



Mental Health **FIRST AID**

from NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR
MENTAL WELLBEING

Instructor Policy Handbook **2021**

Updated: September 13, 2021

Introduction from our Vice President and General Manager

Dear Instructor,

Thank you for being a Mental Health First Aid Instructor. Our Instructors are the heart of this vital program. Your commitment will help countless people gain the knowledge and tools to identify, understand and respond to those experiencing a mental health or substance use issue. Please review the policies in this handbook thoroughly to ensure your compliance with the program.

The National Council for Mental Wellbeing values your unique talents and abilities! Before you teach your first session, I encourage you to reflect on your own passion for mental wellbeing. As an Instructor, you play such an important role in the lives of those experiencing mental health and substance use challenges, largely because you teach others how to offer help. As you lean into that role, I believe you will become a more enthusiastic, effective Instructor.

Thank you for your dedication to mental wellbeing and substance use awareness. I wish you the best of luck on your journey as a Mental Health First Aid Instructor!

Sincerely,



Deanna Roepke
Vice President & General Manager
Mental Health First Aid USA
National Council for Mental Wellbeing

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION FROM OUR VICE PRESIDENT AND GENERAL MANAGER	1
APPENDIX	4
I. Using the Instructor Policy Handbook	4
<i>A. Purpose</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>B. Adhering to Policies.....</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>C. Communicating Policy Updates</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>D. Enforcement.....</i>	<i>4</i>
II. Instructor Certification Status	4
<i>A. Certified.....</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>B. Provisionally Certified.....</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>C. Quality Evaluation Provisional</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>D. De-certified.....</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>E. Suspended</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>F. Revoked.....</i>	<i>5</i>
III. Instructor Annual Certification Requirements	5
<i>A. Annual Single Certification Requirement</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>B. Annual Dual Certification Requirement</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>C. Provisional Certification Requirement</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>D. Instructor Responsibility for Maintaining Certification.....</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>E. Extensions</i>	<i>6</i>
IV. Instructor Quality Evaluation Process	6
V. Dual Certification and Adult MHFA Supplement Course Considerations	7
VI. Instructor Profile	8
VII. Delivering Mental Health First Aid USA Courses.....	8
<i>A. Instructor Professionalism and Conduct</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>B. Course Instruction</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>C. Course Size and Format.....</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>D. Addition/Deletion of Course Information.....</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>E. Use of Instructor Materials</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>F. Registering Courses.....</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>G. Scheduling Courses.....</i>	<i>9</i>
VIII. When Marketing Courses.....	10
IX. Pricing Courses	11

X. Course Cancellation and Refunds	11
XI. Unenrolling Learners From a Blended Course	11
XII. Learner Age	11
XIII. Instructor Age	11
XIV. Copyright for Materials.....	12
XV. Distribution of Course Materials	12
XVI. Modification of Course Materials.....	12
<i>A. Mental Health First Aid Course PowerPoint Slide Deck.....</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>B. Community Resource List.....</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>C. Course Scenarios</i>	<i>13</i>
XVII. Use of Course Materials Outside of Mental Health First Aid Courses	13
XVIII. Language Considerations	13
<i>A. Content Interpretation and Translation.....</i>	<i>13</i>
XIX. Accessibility	13
<i>A. Accessibility of Facility.....</i>	<i>13</i>
<i>B. Accessibility of Curriculum</i>	<i>14</i>
<i>C. Videotaping and Photography.....</i>	<i>14</i>
<i>D. Use of Video Platform When Teaching Virtual Instructor-led training</i>	<i>14</i>
XX. Liability and Mental Health First Aid USA Courses	14
<i>A. Legal Liability for Instructors.....</i>	<i>14</i>
<i>B. Legal Liability for First Aiders</i>	<i>14</i>
MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID – TENETS OF FIDELITY.....	15
Content	15
Audience	15
Presentation	15
Schedule.....	15
Delivery	16
Class Size	16
Safety	16
Required Safety Protocols.....	17
Spirit.....	17

Appendix

I. Using the Instructor Policy Handbook

A. Purpose

This handbook provides all Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) USA Instructors the most up-to-date Instructor policies and procedures. Every Instructor must review this document in its entirety before delivering courses.

B. Adhering to Policies

Upon certification in any MHFA course delivery option, Instructors must agree to adhere to all policies and procedures outlined in this Instructor Policy Handbook.

C. Communicating Policy Updates

Mental Health First Aid reserves the right to update or add policies to this handbook at any time. Instructors will be notified of changes on MHFA Connect, the one-stop shop for managing classes, accessing resources and connecting with National Trainers, Instructors, Coordinators and First Aiders.

D. Enforcement

Mental Health First Aid USA takes Instructor policies seriously and reserves the right to investigate policy violations and false representations. Failure to adhere to any policy will be handled on a case-by-case basis. Gross misconduct and policy violations could result in suspension or revocation of Instructor certification.

II. Instructor Certification Status

A. Certified

“Certified” status indicates an Instructor may deliver Mental Health First Aid courses without a co-Instructor.

B. Provisionally Certified

Instructors Candidates who receive “Provisionally Certified” status scored between 33 and 38 points on the Instructor Teach-back Rubric during their Instructor Training, and must complete additional requirements to attain full Certification. (See Item C under Instructor Annual Certification Requirements.) They also must teach with a fully Certified co-Instructor until they have completed

all provisional requirements and become fully certified. Instructors with Provisionally Certified status may teach with this status for up to one year.

Instructor Candidates who receive a provisional score during their teach-back will be notified of their provisional status by their National Trainer. The National Trainer will also provide the Instructor with additional information and resources for becoming a fully certified Instructor.

C. Quality Evaluation Provisional

Instructors with “Quality Evaluation Provisional” status have received post-evaluation scores below 4.0 on a scale of 1 to 5. Mental Health First Aid USA will work with the individual Instructor to develop a customized improvement process to return them to Certified status. Mental Health First Aid USA staff will provide additional information and resources to any Instructor placed on Quality Evaluation Provisional status.

D. De-certified

An Instructor who does not meet annual certification requirements will be de-certified and prohibited from teaching any Mental Health First Aid courses in any capacity. A de-certified Instructor can pursue reinstatement by successfully completing a new 3-day Instructor certification course. The de-certified Instructor must apply, be accepted and pay any related fees. They will be subject to the same standards as a new Instructor.

E. Suspended

Mental Health First Aid will suspend an Instructor, when necessary, to investigate misconduct or a policy violation. During a suspension, the Instructor is prohibited from teaching any Mental Health First Aid courses. Mental Health First Aid will issue a determination of status within 30 days of the suspension.

F. Revoked

When certification is revoked, the Instructor loses all Mental Health First Aid certifications. They are no longer permitted to teach Mental Health First Aid courses and must cease claiming any affiliation with Mental Health First Aid as an Instructor. Any Instructor whose certification is revoked is ineligible for reinstatement.

III. Instructor Annual Certification Requirements

A. Annual Single Certification Requirement

Instructors must teach a minimum of three courses per anniversary year.

Note: Teaching an Adult Mental Health First Aid Supplement course fulfills a course teaching requirement.

B. Annual Dual Certification Requirement

Instructors must teach a minimum of three courses per anniversary year with at least one course from each curriculum (Adult and Youth).

C. Provisional Certification Requirement

Instructors with provisional status must co-teach three courses per anniversary year, each with a fully certified Instructor.

To become fully certified, provisional Instructors must complete the following requirements:

1. Watch the Instructional Video Series for the appropriate curriculum on MHFA Connect.
2. Co-teach a minimum of one course.
3. Pass the provisional Instructor final exam.

Instructors with provisional status may co-teach with this status for up to one year while they complete the steps to become fully certified. A de-certified Instructor can pursue reinstatement by successfully completing a new 3-day Instructor certification course. The de-certified Instructor must apply, be accepted and pay any related fees. They will be subject to the same standards as a new Instructor.

D. Instructor Responsibility for Maintaining Certification

The Mental Health First Aid Instructor certification is owned by the individual Instructor and is not property of any organization that might have sponsored the Instructor's certification. The Instructor is independently responsible for meeting all certification requirements.

E. Extensions

Instructors who have not successfully completed their recertification requirement by their anniversary date may request a three-month extension, a request that may or may not be granted. To be considered, requests must be submitted at least 30 days prior to the anniversary date using the Extension Request Form found on MHFA Connect. Upon successful completion of the recertification requirements, the Instructor's anniversary is updated to the date the requirements were met. If an Instructor does not meet the extension requirements, they will be de-certified and must complete the reinstatement process to teach Mental Health First Aid. Mental Health First Aid USA reserves the right to deny extension requests in subsequent years.

IV. Instructor Quality Evaluation Process

To help Instructors reach their full potential and teach the best course possible, Mental Health First Aid-USA will regularly review the post-evaluation scores of courses. After reviewing low post-evaluation scores (below 4.0), Mental Health First Aid may place an Instructor on "Quality Evaluation Provisional" status.

Mental Health First Aid USA will work with an individual Instructor to develop a customized improvement process. The additional resources that may be part of the process include, but are not limited, to a combination of any of the following:

- Participating in a coaching call with a Mental Health First Aid staff member.
- Participating in a group coaching call.
- Co-facilitating a training with a seasoned Instructor.
- Watching Instructional Training Videos on MHFA Connect.
- Completing a reflection activity related to an area of improvement.

V. Dual Certification and Adult MHFA Supplement Course Considerations

Instructors may carry certifications in more than one MHFA curriculum. Specific assumptions apply as stated below:

- **For Dual Adult/Youth Certification**
 - Instructors are required to teach one course in first curriculum before becoming certified in the second.
- **To Become Certified to Teach in Another Language**
 - MHFA courses can be taught in English or Spanish. Instructors may obtain a dual certification for language, but should teach in their base language first. For example, if an Instructor is initially certified to teach in English, they should teach a course before applying for certification in Spanish.
- **For Adult MHFA Supplement Courses**
 - MHFA recommends teaching two Adult MHFA courses before applying to teach an Adult MHFA Supplement course.

Adult MHFA Supplement courses are packages of resources that reframe the standard 8-hour In-person course for Adult Mental Health First Aid Instructors to be more relevant to a specific audience.

Instructors must have knowledge and experience with the target audience as specified in each supplement. We also recommend Instructors teach two courses in their foundation curriculum (e.g., Adult MHFA) prior to obtaining any supplement course certifications. Supplements only apply to the standard Adult MHFA curriculum and are not to be incorporated with the Youth MHFA curriculum. Available supplements include:

- Higher Education
- Fire and EMS

- Law Enforcement, Corrections and Public Safety
- Veterans, Servicemembers and their Families
- Older Adults

VI. Instructor Profile

Instructors are required to actively maintain their Instructor profiles. Mental Health First Aid communicates important programmatic information via email, so it is critical that Instructors keep their profiles up to date. Updates can easily be made through MHFA Connect.

VII. Delivering Mental Health First Aid USA Courses

A. *Instructor Professionalism and Conduct*

Instructors are ambassadors of the Mental Health First Aid program and must always maintain professional conduct. Instructor professionalism and conduct is defined as:

- Provide a safe and nonjudgmental learning environment for learners.
- Openly respect alternate viewpoints.
- Lead with empathy and compassion.

B. *Course Instruction*

MHFA courses may be facilitated by one or two certified Instructors. No more than two Instructors are permitted to teach any MHFA course. Non-certified Instructors may not teach the course.

C. *Course Size and Format*

Maximum course size for all course delivery options is 30 learners. Minimum course size is five learners. Any course with fewer than four learners can take place, but will not be counted towards an Instructor's annual certification requirement. Instructors should present to a group size they are comfortable managing and that includes enough learners to foster group discussion.

D. *Addition/Deletion of Course Information*

Mental Health First Aid is a standardized, evidence-based course. Instructors are required to teach the course with fidelity. MHFA USA uses the term "fidelity" to describe the measures needed to ensure core elements that make the MHFA program effective are kept intact. You may not insert or change course content material, including adding new information, data, presentation slides or any other alterations. You may not delete or change course content and materials. You should allow up to 40 hours post-certification to become familiar with the content of the entire course.

E. Use of Instructor Materials

Instructors are required to use the most current course materials and may not use or distribute out-of-date materials. When materials are revised, Instructors will have ample time to review and acquire the updated materials. Regardless of certification status, Instructors may not reproduce any documents, handbooks, books, information or other materials provided in full or in part without express written permission from Mental Health First Aid USA. This extends to any materials provided during Instructor training courses.

The only course document that may be printed without express written permission is the Adult or Youth Participant Processing Guide. Only the learner assigned this document may print this document.

F. Registering Courses

Instructors are required to register all courses they deliver in Mental Health First Aid Connect, regardless of whether it is open to the public. An Instructor must register the class to get credit toward their annual certification requirement.

MHFA USA encourages Instructors to register their courses as soon as they are scheduled, preferably at least two weeks prior to the delivery date to allow ample time for learners to complete any preparation or required pre-work (if applicable). Entering courses within five days of the course may diminish the learner's experience. Late access to any preparation or pre-work (if applicable for the course delivery type) could limit the Instructor's ability to establish and maintain fidelity to the content.

Ensure that course registration contains accurate, specific, and complete information. For example, include the specific start and end times as well as the exact location. If you are delivering a specific Adult MHFA Supplement course, make sure it is accurately listed. **Only courses registered in MHFA Connect will count toward annual certification requirements.**

Instructors must add courses to MHFA Connect prior to the course taking place and ensure learners complete all required course assignments. Only learners who are enrolled in the course prior to when the course takes place and completes all required course assignments will be eligible for a certificate. Instructors may not mark attendees complete in any course or course module they have not completed in full.

G. Scheduling Courses

- In-Person Courses
 - Instructors scheduling a course must allow for the designated number of hours for instruction, not including breaks and lunch. Courses scheduled over multiple days must not occur more than two weeks apart.
 - Options for in-person course scheduling include:
 - Adult In-Person Courses

- One 8-hour day
- Two 4-hour days
- Four 2-hour days
- Youth In-Person Courses
 - One 6.5-hour day
- Blended Courses
 - Instructors scheduling a course must allow the designated number of hours for the Instructor-led training portion of their blended course. Please note that the instructional time outlined below does not include breaks or lunch.
 - The following time frames are designated for the Instructor-led training portion of a blended course:
 - Adult Blended Course with In-Person Instructor-led training – 2-hour pre-work / 5.5 hours course content
 - Adult Blended Course with Virtual Instructor-led training – 2-hour pre-work / 5.5 hours course content
 - Youth Blended Course with In-Person Instructor-led training – 2-hour pre-work / 4.5 hours course content
 - Youth Blended Course with Virtual Instructor-led training – 2-hour pre-work / 4.5 hours course content
 - Blended courses with in-person or virtual Instructor-led training can be scheduled for a maximum of two separate sessions.
 - If an Instructor-led session needs to be rescheduled, change the date and time of the Instructor-led session module within the course in MHFA Connect. If the course is cancelled without editing the Instructor-led session module, learners will lose their progress on any course assignments and will be required to recomplete course assignments.

VIII. When Marketing Courses

A variety of marketing resources are available through MHFA Connect, including a press release template, flyer template, and a PowerPoint presentation. Anyone developing marketing materials is required to use the official Mental Health First Aid USA logo. Use of the logo must adhere to guidance provided in the Mental Health First Aid USA Style Guide. Short sections of a course, up to three minutes in length, may be videotaped for marketing or journalistic purposes, with permission of both the instructor and learners.

IX. Pricing Courses

Instructors are responsible for setting and collecting their own course fees and should make every effort to ensure prices are set to promote accessibility. While actual prices may vary, Mental Health First Aid requires that the Instructor communicates that the course has a value of \$170 per learner. When an Instructor offers a discounted or no-cost course, promotional materials must acknowledge that learner fees are being underwritten. An example of such language is: “This course is valued at \$170. Thanks to a generous donation from Organization ABC, learners may attend at no charge.”

X. Course Cancellation and Refunds

Instructors may set their own cancellation and refund policies for courses they conduct. Mental Health First Aid USA encourages Instructors to include cancellation and refund policies in course promotional materials. Cancellation information should include the mechanism for contact (phone, email or platform, or text). If the Instructor institutes a refund policy with learners, they should indicate the conditions under which refunds are issued, the amount of a refund and the length of time it will take to receive a refund. If there is no cancellation or refund policy, it should be clearly stated.

Mental Health First Aid USA does not process refunds for any unused materials. For courses held virtually, Instructors will be invoiced based on the in-person or Instructor-led training roster, which must be submitted within 48 hours of course completion. If the roster is not submitted within 48 hours of course completion, the Instructor will be invoiced for all registered participants listed on the course roster and will need to request any necessary refunds via the MHFA Request Assistance Form.

XI. Unenrolling Learners From a Blended Course

Learners taking Blended courses are assigned a 2-hour self-paced course as part of their required course assignments. If a learner is unenrolled from a course, any amount of coursework they have completed up to that point will be lost. A learner will have to recomplete the pre-work if enrolled in a future course. Please share this information with your learners as part of their course experience.

XII. Learner Age

Mental Health First Aid is designed for audiences who are at least 18 years of age. Learners must be 18 years of age or above to participate in a Youth Adult Mental Health First Aid or Adult Mental Health First Aid course.

XIII. Instructor Age

Applicants must be 18 years of age to be considered for entry into an Instructor Training.

XIV. Copyright for Materials

All Mental Health First Aid course material is the copyright of Mental Health First Aid International and cannot be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the proper permission of the original copyright holder. “Course documents” also incorporates materials from the National Council for Mental Wellbeing. The added content is owned and copyrighted by the National Council for Mental Wellbeing and cannot be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, transmitted, or distributed in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the proper permission from the National Council for Mental Wellbeing. No part of any related publications may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means — electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise — without prior permission.

XV. Distribution of Course Materials

Instructors are required to distribute the following to each learner:

- Participant Manual
- Participant Processing Guide (Blended courses only)
- Self-care Template (optional)
- Community Resource List
 - Instructors must create and provide an appropriate Community Resource List for each learner in a course.

The distribution of all formats of the Mental Health First Aid Course PowerPoint Slide Deck, Teaching Notes and other instructional materials is strictly prohibited.

XVI. Modification of Course Materials

A. Mental Health First Aid Course PowerPoint Slide Deck

Instructors are prohibited from modifying the Mental Health First Aid Course PowerPoint Slide Deck. However, an Instructor *may* add one slide at the front of the slide deck and/or one slide at the end of the slide deck. For example, adding a title page or contact page is permissible.

B. Community Resource List

Instructors are required to ensure that their Community Resource List is updated as needed with local mental wellbeing resources.

C. Course Scenarios

Instructors may make slight modifications to scenarios to better relate to the audience. Slight modifications include:

- Altering the name of the individual in the scenario.
- Altering the role or job of the individual in the scenario.
- Altering the environment or setting of scenarios.

XVII. Use of Course Materials Outside of Mental Health First Aid Courses

Instructors are not permitted to use Mental Health First Aid course materials for any purpose other than delivering the Mental Health First Aid course within the United States, its districts, territories, embassies and military installations. You are permitted to teach in any state, district, or territory in the United States. Only those in the United States, districts, and territories can take the Mental Health First Aid USA course.

XVIII. Language Considerations

A. Content Interpretation and Translation

1. Currently, Mental Health First Aid courses may be offered only in English and Spanish. An Instructor may teach the course in Spanish if they are fluent in Spanish and certified in the Spanish Supplement course.
2. At this time, Instructors may not translate the course into any other language. If an Instructor needs to translate a few key words to a learner to enhance their understanding, this is encouraged; however, they are not permitted to translate any of the course information or materials. Maintaining Mental Health First Aid's curriculum fidelity and quality is of the utmost importance and this cannot be guaranteed without a formal process of translation and localization.

XIX. Accessibility

A. Accessibility of Facility

Mental Health First Aid USA strives to make this training accessible to all. When choosing a location to hold courses, an Instructor should make every effort to find accessible spaces where public transportation is readily available. When conducting a virtual Instructor-led training, consider reviewing virtual engagement best practices. Please review the following webpage for more information about public space accessibility: https://www.ada.gov/ada_title_III.htm

B. Accessibility of Curriculum

Mental Health First Aid is dedicated to making the curriculum accessible to all. Mental Health First Aid has accessible versions of various portions of the curricula for both the Adult and Youth courses.

C. Videotaping and Photography

Instructors are not permitted to allow videotaping of the course, photographing, screen recording or screen shots of the presentation slide deck. Short sections (up to three minutes) of a course may be videotaped for marketing or journalistic purposes, with permission of both the Instructor and learners. If a short section of the course is taped for any reason, Mental Health First Aid USA suggests Instructors obtain signatures from all learners indicating they have agreed to be filmed.

D. Use of Video Platform When Teaching Virtual Instructor-led training

An Instructor should not post online meeting details in any public forum, as this could lead to unwanted guests joining a virtual Instructor-led training. Online meeting details originate in MHFA Connect.

XX. Liability and Mental Health First Aid USA Courses

A. Legal Liability for Instructors

At this time, Mental Health First Aid USA does not require Instructors to carry any liability insurance. Any questions about liability coverage for Instructors should be directed to an Instructor's legal advisor or insurance carrier.

B. Legal Liability for First Aiders

If First Aiders have questions about liability issues surrounding practicing Mental Health First Aid USA, the following information may be communicated: First Aiders who have completed the program are by no means required to act on their knowledge – but have simply been provided with information on how they may be able to do so. Application of course information does not supersede organization policies regarding mandatory reporting.

Good Samaritan laws cover help provided by First Aiders out in the community. However, the details and extent of these laws vary by state.

Mental Health First Aid – Tenets of Fidelity

Mental Health First Aid USA uses the term “fidelity” to describe the measures needed to ensure core elements of the Mental Health First Aid program are kept intact. Mental Health First Aid USA expects all Instructors and Coordinators to honor these tenets, regardless of delivery method.

Mental Health First Aid USA expects those who provide the program in the United States and its Territories to honor the elements outlined here.

Content

The Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) curriculum must be taught in its entirety. Instructors are expected to present all required slides, exercises and program videos in the order they appear in the Teaching Notes. Each First Aider must also receive a manual, either as a physical copy (In-person courses) or electronically through MHFA Connect, the MHFA learning management system (Blended courses). Additional content for local purposes, such as lists of area resources, is allowed but should be limited to helpful resources. Any additional content must be added to the end of the full curriculum presentation. All content is copyrighted, and the PowerPoint slides may not be printed or shared electronically with attendees.

Each curriculum’s Teaching Notes offer a variety of suggestions for discussion topics, exercises and other activities designed to keep participants attentive and actively engaged in the course. The curricula are designed to keep the pace of the course changes frequently, requiring participants to stay involved in the content. Instructors should both focus on keeping the content and discussions moving forward and on creating an environment for active engagement.

Audience

The Mental Health First Aid USA curriculum is specifically designed for adult learners 18 years of age and older only. The course cannot be delivered to anyone under the age of 18. The course may only be delivered within the U.S. and its Territories, including American Samoa, Guam, Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. The course may not be delivered to learners outside of the U.S.

Presentation

The course is to be facilitated by one or two certified Instructors. Non-certified Instructors may not teach the course.

Schedule

In-person and Blended MHFA courses may be scheduled as described in in the Instructor Policy Handbook, Section VII G.

Delivery

MHFA courses may be delivered in the In-person format or a Blended format. Blended courses include self-paced and Instructor-led content. The Instructor-led training may be conducted in person or virtually via videoconference. Learners must complete the self-paced components prior to participating in the Instructor-led training.

Certified Instructors must complete the virtual learning designation prior to teaching the course.

Class Size

When Instructor-led training is in person: Mental Health First Aid USA has designed In-person courses and Blended courses with in-person Instructor-led training to be facilitated by one or two certified Instructors. Non-certified Instructors may not teach the course. Instructors should present to a group size they are comfortable managing and that includes enough participants to foster group discussion. The minimum number of participants in a course is five and the maximum number of participants in a course is 30.

When Instructor-led training is virtual: Mental Health First Aid USA has designed Blended courses with virtual Instructor-led training for facilitation by two certified Instructors to an audience of up to 30 participants. One certified Instructor teaching a course by themselves can teach courses of up to 15 participants. Non-certified Instructors and Instructors without the Blended courses with virtual Instructor-led training designation may not teach the course. Instructors should present to a group size they are comfortable managing online and that includes enough participants to foster group discussion. The minimum number of participants in a course is five, and the maximum number of participants in a course is 30. Safety precautions, including those for virtual Instructor-led training with up to 30 learners, are described in “Safety.”

Safety

Safety is paramount while teaching MHFA, and mental Health and substance use are often be viewed as somber, serious or “heavy” topics. The program itself is designed to give appropriate weight to the severity of certain mental health and substance use challenges while emphasizing hope for recovery and presenting the material in a relaxed and comfortable environment.

When teaching in a virtual setting, Instructors are required to maintain a “Virtual Hallway” breakout room for all classes so participants can “step out” of the training. When co-teaching, the second Instructor will monitor the virtual hallway and can periodically private chat participants to see how they are feeling.

Instructing a large group online increases risks related to participant safety and crisis management, including greater difficulty monitoring the engagement and mental wellbeing of all learners. Therefore, Mental Health First Aid USA requires that one of the following safety precautions is in place:

- Two Instructors.
- One Instructor and a non-participating mental health clinician or organization staff member

- to monitor the chat and Virtual Hallway.
- One Instructor and a non-participating certified Mental Health First Aider to monitor the chat and Virtual Hallway.

However, If an Instructor is planning to teach between 20 and 30 participants, they must have a second Instructor and a Virtual Hallway monitor (a third Instructor, a non-participating mental health clinician or a non-participating certified Mental Health First Aider). The Virtual Hallway monitor does not need to participate in the training, but must be “on-call” in the event that a participant needs to use the Virtual Hallway. If a participant uses the Virtual Hallway, one of the Instructors must alert the monitor, who can sign into the virtual meeting platform and meet the participant in the Virtual Hallway.

Required Safety Protocols

All Instructors are required to implement the following safety protocols in every course taught:

- Collect emergency contact information for each participant.
- The Co-Instructor/virtual course support person will monitor the virtual hallway and periodically private chat each participant to check how they are feeling.
- Follow up with participants who leave the virtual Instructor-led portion of the class without alerting the Instructor, co-Instructor or virtual course support person.
- Provide the following national crisis resources, and any local mental health resources, to all participants:
 - National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (available 24 hours a day, seven days a week): 800-273-TALK (8255) [24/7 Hotline], 888-628-9454 (Spanish) or 800-799-4889 (TTY)
 - Crisis Text Line (available 24 hours a day, seven days a week): Text “MHFA” to 741-741 to speak with a compassionate, trained crisis counselor.
- Disseminate and collect MHFA Exit Tickets from participants at the end of each virtual Instructor-led training. Participants should be instructed to stay in the session until they have submitted their MHFA Exit Ticket. Instructors should review the MHFA Exit Tickets immediately after the course concludes. Instructors should reach out to any participant who has indicated they want to be checked on by phone or email, as indicated by the participant. Instructors should have a plan to connect a participant to local emergency mental health services or national crisis resources if the participant indicates they are in significant distress following the course.

Spirit

Mental health and substance use can often be viewed as somber, serious or heavy topics. Mental Health First Aid courses give appropriate weight to the severity of certain mental health and substance use challenges while also emphasizing hope for recovery and presenting the material in a relaxed and comfortable environment for course participants. Reducing the stigma associated with mental wellness challenges is a primary goal of the course and should touch every aspect of the course.

PLEASE NOTE: The Manual Provides the Following Disclaimer

The information on this manual is for informational purposes only and is not intended as a substitute for medical professional help, advice, diagnosis, or treatment. It is not intended to establish a standard of care for the provision of emergency mental health services. Always seek the advice of a qualified health care provider if you have concerns regarding a medical condition or treatment. Never disregard professional medical advice or delay in seeking it because of something you read in this manual. The information, including but not limited to, text, graphics, images, and other material contained in this manual are for the purpose of promoting broad consumer understanding and knowledge on mental health care. None of the procedures provided in this manual represents or warrants that any particular procedure is safe, appropriate, or effective for you or anyone whom you deem requires assistance of Mental Health First Aid. Reliance on any information appearing in this manual is solely at your own risk. If you are in the United States and experiencing a medical emergency, please call 911 or for emergency medical help on the nearest phone.

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline — 800-273-TALK (8255)

This is a crisis hotline that can help with many issues, not just suicide. For example, anyone who feels sad, hopeless, or suicidal; family and friends who are concerned about a loved one; or anyone interested in mental health treatment referrals can call the Lifeline. Callers are connected with a professional nearby who will talk with them about what they are feeling or their concerns for other family and friends. Call the toll-free lifeline, 24 hours/day, seven days/week.