

**October 2022**

**Missouri Area Health Centers bring Mental Health First Aid Programs to Missouri**

The Covid-19 pandemic has led to significant increases in mental health issues, particularly among young people. In Missouri, the share of individuals who had a mental illness diagnosis was 22.7% before the pandemic (vs. 19.9% nationwide) and 33.6% after (vs. 31.6% nationwide). Missouri Area Health Centers (AHEC) mission is to increase access to health and behavioral healthcare. One way that Missouri AHEC improves healthcare is through training programs.

As a result of their strong training infrastructure and relationships with diverse community partners, Missouri AHEC was chosen by the Center for Disease Control to provide Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) Training across Missouri.



The Mental Health First Aid program is designed to identify and address mental health needs. Just as adults and youth across the nation have learned how to do CPR or to call 9-1-1, mental health first aid teaches Missouri residents, including teachers, teens, caregivers, law enforcement, etc. to assist someone experiencing a mental health or substance use challenge. “This groundbreaking skills-based course gives people the tools to identify, understand and respond to someone who might be struggling with a mental health or substance use challenge — and connect them with appropriate support and resources, when necessary,” says Mental Health First Aid certified, Trish Lavish with SWMO AHEC.

Each of the 5 MAHEC community centers is expected to provide 10+ community based MHFA trainings, reaching a total of over 1,000 impacted people in Missouri. This project also includes efforts to equip community- and faith-based health

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systems, and educational partners, with culturally and linguistically appropriate strategies. Trainings will also provide information and tools designed to improve health

literacy and address social determinants of health among those impacted by COVID-19, particularly within rural and underserved populations.

Trainings are currently being scheduled at facilities such as pharmacies, the Department of Health and Senior Services, hospitals, and organizations that use community health workers and first responders. More options for training are still available! For more information about how to get your staff scheduled for Mental Health First Aid, please contact Trish Lavish at [ldlavish@missouristate.edu](mailto:ldlavish@missouristate.edu).

**MAHEC is a partnership of seven locally governed organizations and three university-based health professions education programs working statewide to increase the numbers of Missouri youth entering stable, high-paying jobs as healthcare professionals and the numbers of professionals caring for underserved populations.**

**The MAHEC partners include:**

- A.T. Still University Kirksville
- University of Missouri-Columbia
- Saint Louis University
- East Central Missouri ECMO AHEC – St. Louis
- Mid-Missouri AHEC – Rolla
- Northeast Missouri NEMO AHEC – Kirksville
- Northwest Missouri NWMO AHEC – St. Joseph
- Southeastern Missouri SEMO AHEC – Poplar Bluff
- Southwestern Missouri SWMO AHEC - Springfield
- West Central Missouri WCMO AHEC – Kansas City

