

Sub-Committee on Mental Health First Aid Training

The Training Group embarked on a comprehensive mission to muster, train, and deploy Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) instructors throughout the Episcopal Church. The first step in the process was to compile a list of existing certified MHFA instructors within the Episcopal Church. The group began by emailing diocesan offices, requesting the names of individuals holding MHFA instructor certification. Additionally, the group took advantage of the online community by posting in multiple Episcopal Facebook groups, seeking the names of certified MHFA instructors. These efforts garnered several names; however, the list is likely not comprehensive or inclusive of all certified instructors within the church.

The next phase of the group's work was soliciting individuals to train as MHFA instructors. The group actively sought referrals from diocesan offices to identify potential candidates, leveraging their connections within the Episcopal Church. Moreover, the group reached out to the broader Episcopal community by posting inquiries on various Facebook pages to gauge interest from individuals wishing to become MHFA instructors. The group's efforts also extended to collaborating with Episcopal Camps and Conference Centers, who proved instrumental in recruiting potential instructors by featuring information about MHFA instructor training in their newsletters. Furthermore, the Association for Episcopal Deacons played a significant role in the process by disseminating the request for trainer candidates across their diverse networks. Through these collective efforts, the group received an impressive response, amassing a list of 60 individuals who were potentially suitable candidates for MHFA instructor training.

After much discussion, the Task Force developed the following expectations for those receiving MHFA Instructor training.

- Attend every day of MHFA training and complete all assignments.
 - Attend in-person training for three days.
 - Complete all pre-work, evaluations, and post-course registration as an instructor.
- Fulfill all MHFA requirements for Instructor Certification:
 - Teach three one-day courses each year.
 - If dually certified (adults and youth), at least one course per year must be in each certification.
 - Fully utilize the process outlined by MHFA for enrolling participants, collecting fees, obtaining and distributing materials, and offering instruction.
 - Materials must be ordered from MHFA and paid for within 30 days of each training. Fees are directly reimbursable to the instructor directly from participants or through intermediary assistance from the diocese/network.

- Fulfill the following minimum expectations for the Episcopal Church
 - Commit to providing MHFA courses for at least five years.
 - Provide at least 3 MHFA courses per year specifically for the Episcopal Church with a minimum of 10 participants at each course.
 - Offer at least one class per year outside one's home diocese.
 - Courses for the Episcopal Church will be free for at least the first two years (or the first six courses, whichever comes first). After the initial two years (or six courses), the maximum compensation for courses provided to the Episcopal Church shall be no more than \$300 per course.
 - It is always appropriate to request travel expenses, including room and board. Keeping compensation to a minimum radically reduces individual registration fees.
 - When providing additional courses for communities outside the Episcopal Church, charging the recommended MHFA instructor fee is permitted.
 - The goal of the courses offered for the Episcopal Church is to provide education for as many Episcopal clergy and laity as possible. If the class has not reached capacity, ecumenical partners and individuals from the wider community are welcome to attend.
 - Always notify the diocesan, provincial, or network office of training being offered. Promote and recruit, in partnership with diocesan staff, congregations, and organizations.
 - Provide a list with the contact information of all attendees to the Episcopal Church Task Force on Individuals with Mental Illness and to the sponsoring diocese/network.
 - Immediately report any serious issues or problems that arise during training to the chair of the Episcopal Church Task Force on Individuals with Mental Illness and the pastorally responsible diocesan/network leader.

Once those interested in becoming MHFA instructors agreed to fulfill the expectations, the Task Force determined how many people were interested in being certified in Adult MHFA, Youth MHFA, or both. In this step, it was encouraging to see that most respondents expressed interest in being trained in both Adult and Youth MHFA.

The training group explored the possibility of having Adult MHFA Instructor training combined with the Youth MHFA Instructor training for a week-long event. MHFA was not able or willing to combine the two courses. After combining the two courses was not an option, the training group hoped to be able to provide the Adult MHFA Instructor training and the Youth MHFA Instructor training immediately following to enable those who wanted to be trained in both programs to do so in one week. Unfortunately, this was not an option because each training event lasts three days, and MHFA Instructors do not work on the weekends.

Due to funding limitations, the Task Force faced a difficult decision regarding the type of MHFA Instructor training they could offer. Although the original intention was to provide both Adult and Youth MHFA instructor training, the financial constraints prevented this from being feasible. Upon realizing this, the Task Force carefully evaluated the situation and determined that providing the Adult MHFA instructor training would be the most advantageous given the higher number of individuals working with adults in various capacities in the Episcopal Church. Moreover, the Task Force recognized that there are existing programs like Keep Watch by the Diocese of Atlanta, which focus specifically on youth mental health and would serve as a valuable resource until additional funding becomes available for further training. By prioritizing Adult MHFA instructor training, the Task Force aimed to maximize the reach and impact of their efforts while also considering alternative options for supporting the mental health needs of youth.

The Task Force originally planned to host the MHFA Instructor training at the Kanuga Conference, Camp, and Retreat Center; however, it was more cost-effective to host the training at the Maritime Conference Center due to previous contractual agreements with the Episcopal Church. The Task Force coordinated between the General Convention Office and Mental Health First Aid to host an Adult Mental Health First Aid Instructor Training October 23 – 25 at the Maritime Conference Center.

After communicating the training dates, 12 individuals expressed their interest in attending the instructor training. Unfortunately, one person encountered a family medical emergency and could not participate as planned. As a result, on October 25, 11 individuals from 8 different Provinces completed the certification process and became certified Mental Health First Aid Instructors. In addition, the chair of the Task Force is also a certified instructor, and the group has identified other trained instructors in the Episcopal Church who are willing to coordinate efforts. This has yielded an initial total of 15 trained instructors agreed to deploy their efforts for the church.

During the training, participants expressed keen interest in being certified as Teen MHFA instructors. This program directly 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 among their friends and peers. The Task Force hopes to be able to offer this valuable training in the next triennium.