



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

April 14, 2016

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**HEALTH
DEPARTMENT**
of Northwest Michigan

www.nwhealth.org

Youth Mental Health First Aid Course offered May 2 & May 25

PETOSKEY – Imagine that someone you know—maybe someone you love—is distressed, depressed or in a crisis. You want to help, but don't know what to do or how to do it. It's a helpless feeling. Most of us know what to do when someone is having a physical emergency: perform first aid or CPR and call 911. These interventions save thousands of lives every year. Until recently, there was not similar help for those in emotional, behavioral or mental distress. Now, there is Mental Health First Aid, a public education program to help people understand mental illness and substance abuse disorders.

During 'May is Mental Health Month,' Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) trainings specific to youth will be offered to community members, co-sponsored by the Health Department of Northwest Michigan and North Country Community Mental Health (NCCMH). The trainings will be free, thanks to a three-year Project AWARE grant from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), to the Health Department.

The two trainings are 8am-5pm on Monday, May 2, and Wednesday, May 25, with a one-hour lunch break from 12-1pm. Both trainings will take place at the Health Department's Emmet County office located at 3434 M-119 in Harbor Springs.

Anyone can attend a MHFA class, and its techniques can be used with friends and family, as well as with acquaintances or strangers. These Youth Mental Health First Aid classes are especially appropriate for adults working or living with young people: parents, teachers, coaches and youth workers.

Two certified trainers facilitate the classes: Tiffany Moore-Corteville, LMSW, and Amber Southerton, LMSW, both of the Health Department of Northwest Michigan. North Country also has two certified trainers.

Moore-Corteville said, "Course participants will learn about adolescent development, the signs and symptoms of the common and disabling mental health problems in young people, where and how to get help when a young person is developing a mental illness, what sort of help has been shown by research to be effective, and how to provide first aid in a crisis situation."

The program doesn't take the place of medical assistance, but rather bridges the gap. In many situations, a traumatic event, chronic medical difficulties or a chemical imbalance can lead to an anxiety disorder that requires medical attention. Through Mental Health First Aid, the layperson gains some tools to keep the sufferer stable and bring him or her to the point they will accept professional help.

More than 120,000 people nationwide have received training, according to the National Council for Behavioral Health.

The group's CEO, Linda Rosenberg, helped import MHFA to the U.S. from its roots in Australia, and like many advocates of the program, likens it to the typical first aid offered at community recreation centers. The major difference, she says, is that the average person is more likely to encounter someone who is depressed or suicidal than someone in the throes of a heart attack.

To register for either of the May trainings, please contact Sheila Goupell at 231-347-5057 or s.goupell@nwhealth.org. Space is limited.

For more information on the Health Department's Project AWARE grant, programs, and services, contact Natalie Kasiborski at (231) 347-5144. The Health Department of Northwest Michigan is mandated by the Michigan Public Health Code to promote wellness, prevent disease, provide quality healthcare, address health problems of vulnerable populations, and protect the environment for the residents and visitors of Antrim, Charlevoix, Emmet, and Otsego Counties.

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