

Mental Health First Aid: A Statewide Network of Prevention




DESCRIPTION

Mental Health First Aid is a public education program introducing people to the unique risk factors and warning signs of mental health problems. It builds an understanding of the importance of early intervention, and teaches how to help when a person is experiencing mental health challenges.

Last year, the VCP network and their community partners focused on providing in-person and virtual Teen, Youth and Adult Mental Health First Aid trainings and re-building our statewide infrastructure due to a loss of instructors during the pandemic. The VCP infrastructure has been primarily supported through The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) with additional support from the Vermont Department of Mental Health and most recently from the Agency of Education. The AOE support has enabled the network to focus on the provision of trainings in schools and to expand our teen trainings. "MHFA 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" (Mental Health First Aid).

IMPACT

Mental Health First Aid trainings have a direct impact on the wellness of our communities. Virtual trainings have allowed agencies to increase collaboration enabling the network to meet the training needs of communities throughout Vermont. As the mental health needs of our communities increased, VCP has seen an increased demand for Mental Health First Aid trainings, particularly for teen and youth. Since 2016, over 6,100 Vermonters have been trained as Teen, Youth or Adult Mental Health First Aiders by VCP agencies and their community partners.



**Mental Health
FIRST AID**
from NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR
MENTAL WELLBEING

This past Monday fourteen students attended a *Teen Mental Health First Aid* class here on campus. This class was an all-day course where students learned about different types of mental health challenges, the impact social media has on teen's mental health, and how those challenges impact everyday life. The "first aid" component is designed to help teens know what to look for, and how to help and support their peers. They learned how to approach someone about their mental health, and the necessary steps that should be taken in case someone is experiencing an active mental health challenge or crisis. The course was very informative and gave students skills and tools that they can use in the event a situation were to arise here on campus or with friends at home.

With 1 in 5 teens experiencing a serious mental health disorder at some point in their life, this training is an important step in supporting our community. And, according to the instructors, Janet Monette, Clinical Director for Children and Family Services at Northeast Kingdom Human Services, and Sunny Naughton, a Mental Health First Aid and suicide prevention trainer, GMVS is leading the way among schools in Vermont in prioritizing this work. Not surprisingly, our students impressed the team with their engagement and thoughtful discussion.

Press release, National Council for Mental Wellbeing



Teen Mental Health First Aid Training,
Bellows Free Academy St. Albans