

Research and Evaluation of Adult Mental Health First Aid

Conducting research and evaluation activities on Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) is useful to understand the program's effectiveness and to identify areas for improvement. This resource outlines the results of studies conducted on Adult MHFA, which have noted positive effects in communities across the country.

48
*peer-reviewed
articles*

Nearly
700,000
learners represented

Participants from
all 50 states
represented



Participants have included medical professionals, community-based workers, community members living in urban and rural areas, and members from refugee, public safety, military and church communities.

Overview of findings

Studies of Adult MHFA have found that individuals trained in the program:

- Show increased mental health literacy, which includes:
 - Knowledge of signs, symptoms and risk factors of mental health and substance use challenges.
 - Ability to identify appropriate professionals and self-help resources.
- Express increased confidence and likelihood to help a person in distress.
- Show reduced stigma and increased empathy toward people with mental health challenges.
- Use MHFA skills after training.
- Show increased likelihood to seek therapy or mental health care for themselves.
- Can apply MHFA skills correctly during a simulation.

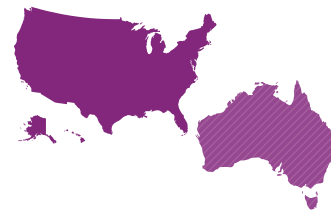


Mental Health FIRST AID

from NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR MENTAL WELLBEING

Selected Results from **Adult** MHFA Studies

In an exploratory study of **265 American and Australian pharmacy students** who received MHFA training and were assessed using simulated patient role-play assessments, both cohorts had similar scores and pass rates (60%–86%). To pass, each person had to perform all required actions and enough additional appropriate actions for each simulated scenario according to a rubric.¹



A citywide evaluation of **2,639 MHFA trainees in New York City** found that MHFA training is a valuable tool for building community-level support skills. The majority of respondents (90%) indicated that they had used MHFA skills in the past six months, with high levels of confidence to help someone with a mental health challenge. Furthermore, over 80% of respondents used MHFA skills to support their own wellbeing and at least occasionally to correct misperceptions about mental health to combat stigma in their communities.²

In a randomized control trial of **70 graduate-level professional athletic training students**, participants who completed MHFA training experienced significant knowledge and confidence improvements. Authors noted that the standardized curriculum and the virtual delivery option offer a “comprehensive, practical and flexible approach.”³



In a study of **176 community first responders in Army National Guard armories**, those who received MHFA training showed greater improvements in confidence, knowledge and behaviors, and reduced stigma toward people with mental health issues, as compared to those in the control group. They also showed significant differences in these measures over time from those in the control group.⁴



In a study of MHFA training for **80 extension agents in Mississippi**, 62.5% of participants used MHFA skills six months after their training, including listening nonjudgmentally, having a conversation about mental health and giving reassurance and information. Most participants agreed that they became more confident in a variety of first aid behaviors after training.⁵



Learn more about [research and evaluation initiatives](#) at **MHFA USA** on our website.



Mental Health FIRST AID

from NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR MENTAL WELLBEING

References

1. Nguyen, W., Moles, R., O'Reilly, C., Robinson, J., Brand-Eubanks, D., Kim, A., Collins, J. C., & El-Den, S. (2022). Observed behaviours and suicide assessment language post-Mental Health First Aid training in Australia and the United States: A mixed methods study using discourse analysis. *BMC Medical Education*, 22(1), 838. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12909-022-03920-8>
2. Wong, E. C., Dunbar, M. S., Siconolfi, D., Rodriguez, A., Jean, C., Torres, V. N., Li, R., Abbott, M., Estrada-Darley, I., Dong, L., & Weir, R. (2023, February 7). *Evaluation of Mental Health First Aid in New York City*. RAND Corporation. https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRa1818-1.html
3. Anderson, A. S., Pitney, W. A., Armstrong, K. J., & Kinslow, B. (2023, October). Athletic training students' mental health recognition and referral skills, part 1: A randomized controlled trial. *Athletic Training Education Journal*, 18(4), 213–222. <https://doi.org/10.4085/1947-380X-23-001>
4. Mohatt, N. V., Boeckmann, R., Winkel, N., Mohatt, D. F., & Shore, J. (2017, January-February). Military Mental Health First Aid: Development and preliminary efficacy of a community training for improving knowledge, attitudes, and helping behaviors. *Military Medicine*, 182(1), e1576–e1583. <https://doi.org/10.7205/MILMED-D-16-00033>
5. Robertson, M. N., DeShong, H. L., Steen, J. S., Buys, D. R., & Nadorff, M. R. (2021, April). Mental health first aid training for extension agents in rural communities. *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior*, 51(2), 301–307. <https://doi.org/10.1111/sltb.12705>



Mental Health FIRST AID

from NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR MENTAL WELLBEING