**What Parents Need to Know**

Our school is conducting teen Mental Health First Aid (tMHFA) training. This is an evidence-based training that teaches teenagers the skills they need to recognize and help their friends with mental health and substance use problems and crises and how to get the help of an adult quickly.

Young people often turn to each other when stressed or upset and try to help, sometimes taking on too much. tMHFA teaches them they don’t have to take these problems on alone. The course discusses issues like school violence and suicide that some children may find distressing. You may wish to discuss them with your child before the training or encourage discussions afterward.

This course is not being introduced because of any specific problems at your school. Mental health challenges are very common in adolescents. If there has been a student suicide in the school, be aware this specific suicide will not be discussed during the class, nor will any individual student.

The course is being taught by school staff or staff from a partnering organization. All instructors teaching the course have received special training and are certified to teach the course by Mental Health First Aid USA® at the National Council for Behavioral Health.

Depending on your child’s school schedule, they will be taught the course in either three sessions of 75 minutes each or five sessions of 45 minutes each.

Your child might want to talk about the course. The following is an overview of what will be addressed.

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| **Session 1: Part I** |
| This session talks about mental health in general, explains what mental health and substance use problems are, and how common and challenging they are for young people. |
| **Session 1: Part II** |
| This session talks about how people with mental health and substance use problems can get better and about professionals who can help. |
| **Session 2: Part I** |
| This session talks about helping a friend who is in crisis because they are suicidal. Students will learn the Action Plan (“Look, Ask, Listen, Help Your Friend”) for the first time and how it can be used in a crisis situation. There is a video that shows a young man helping a friend who is experiencing suicidal thoughts. |
| **Session 2: Part II**  |
| This session talks about helping a friend who is in another type of crisis. Situations covered include: threatening violence or harm to others, engaging in nonsuicidal self-injury, using alcohol or other drugs, or experiencing a traumatic event such as bullying, abuse, or assault. Students practice using the Action Plan (“Look, Ask, Listen, Help Your Friend”) in these kinds of crisis situations. |
| **Session 3**  |
| This session takes a step back and discusses how to help if someone seems to be developing a mental health or substance use problem. The course does not teach students how to diagnose problems — it provides advice about being a supportive friend, encouraging friends to seek help, and helps students understand when it is time to get an adult involved. |

Students will receive a certificate of completion for taking the course and a manual to use during the course that they can take home after the last session. There are resources for further information in the manual that you may want to explore with your child. If you want to learn more now, the following resources are provided.

**Resources**

**Learn more about mental health problems**

**Teens Health**

[http://teenshealth.org/teen/your\_mind](http://teenshealth.org/teen/your_mind/)

**National Alliance on Mental Illness**

[www.nami.org/Find-Support/Teens-and-Young-Adults](http://www.nami.org/Find-Support/Teens-and-Young-Adults)

**National Institute of Mental** **Health**

<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/child-and-adolescent-mental-health/index.shtml>.

**Learn more about Mental Health First Aid**

**Mental Health First Aid USA**

[www.MentalHealthFirstAid.org/](http://www.MentalHealthFirstAid.org/)

**National Helplines**

**If you or someone you know needs immediate help, call 911**.

**National Suicide Prevention Lifeline**

Call 1-800-273-TALK (8255)

Visit [www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org)

**Crisis Text Line**

Text **“MHFA” to 741741 for free 24/7 crisis counseling.**

Visit [www.crisistextline.org](http://www.crisistextline.org/)

You can also encourage your child to talk to their school mental health professionals for additional information and support.

**School Contacts**

If you have any questions about tMHFA or concerns about your child participating in the training, please contact our school tMHFA Liaisons: Mrs. Harris and Ms. Lawley, 215-400-3400.