



Mental Health
Commission
of Canada

Commission de
la santé mentale
du Canada

Mental Health
First Aid Canada 

Virtual Standard Mental Health First Aid External 2022-2023

Course Objectives:

Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) is the support provided to a person who may be experiencing a decline in their mental well-being or a mental health crisis.

Course participants will learn how to recognize signs that a person may be experiencing a decline in their mental well-being or a mental health crisis and encourage that person to:

- Talk about declines in their mental well-being
- Discuss professional and other supports that could help with recovery to improved mental well-being
- Reach out to these support
- Assist in a mental health or substance use crisis
- Use MHFA actions to maintain one's own mental well-being

Module 1: Self-Directed

- Introduction to the course
- Introduction to MHFA actions

Module 2: Virtual Classroom

- Practice applying MHFA actions to situations of declining mental well-being
- Guidelines for MHFA conversations with people from diverse cultures and members of the 2SLGBTQ+ community

Module 3 Virtual Classroom

- Discussion on using MHFA actions for self-care
- Practice using MHFA actions in crisis situations

Method of Instruction:

This 9.5-hour course opens with a self-directed module (Module 1) that focuses on the information and strategies that participants will discuss and practice throughout the virtual classroom modules (Modules 2 and 3). Course participants are required to complete Module 1 before participating in Module 2 and 3.

Upon registration, participants will receive access to the “MHFA Participant Reference Guide” that outlines MHFA actions for developing mental health and substance use problems, and mental health and substance use crises. Each participant must have a computer, a working camera, microphone and speakers or earphones, access to a good Internet connection, and an e-mail address.

Common Questions about Mental Health First Aid:

Who should take a Mental Health First Aid course?

Mental Health First Aid is intended for all Canadians. Since 2007, MHFA has been offered in every sector and region of the country, encompassing friends and families of individuals with a mental illness or addiction, workplaces, primary care, secondary and post-secondary educational institutions, government, construction, youth and community development programs, first responders, and many others.

What do Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) training participants learn?

The MHFA course does not teach people how to be therapists. It does teach people how to:

- Recognize the signs and symptoms of mental health problems
- Provide initial help
- Guide a person toward appropriate professional help

Just as CPR training helps individuals with no clinical training assist an individual following a heart attack, Mental Health First Aid training helps individuals assist someone experiencing a mental health crisis, such as suicidal behaviour.

In both situations, the goal is to help support an individual until appropriate professional help is identified. Individuals with Mental Health First Aid certification learn a single action plan that includes assessing risk, respectfully listening to and supporting the individual in crisis, and identifying appropriate professional help and other supports that can be applied in many situations.

Participants are also introduced to risk factors and warning signs for mental health problems. These build their understanding of the impact of illness on individuals and families and allow them to learn about evidence-supported treatment and self-help strategies.

What types of crisis interventions are covered?

Participants are taught how to provide effective crisis intervention in a variety of situations:

- Panic attack
- Suicidal behaviour
- Substance overdose
- Acute stress reaction
- Psychotic episode

An important component of Mental Health First Aid training is the opportunity to practice the intervention strategy rather than to just learn about it. This simple experience can make it easier to apply the knowledge in a real-life situation.

In addition to crisis interventions, participants learn how to have confident and effective conversations about mental health, regardless of whether someone is in crisis or not. This includes recognizing the signs and symptoms of declining mental well-being or noticing a change in someone's behaviour and starting a conversation with that person.

Is there a minimum age to take MHFA?

MHFA courses are meant for adults (18+) and focus on how adults can provide effective help with mental health issues. The MHFA Adults Who Interact with Youth course is unique because it is for people over the age of 16, depending on the maturity of the participant. It is up to the facilitator to make the final decision. It teaches specifically about the youth population aged 12 to 25.

The reason we recommend the course to adults is because the content can be beyond the level of someone younger than 16. This is based on life experience, exposure, and ability to engage in effective discussions.

I would like to register for a course. How do I do that?

Contact Lisa Sheppard for course dates and availability: lisa.sheppard@nl.ymca.ca

How many people can attend the virtual course?

A virtual Mental Health First Aid course can have a maximum of 15 participants and minimum of 8 participants.

Do I have to attend the full course to receive my certification?

Yes. Participants of both in-person and virtual courses must be present for the full length of the course in order to be certified. Participants of virtual courses must additionally complete a self-led module online prior to attending the live session(s) with a facilitator. All participants will receive a certificate of participation after taking the course.

Is there an MHFA refresher course?

Currently, we do not offer an MHFA refresher course. We recommend that people retake the MHFA course every two to three years to refresh their skills.