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# INSTRUCTOR POLICY HANDBOOK

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Dear Instructor,

I am delighted that you have chosen to become a Mental Health First Aid USA instructor. Your commitment to the program will greatly impact the lives of people living with mental illness and substance use disorders.

This handbook provides a comprehensive guide to Mental Health First Aid instruction policies. Please review the procedures in this handbook thoroughly to ensure your compliance with the program.

The National Council values each instructor's unique talents and abilities. Before you teach your first session, I encourage you to reflect on your own passion for behavioral health. It is my sincere hope that in recognizing your purpose in the lives of those with mental illness and substance use disorders, you will become a more enthusiastic, effective instructor.

Thank you again for your dedication to mental health and substance use awareness. I wish you the best of luck as you begin your tenure as a Mental Health First Aid Instructor.

Sincerely,

Betsy Schwartz  
Vice President, Public Education and Strategic Initiatives  
The National Council for Behavioral Health

## USING THE POLICY HANDBOOK

### **Purpose:**

This handbook provides Mental Health First Aid USA Instructors the most up-to-date instructor policies. You must review this document in its entirety before you begin to deliver courses in your community.

### **Adhering to Policies:**

Upon certification, you agree to adhere to all items outlined in this Instructor Policy Handbook.

### **Communicating Policy Updates:**

Mental Health First Aid reserves the right to update or add policies to this handbook at any time. You will be notified of changes on the [Instructor Portal](#).

### **Enforcement:**

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

## INSTRUCTOR STATUS

### **a. Fully Certified**

Instructors with “fully certified” status can deliver Mental Health First Aid courses independently (without a Co-instructor).

### **b. Provisional**

Instructors with “provisional” status must teach with a Co-instructor who is fully certified.

**c. Suspended**

Mental Health First Aid will suspend an Instructor, when required, to review misconduct or a policy infringement. During a suspension, you are prohibited from teaching any Mental Health First Aid courses. If your status is suspended, Mental Health First Aid will issue a determination within 30 days.

**d. De-accredited**

An Instructor is de-accredited when he or she has not met annual certification requirements and is prohibited from teaching any Mental Health First Aid courses in any capacity. If you are de-accredited, you can pursue reinstatement by retaking the 5-day Instructor certification course. To enroll in an Instructor certification course, you must apply, be accepted, pay any related fees and successfully complete the course. You will be subject to the same standards as a new Instructor.

**e. Revoked**

When certification is revoked, the Instructor loses all Mental Health First Aid certifications. You will no longer be able 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.**

## INSTRUCTOR ANNUAL CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS

**a. Annual Single Certification Requirement**

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

**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) annually to maintain certification.

**c. Provisional Certification Requirement**

Instructors with provisional status may teach with this status for up to one year. Instructors must teach a minimum of two courses and watch the 'Instructional Video Series' on the Instructor portal for the appropriate curriculum before applying to move from provisional status to fully certified.

It is possible to receive a provisional certification upon completing an expedited course, however an instructor may not apply for an expedited training if they are provisionally certified in their initial certification.

**d. Instructor Responsibility for Maintaining Certification**

As a Mental Health First Aid instructor you are independently responsible for meeting all certification requirements. The Mental Health First Aid Instructor Certification is owned by the individual instructor and is not property of a host site or organization. If an instructor is unable to meet the requirements to maintain certification this cannot be attributed to the host site or organization.

**e. Extensions**

Instructors who have not successfully completed their recertification requirement may request a three-month extension. Request for the extension does not guarantee that the extension will be granted. Each request will be evaluated on an individual basis. Requests must be submitted at least 30 days prior to the anniversary date using the [Extension Request Form](#).

If an extension is granted, please note that you must enter all courses, including participant information and evaluations, by the extension deadline to receive credit toward certification. Upon successful completion of the extension requirements, your anniversary is updated to the date the requirements were met; not the date the extension was granted. If you are unable to meet the extension requirements, you will be de-accredited and need to complete the reinstatement process to teach Mental Health First Aid. No more than one extension request per certification year will be considered. Mental Health First Aid USA reserves the right to deny extension requests in subsequent years.

## MODULE DESIGNATION CONSIDERATIONS

Instructors are required to teach a minimum of two courses in their foundation curriculum (i.e. Adult English/Spanish and/or Youth English/Spanish) prior to obtaining a module certifications. Instructors must have knowledge and experience with the target audience as specified in each module.

## INSTRUCTOR PROFILE

Instructors are required to actively maintain their Instructor profile. Mental Health First Aid will communicate important programmatic information via email, so it is critical that Instructors keep their profiles up to date. Updates can easily be made online through the [Instructor Portal](#).

## DELIVERING MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID USA COURSES

### a. Professional Conduct

Instructors are ambassadors of the Mental Health First Aid program and must maintain professionalism at all times. Professionalism is defined as demonstrating the skill, good judgment and courteous behavior that is expected from an accomplished person who is skillful in their job.

### b. Addition/Deletion of Course Information

Mental Health First Aid is a standardized, evidence-based course. You cannot insert or change course content material, including adding new information, data, slides or any other alterations. You may not delete or change course content and materials.

### c. Course Content

**Instructors are required to teach the course with fidelity.** You should allow up to 40 hours post-certification to become familiar with the content of the entire course. There are several [excellent resources](#) to assist you. The [instructional films](#) posted on the Instructor Portal are another helpful tool.

### d. Registering Courses

Instructors are required to register all courses they deliver in the [Instructor Portal](#). Even if your class is not open to the public, you must register the class to get credit for it. Register the courses as soon as they are scheduled, no later than one week prior to the course.

- Please ensure that course registration contains accurate, specific and complete information. For example, include the specific start and stop times of a course as well as the exact location. If you are delivering a specific module, make sure it is accurately listed. **Only courses registered in the [Instructor Portal](#) will count toward annual certification requirements.** Post-course information must be entered within 30 days after the course has concluded.

### e. Scheduling Courses

Courses must allow eight hours for instruction, not including breaks and lunch. Approved options for scheduling include:

- One 8-hour day
- Two 4-hour days
- Four 2-hour days

Courses scheduled over the course of multiple days must not occur more than two weeks apart.

Prior approval is required from Mental Health First Aid to deliver the course in a time format that is not listed above. Submit requests to [ALGEE@TheNationalCouncil.org](mailto:ALGEE@TheNationalCouncil.org) three business days in advance of the course. Submitting a request does not guarantee approval.

### f. Marketing Courses

A variety of [marketing resources](#) are available on the Instructor Portal, including a press release template, flyer template, PowerPoint presentation and more. When developing marketing materials, you are 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](#).

### g. Class Size and Format

**Maximum class size is 30**, with the recommended class size at 25; however, in very rare

instances an instructor may wish to hold a course for more than 30 individuals. This requires prior written approval from Mental Health First Aid. Please submit a request for approval to [ALGEE@TheNationalCouncil.org](mailto:ALGEE@TheNationalCouncil.org) no later than two weeks prior to scheduled course date. Submitting a request does not guarantee approval. **Minimum class size is 5 participants.**

#### h. 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 you communicate that the course has a value of \$170 per participant. If you offer a discounted or no-cost course, promotional materials must acknowledge that participant fees are being underwritten (for example, “*This course is valued at \$170. Thanks to a generous donation from Organization ABC, participants may attend at no charge.*”).

#### i. Course Cancellation and Refunds

Instructors have the authority to set their own cancellation and refund policies. You are encouraged to include this information in course promotional materials. Cancellation information should include the mechanism for contact (phone, email or text). If you institute a refund policy, you should indicate the conditions when refunds are issued, the amount of the 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.

#### j. Participant Age

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

#### k. 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, you will have ample time to review and acquire the updated materials. Regardless of your status, you cannot reproduce any of the documents, handbooks, books, information or other materials provided in full or in part. This extends to any materials provided during instructor training courses.

#### l. Distribution of Course Materials

- **Participant Manuals:** Instructors are required to provide each participant with a participant manual that is theirs to keep. You may not collect, copy or redistribute manuals.
- **Mental Health First Aid PowerPoints:** Instructors are prohibited from distributing the course PowerPoint presentation in written or electronic format.
- **Resource Lists:** Instructors are required to create and provide an appropriate community resource list for each participant.

#### m. Modification of Course Materials

- **PowerPoints:** Instructors are prohibited from modifying the course PowerPoint presentation. You may add slides at the front or end of the slide deck. For example, adding a title page or contact page is permissible.
- **Resource Lists:** Instructors are required to ensure that their resource list is up-to-date and refreshed annually with local resources.
- **Scenarios** – It may be necessary for instructors to make slight modifications to scenarios to better relate to the audience. If scenarios are modified, please send them to [ALGEE@TheNationalCouncil.org](mailto:ALGEE@TheNationalCouncil.org) for approval.



**n. 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. You are permitted to teach in any state.

**o. Language Considerations**

Content Interpretation and Translation: **Currently, Mental Health First Aid courses may be offered only in English and Spanish.** You may teach the course in Spanish if you are fluent in the language and certified in the Spanish curriculum. Instructors must also make every possible effort to accommodate participants with hearing and visual impairments. See *Q. for Accessibility policy*.

At this time, you cannot translate the course into any other language. If you need to translate a few keywords to a participant to enhance understanding, this is encouraged; however, you 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 formalized process of translation.

**p. Accessibility of Facility**

Mental Health First Aid strives to make this training accessible to all. When you choose the location to hold courses, please consider holding them where public transportation is readily available and in accessible facilities.

**q. Accessibility of Curriculum**

Mental Health First Aid is dedicated to making the curriculum accessible to all. If you wish to work with the visually or hearing impaired, please contact [ALGEE@TheNationalCouncil.org](mailto:ALGEE@TheNationalCouncil.org) for additional information.

**r. Videotaping**

**Instructors are not permitted to allow videotaping of the entire course.** Short sections of a course may be videotaped for marketing or journalistic purposes, with permission of both the instructor and participants. Mental Health First Aid suggests that if the course is taped for any reason that instructors obtain signatures from all participants indicating that they have agreed to be filmed.

## DELIVERING MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID USA COURSES

### Legal Liability for Instructors

Instructors are not required by Mental Health First Aid USA to carry any particular liability insurance at this time. Any questions about liability coverage for instructors should be directed to an instructor's legal advisor or insurance carrier.

### Legal Liability for First Aiders

In response to First Aider liability issues regarding Mental Health First Aid USA, the information below 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.

The Good Samaritan Law covers help provided by First Aiders out in the community, although the details and extent of this law vary by state and should not be used across the board.

**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 9-1-1 or for emergency medical help on the nearest phone.