

2025

# Equipping Providers to Monitor and Respond to Community Mental Wellness



By: Kim Silva | Collaborators: Jennifer Seabrook-Scott

**RELEVANCE** According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA) state-level data, Delaware has **165,000** adults that have a **mental health condition**.

One out of **5** adults experience a mental illness each year.



The **Mental Health America** data for **2024** reports **21.9%** of adults with a mental illness in Delaware have unmet needs for treatment.



More than **220,000** people in Delaware live in a community **without** enough mental **health professionals**, according to the Delaware Department of Health and Social Services.



**RESPONSE** In response to the mental health needs in Delaware, UD Cooperative Extension adopted the **Mental Health First Aid (MHFA)** training program, which is an evidence-based, **8-hour** mental health literacy course.

**Prepares** participants to respond with:

- Greater knowledge
- Confidence
- Compassion



when an adult is experiencing a mental health challenge or is having a mental health crisis.

Participants learn to use a **five-step** action plan

- Assess
- Listen non-judgmentally
- Give reassurance and information
- Encourage appropriate professional help
- Encourage self-help



We strategically focused on **training healthcare workers**, who are trusted community members with regular patient contact, to effectively **build essential mental** health capacity directly within the community.



**RESULTS** From **July 2024** through **September 2025**, the University of Delaware Cooperative Extension successfully trained **126 adults** through the **MHFA** course.



This training resulted in significant, measurable **increases** in participant **skills** based on **pre and post** questionnaire **survey** responses:

**Results showed:**

**90%** reported an increase in confidence in their ability to recognize early signs of a mental health challenge.

**22%** average increase in confidence across critical intervention skills, including the ability to ask about suicidal thoughts and respond effectively to a substance use crisis.



These **outcomes** translate into **safer** and more **supportive** communities, as **trained individuals** are now equipped to initiate supportive conversations and provide immediate, potentially **lifesaving assistance**.

---

## RELEVANCE

According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA) state-level data, Delaware has 165,000 adults that have a mental health condition. One in five adults experience a mental illness each year. The Mental Health America data for 2024 reports 21.9% of adults with a mental illness in Delaware have unmet needs for treatment. Further, more than 220,000 people in Delaware live in a community without enough mental health professionals, according to the Delaware Department of Health and Social Services.

---

## RESPONSE

In response to the mental health needs in Delaware, University of Delaware Cooperative Extension adopted the Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) training program, which is an evidence-based, 8-hour mental health literacy course. MHFA prepares participants to respond with greater knowledge, confidence, and compassion when an adult is experiencing a mental health challenge or is having a mental health crisis. Participants learn to use a five-step action plan (assess, listen non-judgmentally, give reassurance and information, encourage appropriate professional help, and encourage self-help) to help themselves or someone else experiencing a mental health issue and to connect them to the care and resources they need to recover. We strategically focused on training healthcare workers, who are trusted community members with regular patient contact, to effectively build essential mental health capacity directly within the community.

---

## RESULTS

From July 2024 through September 2025, the University of Delaware Cooperative Extension successfully trained 126 adults through the MHFA course. This training resulted in significant, measurable increases in participant skills based on pre- and post-questionnaire survey responses:

- 90% reported an increase in confidence in their ability to recognize early signs of a mental health challenge.
- Participants reported a significant 22% average increase in confidence across critical intervention skills, including the ability to ask about suicidal thoughts and respond effectively to a substance use crisis.

These outcomes translate into safer and more supportive communities, as trained individuals are now equipped to initiate supportive conversations and provide immediate, potentially lifesaving assistance.

---

## RECOGNITION

This project was made possible through funding from SAMHSA and a successful collaborative effort led by Penn State Cooperative Extension.

---

## PUBLIC VALUE STATEMENT

The University of Delaware is committed to enhancing mental wellness for all Delaware communities. Through educational initiatives like Mental Health First Aid, we provide critical education that increases the state's capacity to deliver essential support and services in areas with the greatest need.