



**MENTAL
HEALTH
FIRST AID®**

Why Youth Mental Health First Aid? Youth Mental Health First Aid teaches you how to identify, understand and respond to signs of mental illnesses and substance use disorders. This 8-hour training gives adults the skills they need to reach out, provide initial support to adolescents (ages 12-18) who may be developing a mental health or substance use problem, and help connect them to the appropriate care.

Below is an outline of the action plan that can be applied by an adult if a young person is in need of support. Consider reaching out to our school social worker if support is needed.

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

Assess for risk of suicide or harm

When helping a person going through a mental health crisis, it is important to look for signs of suicidal thoughts and behaviors, non-suicidal self-injury, or other harm. Some warning signs of suicide include:

- Threatening to hurt or kill oneself

- Seeking access to means to hurt or kill oneself
 - Talking or writing about death, dying, or suicide
 - Feeling hopeless
 - Acting recklessly or engaging in risky activities
 - Increased use of alcohol or drugs
 - Withdrawing from family, friends, or society
 - Appearing agitated or angry
 - Having a dramatic change in mood
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Listen nonjudgmentally

It may seem simple, but the ability to listen and have a meaningful conversation requires skill and patience. Listening is critical in helping an individual feel respected, accepted, and understood. Mental Health First Aid teaches you to use a set of verbal and nonverbal skills such as open body posture, comfortable eye contact, and other strategies to engage in appropriate conversation.

Give reassurance and Information

It is important to recognize that mental illnesses and addictions are real, treatable illnesses from which people can and do recover. When talking to someone you believe may be experiencing symptoms of a mental illness, approach the conversation with respect and dignity and don't blame the individual for his or her symptoms. Mental Health First Aid provides information and resources you can offer to someone to provide emotional support and practical help.

Encourage appropriate professional help

There are many professionals who can offer help when someone is in crisis or may be experiencing the signs and symptoms of a mental illness or addiction.

- Types of Professionals
 - Doctors (primary care physicians or psychiatrists)
 - Social workers, counselors, and other mental health professionals
 - Certified peer specialists
- Types of Professional Help
 - "Talk" therapies

- Medication
 - Other professional supports
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Encourage self-help and other support strategies

Individuals with mental illness can contribute to their own recovery and wellness through:

- Exercise
- Relaxation and meditation
- Participating in peer support groups
- Self-help books based on cognitive behavioral therapy
- Engaging with family, friends, faith, and other social networks

Mental Health First Aid Role Play (video): <https://youtu.be/wSAq7RwuhGs>

Please call either 911 or these resources if you or someone you know needs help:

