

Combating Mental Health Challenges in Military-Affiliated Students & College Communities

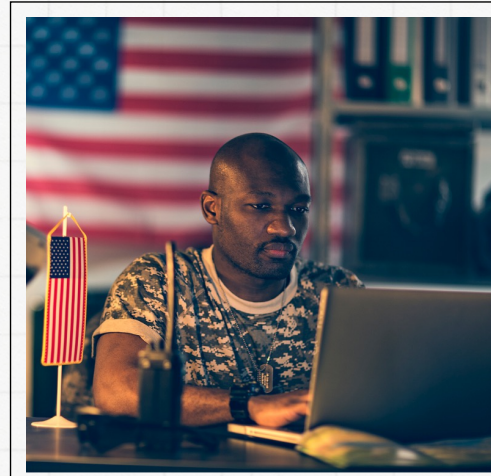
By: Rachel Brauner & Lakshmi Mahadevan, Ph.D.

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On average,

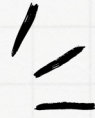
- **132 people** die by suicide each day (AFSP, 2023).
- **> 1 Million** people have died by drug overdose since 1999 (CDC, 2023).
- Suicide is the **3rd leading cause** of death for **15 to 24 year old** Americans (NIMH, 2023).
- **Nearly 1 in 5** U.S. Adults' lives with a mental illness (NIMH, 2023).



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Mental Health First Aid in Rural Texas



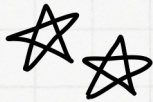
Funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture – National Institute of Food and Agriculture the grant utilized a multi-level intervention to mental health and substance use that focused on:

- Raising awareness on opioid use and misuse and related at-risk behaviors in rural Texas Counties.
- Increasing mental health literacy of adults who interact with rural youth /adults through Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) training.
- Providing harm reduction strategies and education in the form of opioid overdose reversal administration kits.

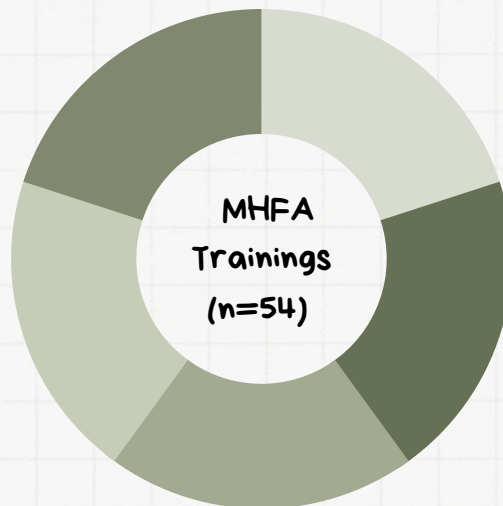


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Results



- **89%** of participants indicated that their knowledge of mental health challenges, signs, and symptoms has improved.
- **Over 72%** of participants reported appreciation for the action plan and the potential for preventing, intervening and recovery for fellow citizens and battle buddies experiencing mental health challenges.
- Participants (**n=595**).



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Feedback

"The training was significant because it simplifies and organizes your approach to better assist someone having a potential crisis."

"As a chaplain, this will enhance my ability to provide better help for service members who visit my office for this reason."

"Broadening my knowledge of working with people with mental health challenges both in my profession and others that I deal with in life in general."



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Addressing Mental Health Concerns on College Campuses

60% of college students meet the criteria for at least one mental health challenge (APA, 2022).

- Acknowledge shared aspects of culture across campuses & the unique experiences individuals may have based on **their own experiences**.
- Utilize **real-life scenarios** designed for faculty, staff, and students to identify signs of mental health and substance use challenges.
- Identify national, campus, and community **resources**.



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What does MHFA training cover?



Recognize signs and symptoms of a mental health challenge and/or substance use.

Prevent crisis by encouraging early help-seeking behavior.

Interact with a person before, during and after a crisis - patient, calm, nonjudgmental, reassuring and providing "hope with facts."



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Course teaches participants how to apply ALGEE Action Plan.

01

Assess for suicide risk or harm.

02

Listen nonjudgmentally.

03

Give reassurance and information.

04

Encourage appropriate professional help.

05

Encourage self-help and other support strategies.

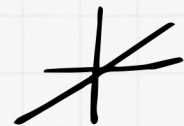
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MHFA in Crisis Situations



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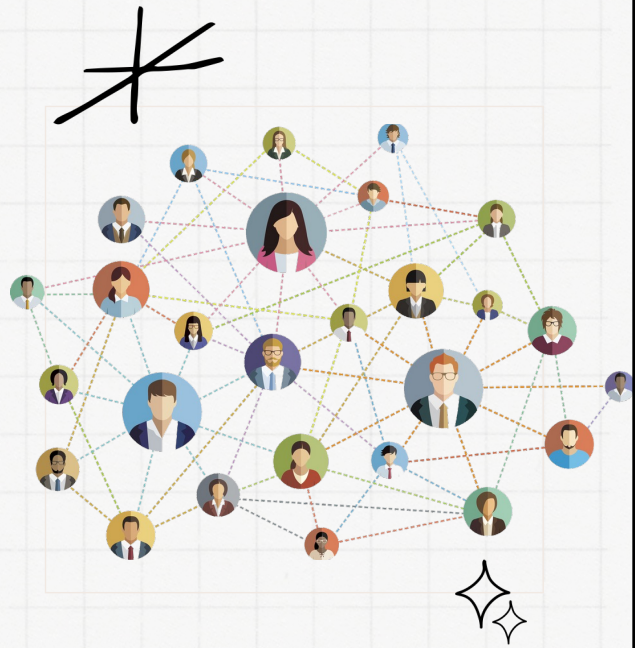
If MHFA is implemented by you or someone else, do you feel it would be helpful in your work or in everyday life?



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Outreach Strategies: What Worked for Us

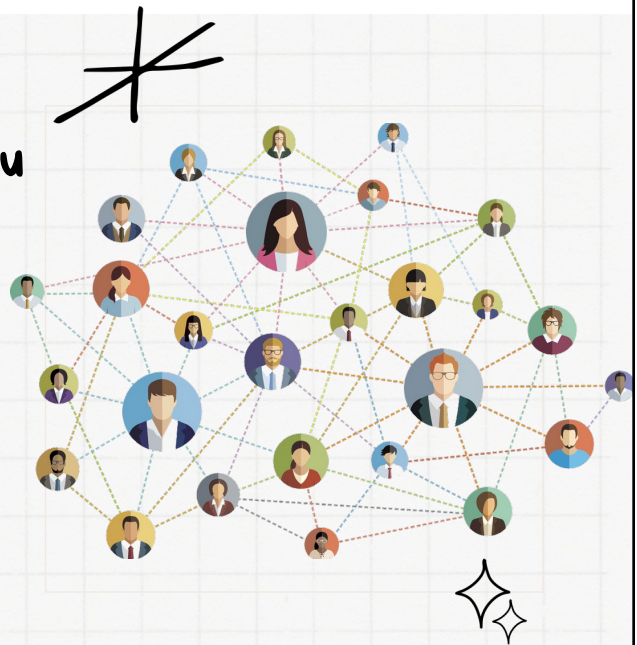
- Partnered with:
 - Student Advisors
 - Counseling Support Personnel (i.e., Student Veterans)
 - Student clubs focused on preventing health and suicide-related crises (i.e., Texas A&M Emergency Care Team).
- Encouraged participation from new employees, student workers, and graduate assistants.
- Utilize news bulletins (i.e., AgriLife Today).



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Outreach Strategies: What May Work for You

- Outreach to student clubs – For example, search “health” or “mental health” at <https://stuactonline.tamu.edu/app/search>
- Utilize TAMU Listserv – For example, Bulkmail.tamu.edu allows you to pick specific departments.
- Collaborate with Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Specialists focused on Family and Community Health.



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Implementation



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TAMU MHFA Task Force

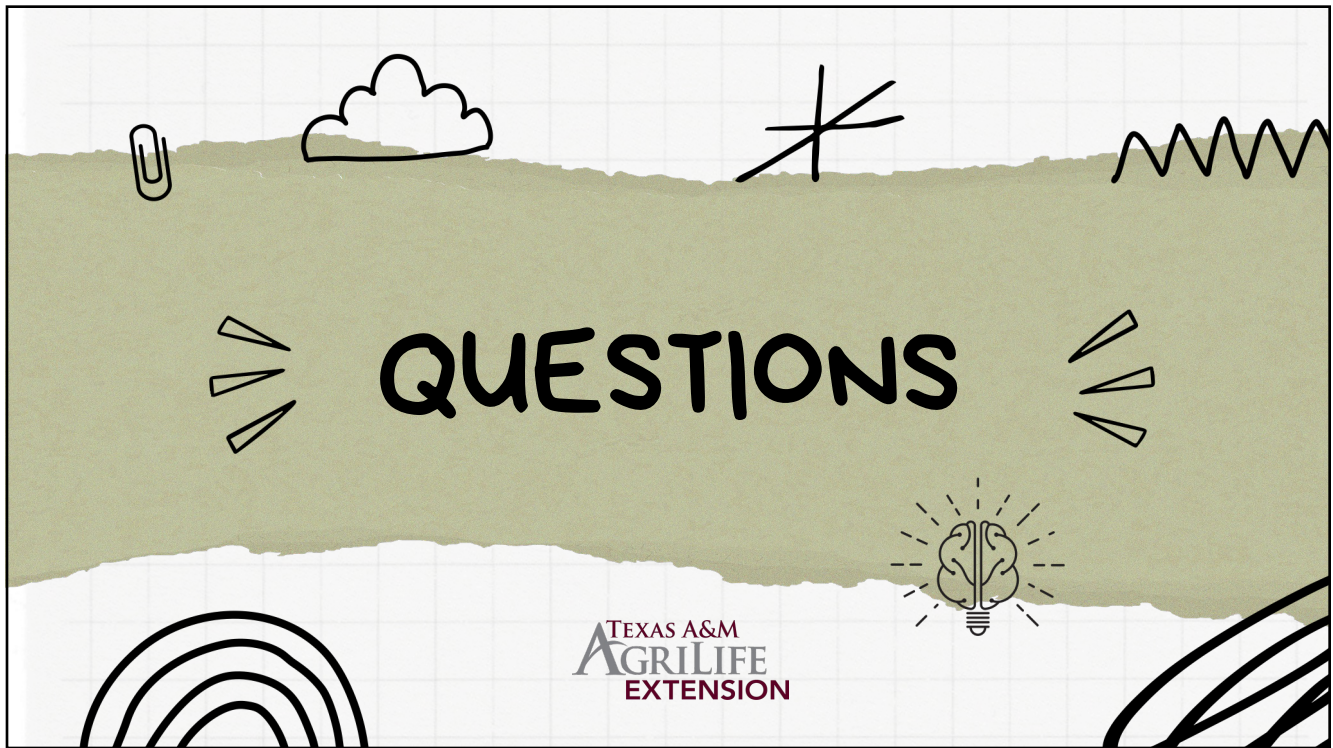


Initiative aimed at addressing mental health issues, promoting mental health awareness, providing valuable training, and getting mental health resources out to underserved populations within the TAMU community and beyond.

For further information or to schedule MHFA trainings, contact Angela Bates at batesmhfa@gmail.com.



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