Becoming a Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) instructor is an exciting opportunity and we at Philadelphia MHFA are thrilled that you or your designee is considering this opportunity. Being a successful MHFA Instructor is highly rewarding. However, this role also requires a serious commitment of time, energy and creativity. Before applying to become a certified instructor, we want to make sure that you fully understand what will be necessary for certification as well as long term success as a MHFA instructor.

Are YOU ready?

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Application Process

- Prospective candidates may apply online at www.HealthyMindsPhilly.org beginning May 18, 2015 through June 5, 2015.
- ALL applicants must currently be a CERTIFIED Mental Health First Aider.
- Two (2) letters of professional reference are requested (please see reference letter guidelines on www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org)
- Interview/Selection Process will take place between June 8th and June 26th.
- Prospective Instructors will be notified by July 3, 2015.
Who should apply?
A Mental Health First Aid instructor is required to serve as a presenter, facilitator, and most importantly an ambassador of the MHFA USA program. There are several key components that make an instructor successful.

First and foremost, it is required that an instructor candidate:
- Has a current certification in either Adult or Youth Mental Health First Aid
- Has general knowledge of mental health and substance use issues (i.e. is a mental health/substance use professional, a family member of an individual in recovery, has worked with individuals experiencing mental health disorders or is currently in recovery from mental illness or substance use challenges)
- Has experience teaching groups of adults
- Understands best practices in adult learning
- Has experience facilitating groups
- Must exhibit positive attitudes towards individuals with mental illnesses and should have enthusiasm to reduce the stigma/discrimination associated with mental illness and addiction disorders, as this is an aim of MHFA and the curriculum is specifically designed to promote recovery

Letters of Reference: Who to ask? What to give them?
All MHFA Instructor candidates are required to submit two (2) letters of professional reference. Letters may come from colleagues, supervisors, or other professional acquaintances who can attest to your facilitation skills, knowledge of behavioral health challenges and attitude towards individuals on their recovery/resilience journey. Please click the link for more examples of what the reference letter should entail. 


Once I become a certified instructor...
Your MHFA Instructor certification belongs to YOU! Not your organization or affiliation. Individuals selected for this course agree to facilitate at least 3 FREE trainings to maintain their national certification, as well as, 3 additional trainings for our Philadelphia communities.

All certified instructors are welcomed into the MHFA Instructor community and will receive their login and password to the National Council for Behavioral Health’s website: www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org, where all of your training needs are managed.

Each certified instructor will be assigned a Public Health Program Analyst (PA). Your PA will be responsible for scheduling trainings, gathering materials and entering data and evaluations (if you have granted Coordinator Level Access to the Philly MHFA unit).

All trainings must have a minimum of 15 participants registered. Philly MHFA does not recommend class sizes larger than 30 participants.

Both individual instructors and organizations may request group trainings through our Healthy Minds Philly website: http://healthymindsphilly.org/mhfa

Am I compensated for my time?
MHFA in Philadelphia is a VOLUNTEER program. We seek to train 20,000 citizens within the next year. In order to reach our goal, DBHIDS has agreed to sponsor the course tuition, $2,000.00, for each selected instructor candidate. In return, each candidate must be willing and able to give of their time in order to train our Philadelphia communities.

Candidates who are applying as an agent of their organization are asked to volunteer some of their time to train community agencies.

Candidates applying as sole individuals may be compensated with a small stipend after their 4th completed training.

Every individual in the City of Philadelphia is entitled to receive FREE Mental Health First Aid training.
Don’t have a training partner?... No Problem!
Philly MHFA believes that you are stronger in tandem. Your assigned PA will always try to pair you with another instructor for all trainings. Once a connection is made, it is the responsibility of both facilitators to find time to prep with each other before a given training.

Who is eligible for the Expedited course?
Current MHFA instructors, in good standing, who wish to become instructors in another curriculum, may apply for the Expedited course. The expedited curriculum is a 2.5-day course that takes place during the 5-day course.

- Expedited Youth: August 3rd-5th
- Expedited Adult: August 17th-21st

Fully certified ADULT instructors may take the supplemental webinars to become certified in Public Safety, Veterans, Higher Education, Spanish or Older Adult if they meet the specified requirements. Anyone who takes a supplemental webinar will be required to pass an exam before receiving the additional designations.

What happens if I don’t pass the course?
It is not guaranteed that all participants who attend the instructor training will achieve certification. Only participants present for the entire training will be considered for certification. In addition to the presentation, each participant must complete and pass a written exam prior to the end of the training. There are three (3) possible outcomes from the instructor training: 1) Full certification 2) Provisional certification or 3) No certification. Attendance is not a guarantee of certification.

Individuals are notified of their status immediately.

Full Certification
In order to become a fully certified instructor, each candidate must receive a score of 36 or higher on their presentation evaluation, and must complete and pass a written exam prior to the end of the training.

Provisional Certification
When a National Trainer discerns potential in an instructor candidate, but

ALGEE-tales

“One Vet client who was clearly agitated at not getting the services he believed he was in need of and thought his needs were not being addressed properly had taken his frustrations out on me and was verbally abusive in explaining what he wanted. I listened to what he had to say and then addressed his issues one at time giving him resource information and explaining to him what steps he could take to make any complaints/suggestions he had to better assist him getting help going forward. I managed to calm him down to a point where he was accepting of his circumstance with his case and was willing to try talking to staff that could and would continue to help him with his requests.”

--Patricia Croons
Veterans Mental Health First Aider
also recognizes that an individual will need additional support to deliver the curriculum effectively, a Provisional Instructor status can be issued. National Trainers make this determination by considering several factors including the candidate’s exam score, course attendance and presentation score. Candidates who score between 32 and 35 on their presentation could be considered. Other factors include the candidate’s desire to improve and his or her willingness to adhere to the conditions of a Provisional Instructor. The Provisional Instructor is awarded a certificate along with all fully certified instructors. In addition, the Provisional Instructor will be listed and receive credit for the classes that he or she teaches with a fully certified instructor. However, there are five (5) important restrictions that apply to this status.

A Provisional Instructor:
1. Must co-teach with a fully certified instructor at all times;
2. Is not allowed to order any materials independently (ordering materials needs to be done by their co-instructor);
3. Cannot register a course in the data system;
4. Cannot enter evaluation data (evaluating data entry needs to be done by their co-instructor); and
5. May not enroll in an expedited course for additional Instructor certifications (i.e. if an Instructor has a provisional status as an Adult MHFA Instructor they may not enroll to become a Youth MHFA Instructor as a part of an expedited training).

No Certification
An instructor candidate will not be certified as an instructor in the event that s/he receives a score less than 32 on the presentation portion and/or does not pass the instructor exam.

Please note that all certification determinations are made by an elite group of Mental Health First Aid National Trainers, not by the DBHIDS/MHFA unit.

Am I required to provide FBI and/or Child Abuse clearances?
At this time, we are not requiring clearances. However, DBHIDS/MHFA reserves the right to request these clearances at any point in the future.

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“This training was very informative. I think it’s really important to have this training in my everyday life because mental illness is so prevalent.”

- Anonymous Aider Evaluation

What does ALGEE stand for?

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