

Mental Health First Aid

AltaPointe Health Systems

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- Joe Emer

Behavioral healthcare professionals at AltaPointe Health Systems are pleased to offer Mental Health First Aid to the Mobile community and South Alabama region. Mental Health First Aid is an evidence-based training program for members of our community interested in learning how to recognize and diffuse mental health crises.

Mental Health First Aid is a 12-hour training certification course that focuses on improving mental health literacy. It can be administered to an individual developing a mental health problem or experiencing a crisis until professional treatment is obtained or the crisis resolves.

New to the Mobile area in 2011, Mental Health First Aid training helps participants identify, understand and respond to signs of mental illness such as panic attacks, paranoia and psychotic episodes. Participants learn how to address those problems through techniques such as using non-threatening body language, speaking softly, asking the person's name and listening closely. They also learn how to assess whether someone is suicidal and where to direct people for services.

Specifically, participants learn:

- The potential risk factors and warning signs for a range of mental health problems, including: depression, anxiety/trauma, psychosis, eating disorders, substance use disorders, and self-injury
- An understanding of the prevalence of various mental health disorders in the U.S. and the need for reduced stigma in their communities
- A 5-step action plan encompassing the skills, resources and knowledge to assess the situation, to select and implement appropriate interventions, and to help the individual in crisis connect with appropriate professional care
- The evidence-based professional, peer, social, and self-help resources available to help someone with a mental health problem.

Mental Health First Aid training teaches a five-step action plan to help loved ones, colleagues, neighbors and others cope with mental health problems and crises. The certification program introduces participants to risk factors and warning signs of mental health problems, builds understanding of their impact and reviews common treatments. Thorough research has proved the CPR-like program effective in improving trainees' knowledge of mental disorders, reducing stigma and increasing the amount of help provided to others.

Groups and individuals that would benefit from MHFA training include mental health and social service professionals, primary care professionals, employers and business leaders, faith communities, school personnel and educators, law enforcement, nursing home staff members, and members of the public.

AltaPointe's Mental Health First Aid team can provide this training at one of its locations or at a location chosen by the trainee. The certification course requires 12 hours but can be divided into a series of class times. Non-profit and group rates are available.

Individuals wanting to schedule a training may call (251) 450-1386, visit www.AltaPointe.org or email AltaPointe at mentalhealthfirstaid@altapointe.org.

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