

Mental Health First Aid Grant Writing Toolkit

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About This Toolkit

When you teach Mental Health First Aid (MHFA), you perform a vital service for your community – you train loved ones, peers, neighbors and colleagues to identify, understand and respond when someone in their life is experiencing a mental health or substance use challenge.

Grant funding can help you grow your MHFA program and ensure more people in your community get the help they need when they need it. This toolkit offers you information, guidance and language for securing grants from philanthropies and federal, state and local governments.

As you write a grant application, remember each grantor has its own requirements and style specifications. Refer to the grant's Request for Applications (RFA) for guidance. Failure to meet the specifications laid out in the RFA may disqualify your application.

About Mental Health First Aid

Founded in 1969, the National Council for Mental Wellbeing is a membership organization that drives policy and social change on behalf of over 3,100 mental health and substance use treatment organizations and the more than 10 million children, adults and families they serve. We advocate for policies to ensure equitable access to high-quality services. We build the capacity of mental health and substance use treatment organizations. And we promote greater understanding of mental wellbeing as a core component of comprehensive health and health care.

In 2008, the National Council introduced MHFA to the United States. MHFA, an international, evidence-based public education program, teaches learners about risk factors and warning signs of mental health and substance use challenges, builds understanding of the importance of early intervention and provides common mental health resources for national and local resources and support. MHFA, which originated in Australia in 2000, provides programs that address adults helping adults, adults helping youth and teens helping teens. Community-specific courses dig deeper into the needs of specific populations, including law enforcement, older adults, veterans and higher education. Today, the U.S. program is active in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, American Samoa, the Federated States of Micronesia, Guam, the Marshall Islands, the Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Notably, MHFA programs in the U.S. were the first in the world to pivot to virtual instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The National Council for Mental Wellbeing is the sole entity providing national Mental Health First Aid program materials in the United States. Mental Health First Aid program materials include, but are not

limited to, manuals, curriculum products, consultation and training, and ancillary products. The National Council for Mental Wellbeing is the sole entity providing Mental Health First Aid Instructor trainings in the United States and U.S. territories, with the exception of Maryland and Missouri.

Since 2008, more than 2.8 million people in the U.S. have been trained in MHFA. The course teaches the 5-step Mental Health First Aid Action Plan (referred to as ALGEE) as a way to navigate situations in which someone appears to be experiencing a mental health or substance use challenge or crisis:

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

The goal of the Mental Health First Aid Action Plan (ALGEE) is to connect people to appropriate professional, peer, social and self-help resources. MHFA teaches common risk factors for mental health and substance use challenges as well as signs and symptoms of specific illnesses such as depressive disorders, anxiety disorders, eating disorders, post-traumatic stress disorder, bipolar disorder and psychotic disorders. Just as learning physical first aid does not make someone a doctor, learning Mental Health First Aid does not qualify anyone to diagnose mental health challenges or provide therapy.

MHFA Efficacy and Impact

Research proves MHFA is effective. Peer-reviewed studies¹ show that individuals trained in MHFA:

- Increase their knowledge of signs, symptoms and risk factors of mental health and substance use challenges.
- Can identify multiple types of professional and self-help resources for individuals with a mental health or substance use challenge.
- Have increased confidence and are more likely to help an individual in distress.
- Show increased personal mental wellness.

Likewise, teen MHFA (tMHFA) training offered for teens in grades 10-12 (ages 15-18) has been shown to result in:

- Increased mental health literacy.
- Increased confidence.

¹ National Council for Mental Wellbeing. (2023). "Mental Health First Aid Research in the United States." https://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/2023.03.01_MHFA_Research-Summary_infographic.pdf

- Increased positive view of mental health professionals.
- Decreased psychological distress.

MHFA offers a crucial response to barriers to access. Mental Health First Aiders learn to respond to individuals where they are in their lived experience, bridging the gap between the emergence of a crisis and its resolution with intervention and referral assistance. By providing tools, awareness, knowledge and links to services, MHFA creates a network of people who can support those who may have previously faced barriers to access. (The term “referral” can include clinical referrals as well as referrals to other supports, including self-help resources.) Importantly, the teen MHFA program explicitly stresses the importance of reaching out to a trusted, responsible adult for help and guidance.

With thousands of Instructors training First Aiders around the country – more than 2.8 million First Aiders to date – the impact of MHFA expands every day. The [Latest Impacts page](#) on MHFA.org presents case studies describing how MHFA has touched lives.

Program Descriptions

Use the program descriptions here as needed in your applications.

Core Curricula

The core MHFA curricula serve three general populations and can be delivered in an In-person or Blended format. (See Instruction Modalities.) The Adult MHFA and Youth MHFA curricula are available in both English and Spanish. All MHFA courses must be taught by MHFA Instructors certified to teach that course.

Mental Health First Aid — Mental Health First Aid is a skills-based training that teaches adults how to identify, understand and respond to signs and symptoms of a mental health or substance use challenge in adults 18 years old and over. The course is offered to individuals 18 years old and over and is available in English and Spanish.

Youth Mental Health First Aid — Youth Mental Health First Aid is a skills-based training that teaches adults, such as parents, family members, caregivers, teachers, school staff, peers, neighbors and health and human services workers, how to identify, understand and respond to an adolescent (ages 12-18) who may be experiencing a mental health or substance use challenge. The course is offered to individuals 18 years old and over and is available in English and Spanish.

teen Mental Health First Aid — teen Mental Health First Aid is a skills-based training that teaches young people in grades 10-12, or ages 15-18, how to identify, understand and respond to signs and symptoms of a mental health or substance use challenge among their friends and peers. The program equips young

people with the knowledge and skills they need to take care of their own mental health and to support each other, with an emphasis on how to get help from a trusted, responsible adult.

Community-specific Courses

Mental Health First Aid’s community-specific courses are tailored to the unique needs of specific populations. MHFA Instructors must have the community-specific designation for any community-specific course they teach.

Mental Health First Aid at Work — Mental Health First Aid at Work is a skills-based training program that teaches adults how to identify, understand and respond to someone who is experiencing a mental health or substance use challenge in a work environment and connect them with appropriate employee resources. The program benefits businesses of all sizes and in all sectors by empowering employees with mental health awareness tools and skills.

Mental Health First Aid for Public Safety — Mental Health First Aid for Public Safety is a skills-based training that teaches law officers and staff how to de-escalate incidents and identify, understand and respond to someone who may be experiencing a mental health or substance use challenge without compromising safety. The program focuses on the unique experiences and needs of public safety personnel and is a valuable resource that can make a difference in their lives and the lives of their coworkers, families and the communities they serve.

Mental Health First Aid for Fire/EMS — Mental Health First Aid for Fire/EMS is a skills-based training that teaches firefighters and EMS personnel how to identify, understand and respond to someone who may be experiencing a mental health or substance use challenge. The program focuses on the unique experiences and needs of firefighters and EMS personnel, including how to intervene in the field and among their peers.

Mental Health First Aid for Military, Veterans and Their Families — Mental Health First Aid for Military, Veterans and Their Families is a skills-based training that teaches adults how to identify, understand and respond to a military veteran or service member who may be experiencing a mental health or substance use challenge. The training places a focus on cultural factors related to military life.

Mental Health First Aid for Older Adults — Mental Health First Aid for Older Adults is a skills-based training that teaches adults how to identify, understand and respond to someone who may be experiencing a mental health or substance use challenge. The program addresses mental health challenges unique to older adults.

Mental Health First Aid for Rural Communities — Mental Health First Aid for Rural Communities is a skills-based training that teaches adults how to identify, understand and respond to someone who may be

experiencing a mental health or substance use challenge. The training emphasizes cultural and environmental factors related to life in rural areas.

Mental Health First Aid for Higher Education — Mental Health First Aid for Higher Education is a skills-based training that teaches adults how to identify, understand and respond to someone who may be experiencing a mental health or substance use challenge. The program emphasizes the unique challenges faced by college students and is designed for students and faculty.

Youth Mental Health First Aid for Tribal Communities and Indigenous Peoples — Youth Mental Health First Aid for Tribal Communities and Indigenous Peoples is a skills-based training that teaches adults how to identify, understand and respond to an Indigenous adolescent (ages 12-18) who may be experiencing a mental health or substance use challenge or crisis. The program provides a strong cultural connection and early intervention in a culturally appropriate course designed to acknowledge and honor tribal communities' and Indigenous peoples' practices.

Instruction Modalities

Adult and Youth MHFA

- In-person courses
 - Instructors scheduling a course must allow for the designated number of hours for instruction, plus breaks or lunch. When a course is scheduled over multiple days, there may be no more than two weeks between sessions.
 - Suggested options for in-person course scheduling:
 - Adult In-person courses
 - **One day:** One 7.5-hour day
 - **Two days:** One 3.5-hour day and one 4-hour day
 - **Four days:** Four 2-hour days
 - Youth In-person courses
 - **One day:** One 6.5-hour day
 - **Two days:** One 3.5-hour day and one 3-hour day
 - **Four days:** Four 2-hour days
- Blended Courses
 - Instructors scheduling a course must allow the designated number of hours for the Instructor-led training (ILT) portion of their Blended course, and they should also include time for breaks or lunch.
 - Blended Adult MHFA with In-person ILT – Courses include approximately two hours of pre-work and 5.5 hours ILT content; allow an additional 30 minutes for breaks.

- Blended Adult MHFA with Virtual ILT – Courses include approximately two hours of pre-work and 5.5 hours ILT content; allow one additional hour for breaks.
- Blended Youth MHFA with In-person ILT – Courses include approximately two hours of pre-work and 4.5 hours ILT content; allow an additional 30 minutes for breaks.
- Blended Youth MHFA with Virtual ILT – Courses include approximately two hours of pre-work and 4.5 hours ILT content; allow one additional hour for breaks.
- Blended courses with In-person or Virtual ILT can be scheduled as a maximum of two separate sessions.

teen MHFA

- In-person Courses
 - There are two In-person learning options for teen MHFA:
 - Six 45-minute sessions – conducted on non-consecutive days with no more than two weeks between sessions.
 - Three 90-minute sessions – conducted on non-consecutive days with no more than two weeks between sessions
- Blended Courses
 - The sole Blended learning option for teen MHFA consists of six sessions. Within each session, teens participate in:
 - teen MHFA self-paced work: Instructors help teens in Blended classes access self-paced work that directs the teens to additional content in the teen MHFA manual and provides base knowledge to support discussions and activities in the next Instructor-led session. Lessons introduce teens to foundational content including an overview of the teen MHFA Action Plan and key definitions such as mental health and mental health challenge.
 - teen MHFA Instructor-led sessions: Instructors facilitate these sessions in person or via videoconference. Instructors use the teen MHFA Blended Teaching Notes to guide the sessions, which build on the content teens learned through the corresponding self-paced work. 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 teen MHFA 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 teen MHFA skills. Teens “meet” virtual peers and use the teen MHFA Action Plan to help them navigate difficult situations.

Completion of the course is defined as completion of all components of the course – including self-paced work, Instructor-led sessions and skills-building scenarios. Only teens who attend all Instructor-led sessions will receive a teen MHFA certificate, so scheduling make-up sessions for teens who are absent is strongly encouraged.

Budgeting Costs Associated with MHFA Programs

Successful grant applications include relevant information on how funds will be allocated and the impacts of holistic program implementation. The following sections include resources on budgeting costs of conducting MHFA programs, what training could be most valuable to a target population and the impact of MHFA.

Instructor Training

When designing a program that includes MHFA instruction, grantees should consider whether they will include costs associated with MHFA Instructor training.

Instructors are individuals certified to deliver a specific MHFA curriculum (e.g., Adult, Youth or teen). Instructor candidates become certified in a program after their application is accepted and they complete the registration process, attend and participate fully in the self-paced coursework and Instructor-led certification training and successfully complete an evaluated presentation.

Each Instructor course models MHFA course content and delivery, summarizes adult learning styles and teaching strategies, and provides in-depth instruction on implementing and managing the program with fidelity to the curriculum.

Course Learning Objectives

By the end of a MHFA Instructor Training, Instructors will be prepared to do the following:

- Implement the MHFA curriculum with fidelity.
- Create a safe and supportive learning environment to teach MHFA to diverse audiences.
- Teach all sections of the MHFA training in a virtual environment and in person.

Following certification, Instructors are permitted to teach the course and certify Mental Health First Aiders. Certification must be renewed annually and requires teaching three courses during the year.

Instructor training is available in-person or virtually.

First Aider Training

Mental Health First Aid courses are commonly referred to as First Aider courses or trainings. MHFA and Youth MHFA address adult learners and teen MHFA is specifically for teens in grades 10-12 (or ages 15-18). Adult and Youth MHFA trainings are available in English and Spanish and can be delivered via in-person or blended learning options that combine self-paced coursework with virtual or in-person Instructor-led training.

All MHFA trainings must be taught by a MHFA Instructor certified in that MHFA course.

Adult Mental Health First Aid

The Adult Mental Health First Aid course utilizes role-playing scenarios and simulations to demonstrate how to assess a mental health challenge or crisis, select interventions and provide initial help, and connect people to professional, peer and social support as well as self-help resources. The course focuses on recognizing the patterns of thoughts, feelings and behaviors that indicate there might be a mental health challenge rather than on specific mental health disorders. Participants learn an action plan to apply to non-crisis and crisis scenarios.

We suggest budgeting for Adult Mental Health First Aid trainings as follows:

Cost of materials: Participant manuals (printed copies) for the in-person classes are \$23.95 per person. Costs for Blended Mental Health First Aid courses are \$28.95 and include a digital manual, access to the 2-hour self-paced coursework through the MHFA learning management system, and access to resources including the self-care template.

Tuition for one Instructor candidate: \$2,200 (\$2,000 for National Council members).

On-site private Instructor training for up to 16 Instructor candidates: Starts at \$26,000 (\$24,000 for National Council members).

Youth Mental Health First Aid

Youth Mental Health First Aid is designed for adults who regularly interact with young people (age 12-18). The program teaches parents, family members, caregivers, teachers, school staff, peers, neighbors,

health and human services workers and other caring individuals how to help an adolescent who appears to be experiencing a mental health or substance use challenge or crisis. Youth MHFA introduces common mental health challenges for youth, reviews typical adolescent development, and teaches the 5-step Mental Health First Aid Action Plan (ALGEE) to help young people in crisis and non-crisis situations.

We suggest budgeting for Youth Mental Health First Aid trainings as follows:

Cost of materials: Participant manuals (printed copies) for the in-person classes are \$23.95 per person. Materials for virtual Mental Health First Aid courses are \$28.95 and include a digital manual, access to the 2-hour self-paced coursework through the MHFA learning management system, and access to resources, such as the self-care template.

Tuition for one Instructor candidate: \$2,200 (\$2,000 for National Council members).

On-site private Instructor training for up to 16 Instructor candidates: Starts at \$26,000 (\$24,000 for National Council members).

teen Mental Health First Aid

teen Mental Health First Aid teaches young people in grades 10-12 (or ages 15-18) how to identify, understand and respond to signs of mental illnesses and substance use disorders among their friends and peers. The training gives teens the skills to have supportive conversations with their friends and teaches them to get a responsible and trusted adult to take over as necessary. Schools are required to train an entire grade level, and youth-serving organizations must teach teen MHFA to an entire group of teens in the program. Schools and organizations offering the training are also required to train at least 10% of their adult staff in Youth Mental Health First Aid.

We suggest budgeting for teen Mental Health First Aid trainings as follows:

Cost of materials: Manuals cost \$12.95 each or \$3,300 for 125 teen manuals.

Tuition for one Instructor candidate (not affiliated with a school or youth-serving organization): \$1,700

Tuition plus 125 teen manuals for one Instructor candidate (affiliated with a school or youth-serving organization): \$3,300.

Instructor Candidate Tuition includes 3-day, live, online training plus 1-day optional training for Blended certification, which allows Instructors to teach the course in a virtual format.

Data Collection and Performance Measurement Guidance

Outcome and Performance Measurement

We recommend using the following resources to establish a baseline against which you'll measure impact:

- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) [National Survey on Drug Use and Health](#) (Data estimates prevalence of substance use and mental health challenges at the national, state and sub-state levels.)
- SAMHSA [2019-2020 National Survey on Drug Use and Health National Maps of Prevalence Estimates, by State](#) (Maps illustrate prevalence of use by age groups, beginning at age 12-17.)
- [Behavioral Health Barometer](#) (Based on the 2015 SAMHSA National Survey on Drug Use and Health.)

Writing Your Grant Proposal

The National Council for Mental Wellbeing is not responsible for writing grants, providing funding or specific guidance to organizations seeking grant funding. The National Council will share information about grant opportunities as available.

The following section includes contributions from organizations that have funded MHFA through grants, including information for outlining, developing and submitting grant proposals for Mental Health First Aid. This is not an exhaustive list of resources. We recommend you research additional grant information or application guidance for specific grants.

Budget Guidance and Spreadsheet

Budget spreadsheets are tools that can be used to customize required federal or state budgets but must be adapted per the guidance outlined in the Request for Applications (RFA) notice to which you're responding. Sample numbers are provided; you will need to customize them to reflect your proposed project costs and the allowable/required limits for the specific program. See the RFA notice for details.

The following is an example of a cost estimate of MHFA implementation. We suggest using it to budget costs.

Item	Estimated Cost
On-site Private Adult MHFA or Youth MHFA Instructor Training	\$26,000 for up to 16 Instructor Candidates (\$24,000 for National Council Members). *3-day training.
Off-site Adult MHFA or Youth MHFA Instructor Training	\$2,200 per Instructor Candidate (\$2,000 for National Council Members) plus travel and per diem costs. *3-day training.
Additional Instructor Certification (e.g., An MHFA Instructor gets additional certification to teach Youth MHFA Instructor.)	\$2,000 (\$1,800 for National Council Members).
Additional Instructor Training for Community-specific Courses	\$50 per Community-specific Course. Adult Instructor Training is a pre-requisite.
teen MHFA Instructor Training	\$1,700 tuition per Instructor Candidate, not affiliated with a school or youth-serving organization.
teen MHFA Instructor Training plus 125 teen MHFA Manuals	\$3,300 per Instructor Candidate, affiliated with a school or youth-serving organization.
Adult MHFA or Youth MHFA “First Aider” Training	Approximately \$25 to \$150 per person for training space, easel pads, and any other needed supplies.
Adult MHFA or Youth MHFA Manuals	Participant manuals (printed copies) for the in-person classes are \$23.95 per person. Materials for virtual Mental Health First Aid courses are \$28.95 and include a digital manual, access to the 2-hour self-paced coursework through the MHFA learning management system, and access to resources, such as the self-care template

Once you have developed your program costs, based on the RFA guidance, you can transfer the line items to the required format. For federal grants, you’ll find the format within the electronic grants.gov application.

More about writing a grant proposal is in Appendix A: Sample Grant Application.

The Need for Mental Wellbeing

Mental wellbeing can have different meanings for different people. For the National Council, it means thriving regardless of a mental health or substance use challenge. It represents resilience, strength and recovery. It's a phrase that promotes the importance of preventive care and the need to increase access to life-saving services.

Providing MHFA fosters mental wellbeing by connecting someone experiencing a mental health or substance use challenge or crisis to resources – often leveraging the person's existing connections and support systems. It trains learners to recognize warning signs and gives them the skills to understand and direct the person to appropriate support, whether that's self-help resources or a clinical referral. In MHFA courses, you learn how to respond to individuals where they are and provide the "glue" between existing relationships.

- The "approach" section of a grant proposal typically describes how your proposed approach addresses identified needs and gaps in the community.
- Describe the impact and prevalence of mental illness and substance use challenges in the community and/or population of focus.
- Include local and state statistics, as well as general national data.
- Outline the needs of those impacted by health disparities in prevalence, treatment access or delivery where applicable.

To do that, you need data. This section of the toolkit guides you to some data resources. We recommend using at least five key points.

National Data Resources

The Mental Health First Aid and Youth Mental Health First Aid participant manuals include helpful resources and additional statistics. The [U.S. Reach page on MHFA.org](#) maps the number of First Aiders and Instructors in each state.

The following websites are great resources for population-specific mental health and substance use statistics:

- [The National Council for Mental Wellbeing](#)
 - [2022 Access to Care Survey](#)
- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#)
- [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration \(SAMHSA\)](#)
- [National Institute of Mental Health \(NIMH\)](#)
- [Office of Minority Health](#)
- [National Alliance on Mental Illness \(NAMI\)](#)

- [National Federation of Families for Children’s Mental Health](#)

These data sources can assist you in demonstrating the need for MHFA. Most grant applications include a Statement of Need: an often short, but crucial, component that must demonstrate how MHFA will be an asset for your state or community. Concise summaries of important data that highlight or compare your local needs with the national picture help to build a compelling case and create a powerful first impression for the reviewer.

Guidance to Support Your Search for Local Data Sources

Paint a picture of state and local needs that highlights the importance of your proposal and makes it stand out in comparison to other submissions. Here are some ideas for finding state and local data:

- Demographic data by state, county and city
<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US/PST045219>
- National- and state- level data on mental health. View by state, census bureau and metro area
<https://www.samhsa.gov/data/all-reports>
- The Annie E. Casey Kids Count Data Center provides demographic, physical health and mental health data by groupings including state, county, city and congressional district
<https://datacenter.kidscount.org/locations>
- The Annie E. Casey Kids Count Data Center also has data available by topic area -- including demographics, economic wellbeing, education, health, family and community, safety and risky behaviors.
<https://datacenter.kidscount.org/topics>
- Community Commons allows you to create a community health needs assessment and/or a vulnerable population footprint.
<https://www.communitycommons.org/collections/Maps-and-Data>
- State Medicaid agencies/Child Health Insurance Program (CHIP) Annual Enrollment Reports
<https://www.medicaid.gov/chip/reports-evaluations/index.html>
- State adolescent and child health data
<https://www.childhealthdata.org/>

Other resources to consider include your state education agency, which may have data/demographic profiles for school-aged youth listed by Local Education Agency and community, and your state mental health authority – look for the state mental health plan that’s submitted to SAMHSA and any other regional and/or county data it collects. You can expect to find descriptions of service needs and system

gaps (e.g., prevalence rates or incidence data, service utilization) and extent of need in your state’s plans for SAMHSA.

About the National Council for Mental Wellbeing

Many grantors value supporting organizations with experiences, demographics and characteristics aligned with their philanthropic vision. This section includes information that could be valuable for grant writers who need information about the National Council as a 501 (c)(3). This public information is included in the guide as a resource that is condensed and accessible.

National Council for Mental Wellbeing Staff Leaders

The National Council’s Executive Staff includes the executives who are responsible for directing the strategic direction of the organization. President and CEO Charles Ingoglia has been with the organization since 2007 and in his current role since 2019. Executive staff members and brief biographies can be found on the “About” page of the [National Council website](#).

About the National Council for Mental Wellbeing Board of Directors

The Board of Directors represents the National Council’s membership and is committed to diversity, leadership and promoting excellence in mental health and substance use treatment. Board members are volunteers drawn from the staff and community boards of National Council member organizations. They are elected to the Board by National Council member organizations in each of 10 regions covering the U.S. The most up-to-date descriptions of regions, officers, at-large directors and regional directors can be found on [the Board of Directors page of the National Council website](#).

Appendix A: Sample Grant Application

Executive Summary

In this section, summarize what MHFA is, the need for it and your specific grant request based on what you propose to do.

For example:

For too long, mental health challenges have been treated as separate and tangential to our overall health and wellbeing. Because of this, accessing mental health services is not as simple as making an appointment with your family doctor. The stigma surrounding mental illness often prevents people from seeking treatment, and those that do want help are not sure where to turn.

[The National Council for Mental Wellbeing](#) brought [Mental Health First Aid](#) (MHFA) to the United States in 2008. MHFA is a course that teaches individuals how to identify, understand and respond to signs and symptoms of mental health and substance use challenges. The training gives people in our communities the skills needed to reach out and provide initial help and support to someone who may be developing a mental health or substance use challenge or experiencing a crisis. Since being introduced to the U.S. in 2008, more than 2.8 million people have been trained in MHFA by thousands of certified Instructors.

[*Organization Name*] requests a grant in the amount of [*amount*] to support MHFA in our community. MHFA is a high-impact program that generates tremendous community awareness and support, enabling thousands of individuals to be trained with a small investment.

Needs Assessment

Add about five local, regional or state statistics in addition to the statistics noted here.

In a 2022 survey by the National Council, more than 1 in 3 Americans (35%) reported less than good mental wellbeing. Data from the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention reveals that, on average, 130 people die by suicide every day and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that from 1999 to 2019 841,000 people died from drug overdose.

Mental illnesses are just as treatable as other health conditions, and yet the World Health Organization reports mental illness accounts for more disability in developed countries than any other group of illnesses, including cancer and heart disease. And according to the National Council survey, more than

two in five Americans who needed mental health care (43%) or substance use care (43%) in the past 12 months did not receive it, compared to only about one in five of those who needed primary care (21%) and did not receive it.

Having a mental illness or substance use challenge can have damaging and costly effects on a person's life, such as job loss, school dropouts and relationship issues. Beyond the impact on the individual experiencing the illness, the cost and consequences of untreated mental illness affects families and caregivers, employers and taxpayers. The economic impact of mental illness in the United States is substantial -- about \$300 billion annually. Much of this is due to lost productivity in the workforce, but also includes the use of emergency services, involvement of the justice system, and other social supports.

There are many reasons that people do not seek help for these concerns. Often, they may not know where -- or if -- they can get help. They may feel ashamed of their condition because of widespread stigma toward people with mental health and substance use challenges. Mental Health First Aid addresses these barriers directly -- offering a forum for understanding and discussing mental health and substance use challenges, providing resources for help, and encouraging people to be the first line of help that so many of their friends, colleagues and neighbors need. The effects of untreated mental illness and addiction need not be so widespread.

Program Overview

Include specific information on Mental Health First Aid's presence and presentation in your organization, as well as some information on the national program overall, as described below.

Mental Health First Aid teaches individuals the skills to help someone who appears to be experiencing a mental health or substance use challenge or crisis and provide initial help and support until professional help is obtained. Participants learn the 5-step Mental Health First Aid Action Plan (ALGEE), which summarizes the steps to take to help connect an individual in crisis with appropriate professional, peer, social and self-help care.

Mental Health First Aid is proven to improve mental health literacy and reduce the stigma surrounding mental illness. Peer-reviewed studies show that individuals trained in the program:

- Increase their knowledge of signs, symptoms and risk factors of mental health and substance use challenges.
- Can identify multiple types of professional and self-help resources for individuals with a mental health or substance use challenge.
- Show reduced stigma and increased empathy toward individuals with mental health challenges.

- Increase their confidence and likelihood to help an individual in distress.
- Use the skills and information they learn in MHFA to manage their own mental wellbeing.

More than 2.8 million people from all 50 states, the District of Columbia and United States territories have completed the training. The training has broad applications with a diverse range of audiences, including law enforcement, schools, primary care, veterans and members of the military and employers. The program is available in both English and Spanish. Youth Mental Health First Aid, which launched in Fall 2012, specifically addresses strategies for assisting youth ages 12-18. teen Mental Health First Aid, which launched in 2019, provides tools teens in grades 10-12 (ages 15-18) can use to help their friends, with an emphasis on getting the help of a trusted adult.

Since 2013, 26 states have made Mental Health First Aid a priority by enacting policies that allocate funding for trainings, require certification standards for public sector employees and establish statewide mental health training programs and requirements.

Organizational Capacity and Administration

In this section, present an overview of your organization and its history, including examples of its successes. Use your story to describe your organization.

For example:

Founded in 1969, the National Council for Mental Wellbeing is a membership organization that drives policy and social change on behalf of over 3,100 mental health and substance use treatment organizations and the more than 10 million children, adults and families they serve. We advocate for policies to ensure equitable access to high-quality services. We build the capacity of mental health and substance use treatment organizations. And we promote greater understanding of mental wellbeing as a core component of comprehensive health and health care. Through our Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) program, we have trained more than 2.8 million people in the U.S. to identify, understand and respond to signs and symptoms of mental health and substance use challenges.