Report on the Mental Health First Aid Program for Fiscal Year 2016

As Required By
Texas Health and Safety Code Section 1001.205(b)
(Amended by S.B. 133, 84th Legislature, Regular Session, 2015)

Health and Human Services Commission
December 2016
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Executive Summary

H.B. 3793, 83rd Legislature, Regular Session, 2013, directed the Department of State Health Services (DSHS) to provide grants to the local mental health authorities (LMHAs) to train their staff and contractors as instructors of Mental Health First Aid (MHFA). After receiving certification, MHFA instructors provide the MHFA training to public school district employees and school resource officers at no cost.

As amended by S.B. 133, 84th Legislature, Regular Session, 2015, the Texas Health and Safety Code Section 1001.205(b) requires DSHS to submit a report on the MHFA program to the Legislature not later than December 1 of each year based on compiled information submitted by the LMHAs, including the number of:

- LMHA employees and contractors trained as MHFA trainers during the preceding fiscal year;
- Public school district employees and school resource officers who completed a MHFA training program provided by a LMHA during the preceding fiscal year; and
- Individuals from the community who are not employed by a school district who completed a MHFA training program provided by a LMHA during the preceding fiscal year.

S.B. 200, 84th Legislature, Regular Session, 2015, required the transfer of the DSHS Mental Health and Substance Abuse (MHSA) Division, which administered the MHFA program, to the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) on September 1, 2016. As a result, HHSC is now responsible for the MHFA program and is required to submit this annual report.

All 37 LMHAs and one local behavioral health authority (LBHA), the LBHA for the NorthSTAR Behavioral Health Program, continued to participate in the MHFA program in fiscal year 2016. Each of the LMHAs and the LBHA submitted an annual plan to the MHFA program outlining how many resource officers, school district employees, and community-based personnel they planned to train within the year. Additionally, the plans included information about how the LMHAs and the LBHA would develop and maintain community partnerships to increase training opportunities.

In fiscal year 2016, the MHFA program and statewide partnerships resulted in:

- 147 LMHA and LBHA employees and contractors trained as MHFA instructors;
- 7,137 public school district employees and school resource officers trained in MHFA; and
- 4,490 individuals from the community who are not employed by a public school district trained in MHFA.

Through feedback from schools and other community-based organizations, several potential barriers to offering MHFA trainings to local school districts were identified. Difficulty marketing and obtaining access to local school districts and addressing challenges in training non-educators have all been identified as barriers to program implementation. The report provides a summary of activities to address these marketing and outreach barriers to increase the number of MHFA trainings offered to local school districts throughout the state in fiscal year 2016.
Through continued partnerships and collaborations, the program experienced a nine percent increase in the number of public school district employees trained in fiscal year 2016 compared to fiscal year 2015. The continued goal of the MHFA program is to decrease stigma, increase awareness, and help provide resources to individuals who might be experiencing a mental health crisis.

**Introduction**

As amended by S.B. 133, 84th Legislature, Regular Session, 2015, the Texas Health and Safety Code Section 1001.205(b) requires DSHS to submit a report on the MHFA program to the Legislature not later than December 1 of each year based on compiled information submitted by the LMHAs, including the number of:

- LMHA employees and contractors trained as MHFA trainers during the preceding fiscal year;
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S.B. 200, 84th Legislature, Regular Session, 2015, required the transfer of the DSHS MHSA Division, which administered the MHFA program, to HHSC on September 1, 2016. As a result, HHSC is now responsible for the MHFA program and is required to submit this annual report.

This annual report provides a brief summary of the activities for the MHFA program in fiscal year 2016.

**Background**

MHFA is an eight-hour, evidence-based curriculum that teaches individuals how to help someone who is developing a mental health problem or experiencing a mental health crisis. The training reviews signs of addiction and mental illness, how to assess a situation and provide assistance, the impact of mental illness and substance use disorders, and the availability of local resources. MHFA training increases awareness of mental health and reduces stigma around mental illness.

H.B. 3793, 83rd Legislature, Regular Session, 2013, directed DSHS to provide grants to the LMHAs to train their staff and contractors as instructors of MHFA. After receiving certification, MHFA instructors provide the MHFA training to public school district employees and school resource officers at no cost.

S.B. 133 broadened eligibility criteria for MHFA training to all school district employees and resource officers, beyond only educators. The expanded criteria includes school bus drivers, cafeteria staff, secretaries, and others who regularly interact with students throughout the course of their duties. This expansion increases the likelihood children and adults experiencing a mental
health crisis will encounter school staff who are equipped to provide assistance as needed, which not only benefits the students, parents, and school districts, but communities across Texas. The legislation also changed reporting requirements to align the state reporting schedule with the LMHA and LBHA data collection schedule and amended the funding structure to allow LMHAs and the LBHA more flexibility related to using grant funds either to certify trainers or to train additional school district employees and resource officers.

Fiscal Year 2016 Activities

All 37 LMHAs and one LBHA, the LBHA for the NorthSTAR Behavioral Health Program, continued to participate in the MHFA program in fiscal year 2016. The Mental Health Prevention Standards established in Title 25, Texas Administrative Code, Chapter 412, includes LBHAs in the definition of LMHAs. Therefore unless strictly prohibited from doing so, the state includes LBHAs in any funding opportunity for statewide implementation. Each of the participating LMHAs and the LBHA submitted an annual plan to the MHFA program outlining how many resource officers, school district employees, and community-based personnel they planned to train within the year. Additionally, the plans included information about how the LMHAs and the LBHA would develop and maintain community partnerships to increase training opportunities.

In fiscal year 2016, the MHFA program and statewide partnerships resulted in:

- 147 LMHA and LBHA employees and contractors trained as MHFA instructors;
- 7,137 public school district employees and school resource officers trained in MHFA; and
- 4,490 individuals from the community who are not employed by a public school district trained in MHFA.

Marketing and Outreach Efforts

Through feedback from schools and other community-based organizations, several potential barriers and opportunities to offering MHFA trainings to local school districts were identified. Difficulty in marketing and obtaining access to local school districts and addressing challenges in training non-educators have all been identified as barriers to program implementation.

Marketing Strategies

The MHFA program worked directly with the Texas Council of Community Centers (Texas Council) to expand marketing and outreach efforts across the state. The Texas Council highlighted the MHFA program at its annual conference and offered a specialized training for current MHFA trainers to improve marketing and address other training needs. In addition, the Texas Council created a list which cross-referenced all the independent school districts in Texas with the LMHA and LBHA service areas. This tool has proved extremely helpful in educating LMHA and LBHA staff about schools to target in their service area. The MHFA program and the Texas Council established monthly technical assistance calls for MHFA trainers to help assist in efforts to increase the number of public school employees who were trained. Future activities
include the development of a marketing toolkit, which will include a brochure and other information about the MHFA training and its benefits to the school districts and the community at large.

**Outreach Efforts with School Districts**

Throughout fiscal year 2016, the MHFA program continued to collaborate with the Texas Education Agency (TEA) and participate in the United Services for All Children, a workgroup consisting of representatives from TEA, the Department of Family and Protective Services, the Texas Institute of Excellence in Mental Health at the University of Texas at Austin, and others to help eliminate barriers to children in the educational system by providing resources. The MHFA program also partnered with special education coordinators in various school districts to assist LMHAs and the LBHA in gaining access to schools. Additionally, the program partnered with the Educational Service Center (ESC) in Region 4, serving Harris County, to pilot a collaborative effort with the LMHA, Harris Center for Mental Health and Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities. The local ESC hosts and markets the MHFA trainings to the public school system employees in their district. As a result, the LMHA is now reaching some school districts not previously receptive to this training, resulting in more school district employees trained. The MHFA program is exploring other collaborative pilot sites across the state for fiscal year 2017.

To further assist LMHAs and the LBHA in outreaching to local school districts, the MHFA program plans to create a list of school districts where LMHAs and the LBHA have provided MHFA training. Starting in fiscal year 2017, the program will begin to use this information to further refine strategic outreach and marketing efforts. Additionally, the program plans to pilot an online registration tool so participants across the state can have easier access to trainings held in their area.

**Addressing Other Barriers**

Feedback from schools and other community-based organizations indicates the eight-hour length of the training is a challenge for many school districts since it means vital personnel are offline for an entire day of training. Mental Health Mental Retardation (MHMR) of Tarrant County overcame this barrier by partnering with the Fort Worth Independent School District to provide MHFA training for bus drivers during the summer months, during their downtime, resulting in the training of 442 bus drivers. Bus drivers were particularly targeted for this training as they are usually the first and last school district personnel to see a child each day and often function as an essential part of a student’s life. Bus drivers who took the training reported an increased ability in identifying students who were sad or depressed, as well as being better equipped with knowledge and skills to assist students who might not otherwise have been identified. While not specifically mandated to reach this population, the state has encouraged MHMR Tarrant County to share this strategy with other LMHAs and the LBHA as an innovative practice to meet the required outreach to other public school employees who interact with children and youth on a routine basis.
Impact

Through continued partnerships and collaborations, the MHFA program experienced a nine percent increase in the number of public school district employees trained in fiscal year 2016 compared to fiscal year 2015.

Conclusion

Through enhanced partnerships and collaborations across the state, the MHFA program continues to successfully train public school employees, resources officers, and the community at large. During the last fiscal year, the MHFA program collaborated with community partners to identify solutions to increase the number of staff and community members trained in MHFA. The continued goal of the MHFA program is to decrease stigma, increase awareness, and help provide resources to individuals who might be experiencing a mental health crisis.
## List of Acronyms

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Full Name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DSHS</td>
<td>Department of State Health Services</td>
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<tr>
<td>ESC</td>
<td>Educational Services Center</td>
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<tr>
<td>H.B.</td>
<td>House Bill</td>
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<tr>
<td>HHSC</td>
<td>Health and Human Services Commission</td>
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<tr>
<td>IDD</td>
<td>Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities</td>
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<td>LBHA</td>
<td>Local Behavioral Health Authority</td>
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<td>LMHA</td>
<td>Local Mental Health Authority</td>
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<td>MHFA</td>
<td>Mental Health First Aid</td>
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<td>Mental Health and Mental Retardation</td>
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<td>Senate Bill</td>
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<td>TEA</td>
<td>Texas Education Agency</td>
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<td>Texas Council</td>
<td>Texas Council of Community Centers</td>
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