

DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH **STRATEGIC PLAN HIGHLIGHTS**

DMH and NAMI offer Mental Health First Aid “Train the Trainer” Session in June

**Goal 3, Objective 3—Utilize evidence-based or best practices among
DMH Certified Providers**



Pictured are participants Lyndsey Paige Adams, Molly Barbieri, Pamela Bowman, Stephanie Brooks, Lewis Anthony Bullock, Lorinda Carter, Kirsten Chodrick, Kyle Craig, Tina Dye, Ron Earl, Melanie Elmore, Cynthia Franklin, Wilean Hathorn, Kimberly Johnson, Alyssa Killebrew, Amanda Lambert, Shirley Long, Chiquita Long-Holmes, Clai Meador, James Miller, Youlanda Nelson, Kelcey Steinriede, Kambria Thompson, Jarice Veal, Christiane Williams, Victoria Williams, Jameenah Williams and Chan Willis. Also pictured are trainers Jim Kirk and Lee Berlinquette

Mississippi recently added 29 more individuals to the growing list of Mental Health First Aid Instructors in the state through a training offered by the Mississippi Department of Mental Health and NAMI Mississippi.

This is the first time in Mississippi that in addition to the Mental Health First Aid course, participants also received supplemental training on the Mental Health First Aid for Law Enforcement, Corrections,

and Public Safety module. This module builds upon the effectiveness of the standard Mental Health First Aid curriculum by focusing on the unique experiences and needs of law enforcement, corrections and public safety audiences.

Participants included staff from the Mississippi Department of Corrections, law enforcement agencies, Community Mental Health Centers, and private providers.

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Mental Health First Aid teaches a 5-step action plan encompassing the skills, resources, and knowledge to help an individual in crisis connect with appropriate professional, peer, and self-help care. Participants learn the unique risk factors and warning signs of mental health problems, builds understanding of the importance of early intervention, and, most importantly, teaches individuals how to help someone in crisis or experiencing a mental health challenge.

For a number of reasons, individuals experiencing mental illness and substance use disorders often interact with the criminal justice system than the general population does. Thus, the better prepared officers and staff are to respond effectively and appropriately, the more likely the interaction will be a positive one.

“The training gave me closer view on how effective Mental Health First Aid can be with the Criminal Justice System,” said Kimberly Johnson, Training Officer with the Central Mississippi Correctional Facility.

“Mental Health First Aid training helped me better understand how effective I can be upon approaching an individual with mental illness.”

The course is taught to police, first responders, corrections officers, and other public safety audiences around the country. Mental Health First Aid for Public Safety provides officers with more response options to help them deescalate incidents and better understand mental illnesses so they can respond to mental health related calls appropriately without compromising safety.

Tools like Mental Health First Aid give officers the skills to recognize and respond to immediate crisis – and like first aid or CPR, allows them to stabilize

someone and deescalate crisis. Safely deescalating situations is, without question, now a critical mandate for our nation. In addition to crisis situations, Mental Health First Aid has also been shown to improve everyday interactions between correctional officers, parole/probation agents, and justice-involved individuals as measured by fewer incident reports which increases safety for all.

A 2015 Washington Post study concluded that one-fourth of those killed in officer-involved shootings were experiencing an emotional crisis. The Treatment Advocacy Center found that persons with severe mental illnesses are 16 times more likely to be killed by police than other civilians. In addition, the U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMSHA) reported that 63-76 percent of incarcerated adults and 50-70 percent of juveniles, “met the criteria for a mental health disorder.”

“I thoroughly enjoyed the training and find it helpful when establishing relationships with local law enforcement,” said Victoria Williams with Singing River Services. “Once we are able to educate them on mental illness it will help make our jobs better connected.”

Instructor certification results from a five-day training that presents the Mental Health First Aid eight-hour course and provides in-depth instruction on facilitating the course. The training includes a written exam and evaluates each candidate’s ability to present the eight-hour Mental Health First Aid course.