

## **CBHC BOARD POSITION STATEMENT 13.0:**

### ***Mental Health First Aid***

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#### **Position Statement**

*CBHC is committed to the expansion of Mental Health First Aid in Colorado through increasing the number of individuals trained as instructors and broadening the reach of these instructors in teaching the skills to respond to the signs of mental illness and substance use. Our vision is for MHFA to become as common as CPR and First Aid training, having regular courses offered across Colorado.*

#### **Background**

Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) was started in Australia in 2001 and expanded to the United States in 2008. Peer reviewed studies show that the program saves lives, improves the mental health of the individual administering care *and* the one receiving it, expands knowledge of mental illnesses and their treatments, increases the services provided, and reduces overall social distance toward individuals with mental illnesses by improving mental health literacy. Additionally, it has been found that those who trained in Mental Health First Aid have greater confidence in providing help to others, greater likelihood of advising people to seek professional help, improved concordance with health professionals about treatments, and decreased stigmatizing attitudes.

The National Council for Behavioral Health operates MHFA USA and is solely licensed and responsible for disseminating MHFA at a national level. Introduced in Colorado in 2008, the program has grown from just a handful of partners focused in the Denver-metro area to include a statewide network of over 600 Instructors that have certified over 78,000 Coloradans as Mental Health First Aiders to date.

This effort has been spearheaded by the Colorado Behavioral Healthcare Council, serving as the organizational home for Mental Health First Aid Colorado (MHFACO). Formed together with a coalition of community non-profit organizations and state agencies, MHFACO is dedicated to growing the Mental Health First Aid program across all of Colorado. We achieve this by fostering strategic partnerships for program expansion, maintaining the leanest possible infrastructure necessary to support growth while maintaining consistently high-quality training, leading marketing and communications efforts, and cultivating financial resources for local and state partners engaged with us in expanding the program. This includes coordination of several Instructor Trainings for the state, coordination of the training of Mental Health First Aiders, and various activities related to marketing, dissemination, evaluation and quality improvement, all of which support the overall growth of the MHFA program in Colorado.

CBHC is dedicated to working on policy, legislation and initiatives that expand the knowledge and reduce the stigma of mental health and substance use disorders. CBHC specifically supports efforts to expand and enhance MHFA, Youth MHFA, and Teen MHFA in Colorado.

#### **Policy Priorities**

### **13.1 Expansion of Instructor Network**

To expand the number of individuals able to provide MHFA trainings (including Adult, Youth, and Teen) to all populations across the state, with specific emphasis on areas of identified health disparity.

- ❖ CBHC supports policies that increase funding opportunities to bring instructor trainings to Colorado:
  - Ensure availability of MHFA Instructors in broad geographical areas
  - Ensure availability of a diverse MHFA Instructor pool representative of underserved populations, as determined by age, gender, race and ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, and socioeconomic status
  - Ensure availability of MHFA Instructors drawn from various professional and civil service roles, including criminal justice, first responders, education, healthcare, businesses, youth-serving organizations, and others who interface with the public on a regular basis

### **13.2 Increase Number of Individuals Certified in Mental Health First Aid**

Secure additional funding to support MHFA, Youth MHFA, and Teen MHFA Certification Courses statewide

- ❖ CBHC supports policies that increase funding for MHFA certification courses
  - Ensure availability of MHFA courses to underserved populations, as determined by age, gender, race and ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, and socioeconomic status
  - Ensure availability of MHFA courses to equitably represent frontier, rural, and urban communities.

### **13.3 Develop Necessary MHFA Infrastructure at State and Local Levels**

To enhance infrastructure, branding and marketing efforts, and Instructor support tools to help take MHFA to scale in Colorado, and to increase the availability of trainings statewide, with specific emphasis on areas of identified health disparity.

- ❖ CBHC supports policies that encourage greater adoption of MHFA certification as a training component for individuals serving in various professional and civil service roles, including criminal justice, first responders, education, healthcare, businesses, faith-based organizations, youth-serving organizations, and others who interface with the public on a regular basis
  - Ensure a robust MHFA Colorado initiative that manages branding and communication, fidelity and quality improvement, registration and data-tracking, and strategic planning for MHFA in the state.
  - Ensure a wide range of community level resources that support local dissemination of MHFA

#### **Effective Period**

The Colorado Behavioral Healthcare Council (CBHC) Board of Directors approved this policy on 10/06/2017. It is reviewed as required by the Public Policy Advisory Committee.

#### **Policy Updated**

Updates to this policy position were approved by the CBHC Board of Directors on 02/17/2021.

**Expiration: 07/17/2023**