



'Mental Health First Aid' certification courses offered

AP AL State Wire

By KYM KLASS

Published: Sep 4, 2016

MONTGOMERY, Ala. (AP) - A training class is being offered to help take the fear and hesitation out of starting conversations about mental health and substance abuse problems by teaching people how to identify, understand and respond to a variety of mental health situations.

The Healthy Minds Network, which is the Collective Impact initiative of Envision 2020 in partnership with SummaSource at Auburn Montgomery, has announced the availability of instructor certification training in Mental Health First Aid.

Mental Health First Aid is an eight-hour training course that gives participants the skills needed to reach out and provide initial help and support to someone who has a mental health or substance use problem or is experiencing a crisis. The Healthy Minds Network is hosting two Mental Health First Aid Instructor Certification courses, which are managed, operated and disseminated by the National Council on Behavioral Health, in Montgomery in October.

"It will bring instructors to our communities who can then train people in our community so they can be more aware of what the signs and symptoms of mental health are so they can respond to a mental health crisis," said Alana Barranco, a consultant with SummaSource at Auburn Montgomery. "Our instructors will train 'aiders' ... they'll go to schools, churches, businesses, those at community centers."

Another piece of this, she said, is destigmatizing mental health.

"Mental health is a national crisis," she said. "This is a tool that's great for the lay person who is an everyday person who might encounter someone who is having a mental health issue."

While the standard cost for one certification is \$2,000 (or almost \$3,000 for both), thanks to a grant from the Montgomery City/County Joint Public Charity Hospital Board, people who live in the city of Montgomery or Montgomery County will be able to attend one or both of the certification classes for free.

Those who live in Autauga, Elmore, Lowndes or Macon Counties can apply to receive both the adult and youth certification for \$500. Individuals who live anywhere else in Alabama can receive both adult and youth certification for \$1,000.

The instructor training is the launch of the River Region's Mental Health First Aid training program, which will be coordinated by the Healthy Minds Network and equip more Mental Health First Aid "first aiders" than ever before, Barranco said. Once certified, instructors are required to teach the course three times per year to maintain their certification.

Courses are team taught by two certified instructors.

?Mental Health First Aid is listed in the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's national registry of evidence-based programs and practices. Through the program, Barranco said, people will grow their knowledge of signs, symptoms and risk factors of mental illnesses and addictions; be able to identify multiple types of professional and self-help resources for individuals with a mental illness or addiction; increase their confidence in and likelihood to help an individual in distress; and show increased mental wellness themselves.

Information from: Montgomery Advertiser,
<http://www.montgomeryadvertiser.com>