

YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID

RECOGNIZING THE WARNING SIGNS: THE FIRST STEP TOWARD HELPING YOUTH IN MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS

A collaboration with the San Mateo County Office of Education, the Youth Mental Health First Aid course is a free, 8-hour public-education training program intended for adults who work with young people, ages 12 to 24. The course has been designed to train school personnel throughout San Mateo County how to recognize the warning signs of:

- Emotional distress
- Substance-use challenges
- Mental-health crises

Participants learn the effectiveness of early intervention and the critical importance of directing students to the proper community mental health resources and self-help strategies.

Learn the **ALGEE** method!

- A** - Assess for risk of suicide or harm
- L** - Listen non-judgmentally
- G** - Give reassurance and information
- E** - Encourage appropriate professional help
- E** - Encourage self-help and other support strategies.

AWARE. INFORMED. EVIDENCE-BASED.

Since school staff members typically form bonds and establish rapport with students, they are well positioned to play an instrumental role in identifying problems and facilitating solutions. Youth Mental Health First Aid training often serves as the first significant step toward helping students in crisis access the services they need.

MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Of those who participated in the training, an impressive 89 percent graduated and received certification. Data was gathered at the beginning of the course and in a six-month follow-up, and the results demonstrate the value of the program.

Between 93 and 99 percent of attendees reported an increase in confidence in the following areas:

- Recognizing signs that a student may be dealing with a mental-health challenge
- Reaching out appropriately
- Actively and compassionately listening to someone in distress
- Offering basic information and reassurance about mental-health problems
- Directing someone in crisis to seek professional help
- Being aware of their own views and feeling about mental-health disorders

During the follow-up, 88 percent of participants reported that they were in at least one situation in which Youth Mental Health First aid was relevant. In those instances, 94 percent applied the principles they learned during the course to assist a student.