course should be taught to an entire group of teens at the youth-serving organization or program.
- Schools or organizations should have approximately 10% of staff at the site trained in YMHFA (for adults helping young people) before teaching teen Mental Health First Aid to teens. This ensures that adults are available and prepared to help young people facing a crisis or challenge. Sites are encouraged to offer Youth Mental Health First Aid training to parents/guardians as well.
- The school or organization offering the training must have a safety protocol in place to ensure teen safety, including how to respond to a teen who's in distress and indicates they would like to be seen. Sites must also commit to using *tMHFA Exit Tickets* to provide teens with a discreet way of asking for help for themselves or a friend after every session of the course. Sites must establish a protocol to have Instructors and/or a site staff person read every *tMHFA Exit Ticket* and contact every teen who requests help.
- The course should be taught in classes of approximately five to 30 teens on non-consecutive days. The program should **not** be taught in large, assembly-style sessions.
- Sites are encouraged to provide YMHFA training to parents and caregivers before the tMHFA course begins or concurrently with the tMHFA course.

# tMHFA Implementation Requirements and Teaching Questions

## 11. What are the requirements for implementing tMHFA?

Any school, youth-serving organization or organization in partnership with a school that wants to bring tMHFA training to their teens can apply to become a tMHFA Site. Interested schools and organizations must be accepted to teach tMHFA.

When speaking to a member of the MHFA team, you will be asked if you are able to meet a set of requirements (below). Interested schools and organizations will need to sign a contract to show their commitment to teaching the program with fidelity and adhering to the implementation requirements. The contract will also allow sites to pay for Instructor trainings, tMHFA manuals and other materials.

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- Schools or organizations should have approximately 10% of staff at the site trained in Youth Mental Health First Aid (for adults helping young people) before teaching teen Mental Health First Aid to teens. This ensures that adults are available and prepared to help young people facing a crisis or challenge. Sites are encouraged to offer YMHFA training to parents/guardians as well.
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- The course should be taught in classes of approximately five to 30 teens on non-consecutive days. The program should not be taught in large, assembly-style sessions.
- Sites are encouraged to provide YMHFA training to parents and caregivers before the tMHFA course begins or concurrently with the tMHFA course.

## 12. What if I don't have an Instructor candidate?

If you do not have someone that you can train as a tMHFA Instructor, but still wish to bring tMHFA to your teens, we can connect you with other tMHFA Instructors in your area. Please [complete this form to get in touch with a member of our team](#).

**13. How can I find Instructors in my area?**

We can connect you with other tMHFA Instructors in your area. Please [complete this form to get in touch with a member of our team](#).

**14. What if my school does not have grade levels? Whom am I required to teach?**

In this case, teach teens ages 15-18.

- 10th grade: 15-16 years old
- 11th grade: 16-17 years old
- 12th grade: 17-18 years old

**15. What if I can't train 10% of my staff in YMHFA?**

Please visit the Mental Health First Aid website to complete the tMHFA Interest Form and speak to a member of our team who can help. You can also visit the [Mental Health First Aid website](#) to find available YMHFA courses near you.

**16. Why do I have to train an entire grade level or all the age-appropriate teens in my setting?**

tMHFA was created as a universal approach to mental health education. We do not know which teens might experience a mental health challenge or crisis or who those teens might turn to if they are struggling. Therefore, we want all teens to have the knowledge and skills to help a peer experiencing a mental health challenge or crisis.

**17. Can parents/guardians opt their child out of tMHFA?**

Yes, parents/guardians can certainly opt their child out of taking the tMHFA course. Instructors are encouraged to offer parent informational sessions before teens take the training and send informational letters home so that parents understand the learning objectives of the tMHFA course. We also recommend including your contact information in the parent letter so parents can contact you with any questions. The informational session and informational letters usually alleviate any parent concerns, but if a parent still does not want their child to take the course, they can certainly opt them out.

**18. Why can't I train teens in the ninth grade?**

We believe that mental health education is important for all teens regardless of their age. However, this specific course is designed to be developmentally appropriate for older teens. It includes an intense video about assisting a friend who is having suicidal thoughts and discussions about supporting friends experiencing other forms of crisis. Our experts do not feel that the content, as it is presented in this course, is appropriate for a younger age group.

While we recognize that for some schools ninth grade health education would be an optimal time to train an entire grade level of teens, we are not able to make exceptions to our requirements that the course only be taught to the intended age group.

We hope to create training for young people in grade 9 in the future.

**19. How did other schools schedule the course and ensure that they taught an entire grade level of teens?**

Existing tMHFA sites schedule the training using a variety of courses, incorporating tMHFA in health, English, history and art classes. It often depends on which classes the majority of one grade level is taking.

Many sites choose to train half of a grade level in the fall semester and the second half of the grade level in the spring semester. That is completely fine!



We know that it is often difficult for schools and teachers to give up class time for other instruction. We recommend that you sit down with administrators and teachers in the school to explain the importance of tMHFA and help achieve buy-in for the course.

**20. Can I teach all six or three sessions of tMHFA on the same day?**

No, tMHFA must be taught on non-consecutive days. There must be at least one day, but no longer than two weeks, between sessions.

**21. If we organize an in-school retreat for three or six days, can we teach one session of the course every day and finish training at the end of the three or six days?**

No, please ensure that you have at least one day in between each session with no tMHFA instruction.

**22. Is there a required number of teens I have to train per year?**

No. The only requirement is that you train the entire grade level (10th, 11th or 12th grade) of teens if teaching at a school. Whether your grade level includes 30 teens or 1,000 teens, you and your school will need to ensure that your goal is to train all of them in the school year.

If training at a youth-serving organization or program or community site, the requirement is to train the entire group of teens in the setting. Please ensure that all teens are in the 10th, 11th or 12th grade, or between ages 15 and 18.

**23. What if there are a few teens who are absent when I teach tMHFA? Do I need to find a way for them to make up the course?**

We recommend that you schedule make-up courses for those who are absent. While we recommend that these make-up courses take place before teens move on to the next session, it is not required. However, please make sure that you follow up with any teen who is absent after the session that discusses suicide.

While make-up sessions are recommended, they are not required, especially if there are only a handful of teens who are absent. Any teen who does not complete all three or six sessions of the tMHFA course can receive a “certificate of participation” rather than a “certificate of completion.” These certificates are provided to you when you become a tMHFA Instructor.

**24. How many teens should I train in a class?**

We recommend that you limit the size of the class to the number of teens in a typical classroom at your school. Assembly-style sessions in an auditorium are **not** permitted.

We recommend following the guidelines of our Adult and Youth Mental Health First Aid courses — a minimum of 5 and a maximum of 30 teens to a class. If you need to make classes slightly larger in order to accommodate schedules, that is okay too. Please ensure you have at least two adults in the room at all times, either in-person or virtual, to help you manage the course.

**25. Can I teach the course to teens with special needs or cognitive disabilities?**

At this time, if sites have concerns about individual teens, we ask that they work with those teens and their parents/guardians to determine if this training is a good fit for their child. We believe that you know your teens the best. If you do not feel like the training is an appropriate fit, you may choose to have the teen abstain from the course. In the future, we plan to work with adolescent mental health and learning experts to develop additional guidance to schools about teaching to teens with special needs and cognitive disabilities.



**26. What are the qualifications for the mental health professional that must be available?**

The mental health professional must be a credentialed professional, such as a school nurse or counselor, who is available to see a young person who may be in distress while the training is taking place.

**27. What type of agreement does the organization need to have with schools?**

It's up to you and the school you are partnering with whether you operate with an informal or formal agreement and whether you charge the school for the training. The school does need to understand the requirements and be in full agreement with them prior to teaching teens.

**28. What are the reporting requirements?**

Each teen will need to take a pre-test, a post-test and a six-month follow-up test. Sites will be asked to keep track of how many teens they've trained, how many teens requested to be seen, and how many referrals were made to a mental health professional. Parent permission forms are not required, but parents can reach out to the site coordinator if they wish to opt-out their teen from the course

**29. Can we teach tMHFA virtually to teens?**

Instructor candidates interested in teaching the Blended learning option of tMHFA to teens must first be certified in the standard in-person learning option. After taking the standard 3-day Instructor training course, Instructor candidates can become certified to teach the Blended learning option by taking an additional 1-day Instructor training.

## Teen Safety

**30. How do tMHFA Sites account for teen safety?**

Sites must have a protocol in place for responding to a learner experiencing distress. Mental Health First Aid provides a sample protocol your site can tailor to your needs if you do not already have one. At a minimum, the protocol should cover:

- **Following up immediately with a teen who says they are or have been suicidal.** This is an urgent matter. A site/school mental health professional must follow up with them immediately. A site's protocol for responding to a teen in distress should be implemented.
- **Discussing course content** with any individual teens who may be at increased risk, such as those who have been touched by suicide.
- **Staff can talk with any teen they were concerned about** before the tMHFA course, even if that teen doesn't request help.
- **The Exit Ticket process.** After each session, all participants must complete an Exit Ticket. The Exit Ticket is an opportunity for teens to ask questions, say something they've learned and ask that an adult check in with them. The Instructor(s) must read over the completed Exit Tickets before leaving the site to identify any teens requesting follow-up by a site/school mental health professional. Before the Instructor leaves the site, they must give the names of teens who request follow-up to the site/school mental health professional or other identified staff member. The site/school mental health professional must contact the teen at the earliest opportunity.

**31. Does the National Council collect personal identifying information on teens?**

All course and evaluation data gathered from teen MHFA courses is submitted through the MHFA Connect Submit-a-Course feature and does not include any personally identifiable information from learners. For more information on Submit-a-Course, see these [FAQs](#).

**32. Are mental health professionals available for teens taking the course?**

Sites must have adults available during the course to provide additional support:

- A site/school mental health professional must be available during the class.
- At least two adults must be in the training room (virtual or in-person) at all times. They do not both have to be tMHFA Instructors, but they can be. The classroom teacher and school counselor are both great options to help Instructors manage the class.
- Sites may ask local mental health professionals or other social service staff from outside the school or organization to be available while the program is being taught.

**33. Can parents/guardians opt their child out of tMHFA?**

Yes, parents/guardians can certainly opt their child out of taking the tMHFA course. Instructors are encouraged to offer parent informational sessions before teens take the training and send informational letters home so that parents understand the learning objectives of the tMHFA course. We also recommend including your contact information in the parent letter so parents can contact you with any questions. The informational session and informational letters usually alleviate any parent concerns, but if a parent still does not want their child to take the course, they can certainly opt them out.

**34. How are you ensuring the safety of teens while taking this course virtually?**

Due to the sensitive content in the tMHFA course surrounding suicide and other crisis situations, there were a number of youth safety considerations that Mental Health First Aid USA took into account when developing the Blended model. MHFA solicited the expertise of mental health and telehealth experts and received feedback about teen safety protocols from schools and sites across the country who are currently engaged in distance learning. MHFA also hopes to use the pilot to further hone and build upon these safety practices.

# Pricing

## 35. What costs are associated with tMHFA?

You can bring teen Mental Health First to your school or youth-serving organization at the below pricing! This pricing model gives the opportunity to purchase tMHFA Manuals and Instructor Trainings together.

Client	Product Bundle	What's included	Price
Individual School or Youth-Serving Organization	Bundled Instructor training and manuals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3-day tMHFA Instructor training</li> <li>1-day optional training for the blended certification</li> <li>125 tMHFA manuals</li> </ul>	\$3,300
School District or Enterprise/Large Organization (purchasing and coordinating for multiple schools or Sites)	Private Instructor training and manuals for up to 16 Instructor candidates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Private 3-day tMHFA Instructor training for up to 16 participants</li> <li>1-day optional training for the blended certification</li> <li>2000 tMHFA manuals</li> </ul>	\$52,800
Individual Instructor Candidate (partnering with a school and/or organization. Enables schools to bring in their own Instructors / pay for manuals only.)	tMHFA Instructor training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3-day tMHFA Instructor training</li> <li>1-day optional training for the blended certification</li> <li>Instructor Materials</li> </ul>	\$1,700
Individual Schools or Youth-Serving Organizations of any size	Manuals only	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>125 manual bundle</li> <li>Per manual</li> </ul>	\$1,600 \$12.95

## 36. Why is the cost of the Instructor Training for tMHFA different than the Youth and Adult Instructor Training?

Unlike Adult and Youth Mental Health First Aid where manuals must be purchased separately from the Instructor training fee, the tMHFA program bundles the tuition for the Instructor training and the manuals needed to teach the program to teens into one product to purchase. While the upfront cost is more than becoming trained in one of our other products, you receive all materials to get started training teens at one time when you purchase the tMHFA program.

Independent Instructors are not eligible to purchase the bundled option and can only

purchase a seat in the Public tMHFA Instructor Training for Individual Instructors. Once the Instructor knows where they will be teaching tMHFA, they can then connect the site to the National Council to purchase manuals for their teens.

**37. We are a youth-serving organization or community site; we do not know where we will train teens yet, but we plan on partnering with another organization (such as a school). What are our first steps?**

If you are a community organization or youth-serving organization interested in partnering with a school or another site to train their teens, you must become a tMHFA Site. To do this, [please schedule a call](#) with a member of the MHFA team.

## Becoming a tMHFA Instructor

**38. I am an individual Instructor not connected to a school or organization. How do I get trained as a tMHFA Instructor?**

If you are interested in applying for a tMHFA Instructor training, [complete this form to get in touch with a member of our team](#). Whether you are still looking for a site to teach tMHFA, or you have an organization in mind, you must speak with a member of our team before you can apply to become a tMHFA Instructor.

**39. Do Instructors need to apply to attend an Instructor training?**

Yes. If you are an Instructor working with an accepted tMHFA Site, you must submit applications to attend a 3-day tMHFA Instructor training. If you are an independent Instructor that has not yet secured a site to implement tMHFA, you must still speak to a member of our team to get started and then apply to a tMHFA Instructor training.

**40. How do I become certified to teach the in-person learning option of tMHFA?**

In order to become certified to teach the in-person learning option of tMHFA, Instructor candidates must take a 3-day tMHFA Instructor training. This training is a prerequisite if you wish to become certified in the Blended learning option. After taking the 3-day training, you may then choose to take a supplemental 1-day Instructor training to learn the Blended learning option.

The 3-day Instructor training is a live, interactive training presented by tMHFA National Trainers. Each day of instruction will run 6-8 hours. In addition, each training requires approximately four hours of pre-work prior to the training, where candidates will watch a series of modeling videos of the training and complete assignments in an Instructor Processing Guide.

On the third day, Instructor candidates will present a portion of the curriculum to the entire class and receive feedback from the National Trainers. Instructor candidates must pass this presentation and be present during the entire three days of training to receive certification.

**41. What will the 1-day training to learn the Blended learning option entail?**

Similar to the 3-day standard tMHFA Instructor training, this training will involve around four hours of pre-work prior to attending the training. This will include taking the teen self-paced course, watching Instructor modeling videos, reviewing your site's safety of the course, give you distance learning best practices and pedagogy, and go over the teen safety requirements with you.

**42. Is there a provisional status for tMHFA Instructors?**

No, there is not a provisional status for tMHFA Instructors at this time. Candidates will either pass or fail the Instructor Training.

**43. Can I get continuing education (CE) credits for the tMHFA Instructor training?**

Currently, CEs are not being offered for the 3-day tMHFA Instructor trainings. Many Instructors may be able to apply for CEs independently. While the National Council can assist by providing materials requested for the application, the individual or host would need to identify the local CE application process and documentation necessary.

**44. When and where are Instructor trainings being held this year?**

Please visit our [tMHFA Information and Resources page](#) for tMHFA Instructor training dates and locations. All our trainings are currently being held virtually.

45.

**46. Is it a pre-requisite for me to be a Youth Mental Health First Aid Instructor to become a teen Mental Health First Aid Instructor?**

No, you do not need to be a **Youth** Mental Health First Aid Instructor to become a **teen** Mental Health First Aid Instructor. We ask that you take a Youth Mental Health First Aider course, our course for adults who interact with youth, (the 8 hour training – not the Instructor course) before you start teaching teens in the teen Mental Health First Aid course.

**47. Who makes the best tMHFA Instructor candidates?**

All tMHFA Instructors must have experience working with youth in a personal or professional setting. They also must have experience delivering presentations and facilitating discussions. A working knowledge or interest in mental health is recommended.

All tMHFA Instructor candidates must be certified as a Youth Mental Health First Aider (in the community course) before attending a tMHFA Instructor training. Being a Youth or Adult Instructor is **not** required.

**48. Once I'm a tMHFA Instructor, what are the requirements for maintaining my certification?**

To maintain your tMHFA Instructor certification, you must teach one full course per year. Only two Instructors can receive credit for a tMHFA course.

**49. I am an Adult and Youth Instructor and am planning on becoming a tMHFA Instructor. What will be the requirements to maintain all three certifications?**

Because tMHFA is a different curriculum than the Adult or Youth MHFA curricula, Adult and Youth Instructors must continue to maintain their Adult and Youth teaching requirements in addition to the tMHFA requirement of one course per year.

If you are certified in Youth or Adult MHFA and certified in tMHFA, you must teach three courses per year in your Youth or Adult certification and teach one course in tMHFA.

If you are certified as an Instructor in all three curricula (Adult, Youth, and tMHFA), you will need to teach three courses per year (two Adult courses and one Youth course OR two Youth courses and one Adult course) AND teach one tMHFA course.

# tMHFA Private Instructor Training

**50. What is a private training?**

Your organization can contract with the National Council to conduct a private Instructor Training for your Instructor candidates if you would like to train several participants. The training would be only available for your Instructor candidates.

The tMHFA Instructor Training would allow for 16 participants in a 3-day in-person training. The cost associated is \$52,800. (National Council members receive a discounted price of \$50,000). The price includes an optional 1-day training for the blended Instructor certification, Instructor materials for each Instructor candidate and 2,000 tMHFA manuals.

All Instructor trainings are currently being held virtually.

All the implementation requirements are still applicable for Instructors who attend private trainings.

**51. Can I partner with other organizations in my area to fill a private training?**

Yes! While only one organization can be on the contract, you are welcome to work with other organizations in your area and charge their Instructor candidates to attend your private course.

**52. How do I start the process of organizing a private tMHFA training?**

The first step will be to register as a tMHFA site. To do this, [visit the Mental Health First Aid website to complete the tMHFA Interest Form](#). A member of the MHFA team will reach out to schedule a call with you to discuss the program and begin your application.

## tMHFA Blended Learning Option

### 53. What is the structure of the Blended learning option?

teen Mental Health First Aid (tMHFA) teaches high school teens in grades 10-12 how to identify and respond to signs of mental health and substance use challenges or crises among their friends. The training gives teens the skills to have supportive conversations with their friends and get a responsible and trusted adult to take over as necessary.

Developed in response to various school and youth-serving organization re-opening models in the United States following COVID-19, the blended learning option is designed to provide teens with the same quality learning experience and learning outcomes as the in-person tMHFA course, but in a virtual setting.

The course consists of six sessions. Within each session, teens participate in:

- **tMHFA Self-paced Courses:** Instructors help teens in Blended classes access these sessions via Mental Health First Aid Connect, our online learning platform. Each self-paced course directs teens to reference additional content in the tMHFA manual and prepares them for the corresponding Instructor-led session with the base knowledge to support the discussion and activities. Lessons introduce teens to foundational content including an overview of the tMHFA Action Plan and key definitions such as mental health and mental health challenge.
- **tMHFA Instructor-led Sessions:** Instructors facilitate these sessions in person or via videoconference. Instructors use the tMHFA Blended Teaching Notes to guide the session, which builds on the content teens learned in the self-paced course. Instructors can review the content, respond to questions and then facilitate discussions that make the information relevant to the teens. Instructors guide teens through activities that allow them to practice skills such as having a supportive conversation with a friend and using the tMHFA Action Plan. Instructors may use any videoconferencing platform of their choosing.
- **Skill-Building Scenarios:** Three animated skill-building scenarios help teens apply and practice their tMHFA skills. Teens “meet” virtual peers and use the tMHFA Action Plan to help them navigate difficult situations.



### tMHFA Blended

#### Training Sessions:

1. What are Mental Health Challenges?
2. What is Appropriate Help?
3. Helping a Friend in Crisis - Suicide
4. Helping a Friend in Crisis – Panic Attacks, Self-Injury, Trauma, Bullying and Violence
5. Helping a Friend in a Substance Use Crisis and Mental Health Challenge
6. Recovery and Resilience

#### All sessions include:

- 20-30 minutes (approximately): Self-paced
- 30 minutes: Virtual or In-person Instructor-led Time
- 5 minutes: Skills Practice

**54. For the in-person learning option, we are required to train an entire grade level of teens if teaching at a school. Is this still the requirement for the Blended learning option?**

tMHFA is intended to be a universal program that does not single out youth who are perceived as at risk or identified as young leaders, but rather seeks to train all teens in a community. We stand by that vision for all the various learning options of tMHFA. However, we also realize that distance-learning is not the ideal learning method for some teens and that for their safety it would be best to teach tMHFA to them in an in-person environment. For this reason, if you would like to teach the Blended version of the course to a small group of teens, rather than an entire grade level, we will allow that during this pilot year. While we hope that the goal in future years will be to teach an entire grade level of teens if teaching at a school, we will allow you to teach the course to a small group of young people during this pilot year.

**55. Do we still need to have 10% of staff at the training location trained in Youth Mental Health First Aid?**

Yes, we are still asking sites to train 10% of staff at the training location in Youth Mental Health First Aid (the 8-hour First Aider community course, not the Instructor course). While we do have a blended learning option of YMHFA, we understand that access to the course may still be difficult. Sites can be training their adult staff in YMHFA while they are training teens in tMHFA.

**56. Can I only be certified in the Blended learning option?**

No, the standard 3-day tMHFA Instructor training where you learn the in-person learning option is

a prerequisite to the Blended certification.

**57. Can I become certified to teach the Blended AND the in-person version of the course?**

Yes, all Instructor candidates who want to learn the Blended model must be certified in the in-person version of the course first. It is a prerequisite to attend the 3-day tMHFA Instructor training which teaches candidates the in-person course before attending the 1-day training that teaches candidates the Blended learning option.

The cost of the 3-day tMHFA Instructor training is \$3,300 for non-members and \$3,000 for members. This also includes the cost of 125 manuals and the additional 1-day training to learn the Blended learning option.

**58. How many teens are allowed in the virtual Instructor-led session?**

For the virtual environment, our guideline is that there be a minimum of five teens in the virtual Instructor-led session and a maximum of 20 teens in the Instructor-led session. However, like the in-person version of tMHFA, we recommend that you adhere to the standard distance learning classroom sizes at your site.

**59. How many days should I factor in between sessions?**

We recommend scheduling at least two days in between each Instructor-led session, and ideally one week in between each session. This will provide your teens with enough time to complete the self-paced exercise and the self-paced portions of the course prior to the next Instructor-led session. There should not be more than 2 weeks in between Instructor-led sessions.

**60. For the Instructor-led portion, can half of my teens tune in virtually and half my teens be in-person?**

No, for the Instructor-led portion of the course, we recommend that all the teens you are teaching tune in either virtually or be in-person (no mixture). If you have two Instructors, one of them can teach the teens virtually, and the other can teach the in-person teens.

**61. For the Instructor-led portion, can my teens switch from taking sessions in-person to virtually over the course of the six sessions?**

As long as every teen is tuning in via the same delivery format – either all are virtual or all are in-person – during every session, it is no problem to switch between in-person and virtual.

**Please note - you cannot switch back and forth from Blended to completely in-person.** They are taught and structured differently (there are no self-paced courses in the in-person model) and you will need to start over if you would like to teach the in-person model to the same group of teens. For instance, if you were in the middle of teaching tMHFA virtually because your site was fully virtual, and then your site switched to in-person, you will need to start the curriculum over and teach the in-person model.

**62. How are you ensuring the safety of teens while taking this course virtually?**

Due to the sensitive content in the tMHFA course surrounding suicide and other crisis situations, there were a number of youth safety considerations that Mental Health First Aid USA took into account when developing the Blended model. MHFA solicited the expertise of mental health and telehealth experts and received feedback about teen safety protocols from schools and sites across the country who are currently engaged in distance-learning.

MHFA also hopes to use the pilot to further hone and build upon these safety practices.

It is the responsibility of the site to put safety mechanisms in place prior to teaching the course. Prior to implementing the Blended tMHFA course with teens, sites must agree to abide by the following safety protocols:

- Sites must inform parents/guardians that their youth will be participating in the tMHFA course virtually, provide instructions if parents/ guardians want to opt their child out of the course and provide a tMHFA site contract that parents/ guardians can reach out to while their child takes the course
- Sites must have on file an Emergency Contact Form for every teen that is taking the course. Instructors must have the emergency contact information available to them while they are teaching the Instructor-led session in the event they have urgent concerns about the teen's safety.
- Sites must develop a protocol for responding to a teen who shows signs of distress during the Instructor-led session and notify their teens of that protocol.
- Sites should notify teens of virtual learning best practices, including keeping their video on at all times and finding a private place to take the course.
- Sites should provide the contact information of a mental health professional or a site staff person that a teen can reach out to if they need to speak to an adult.
- Sites must provide the National Crisis Resources, and any local mental health resources, to teens at the start of every session.
- Two adults must participate in the virtual Instructor-led sessions at all times. We encourage the second adult to private chat teens throughout the session with a simple, "how are you?" periodically throughout the training. The adult may also place a teen into the virtual hallway – a breakout room in the virtual meeting space – if they feel a teen needs to talk.
- Sites must collect electronic Exit Tickets from teens at the end of each Instructor-led session. Teens will not be allowed to leave the Instructor-led session until they have submitted their Exit Ticket. Instructors may choose to administer the Exit Ticket in various ways.

## Purchasing Materials

**63. What materials are required to teach the course?**

Each teen that you teach is required to receive a physical copy of the teen manual that is purchased from the National Council. You will also need Teaching Notes, your PPT presentation and Exit Tickets and to ensure that everyone has a writing utensil.

**64. How do I purchase teen manuals?**

Each teen that you teach is required to receive a physical copy of the teen manual. Teen Manuals may be purchased when you register as a tMHFA site. If more manuals are needed, the Site Coordinator of your site may purchase them on the MHFA Storefront for an additional cost of \$12.95.

**65. Can I just make copies of the teen manual I received at the Instructor training?**

No, you must purchase a manual from the MHFA Storefront for each teen.