



Mental Health First Aid

Most organisations are familiar with the role of the physical first aiders who assist in times of physical situations. Have you considered a mental health first aider and what role they play in your organisation?

Mental health first aid is the initial assistance given to an individual with a mental health problem or in a mental health crisis. The first aid is given until appropriate professional treatment is received or until the crisis resolves. It is critical in the workplace as well as in the community.

The organising body behind the course, Mental Health First Aid in Australia, sum it up, describing MHFA as an “educational course which teaches people how to identify, understand and help a person who may be developing a mental health issue. In the same way as we learn physical first aid, Mental Health First Aid teaches you how to recognise those crucial warning signs of mental ill health.”

But does it work in the workplace?

Evidence has shown that individuals who complete the MHFA training have:

- Significantly greater recognition of the most common mental health illnesses and problems
- Decreased social distance from people with mental health illnesses or problems
- Increased confidence in providing help to others
- Demonstrated increase in helpful actions

In a study recently completed by BMC Psychiatry, *Mental Health first aid responses: results from an Australian National Survey*, a randomised controlled trial of the MHFA course in the work environment found the benefits of the training included: better recognition of disorders, changes in beliefs about treatment to be more like that of professionals, decreased social distance, increased confidence in providing help and increase in actual help given. The workplace trial also found improved mental health in course participants.

The role of mental health first aid in the workplace is critical to all organisations.

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