

MHFA Newsletter

JULY 2006

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**MENTAL
HEALTH
FIRST AID**

THE MHFA PROGRAM RECOMMENDED BY THE SENATE SELECT COMMITTEE ON MENTAL HEALTH

This enquiry is one of the largest and most comprehensive investigations into the state of mental health in Australia. The report, released on 28 April 2006 can be downloaded here:

http://www.aph.gov.au/Senate/committee/mentalhealth_ctte/report02/index.htm

The Mental Health First Aid course is included in 2 of its recommendations:

Recommendation 4 (p7-8)

"The committee recommends that Australian Health Ministers agree to....

- Establish and fund a *National Mental Health Advisory Committee* made up of consumers, carers and service providers to...promote and manage **MHFA programs aiming for 6% of the population** to be trained and accredited, targeting those with the greatest probability of coming in contact with mental health issues - teachers, police, welfare workers and family carers".

Recommendation 88 (p24)

"ensure that rural police and ambulance services are a high priority for MHFA training"

UPDATED SUMMARY OF THE MHFA PROGRAM

An updated document all about the MHFA Program is now available on the "Program Overview" webpage of the MHFA website. It can be downloaded at this URL:

<http://www.mhfa.com.au/documents/SummaryonmhfaJune06.doc>

MHFA MANUAL REPRINTED

Could the MHFA Manual become a best-selling publication? By June this year, 30,000 MHFA manuals had been printed and disseminated. Last month, there was another print run of 20,000 MHFA manuals, with some amendments and updates. That brings the total number of MHFA manuals printed since September 2002 to 50,000.



MHFA STANDARDS PROJECT

Psychosis, Deliberate self-injury, and Suicidal Behaviour

We are inviting consumers who have personally experienced psychosis, deliberate self-injury, or suicidal thoughts or behaviours, and carers, who have looked after someone described above, to take part in an international study we are conducting at ORYGEN Research Centre, University of Melbourne. The aim of this project is to use the consensus of expert consumers, carers and clinicians to establish MHFA standards for psychosis, for deliberate self-injury, and for suicidal behaviour. Once established, these standards will empower members of the public to provide the best possible support to family members, friends and colleagues who may be experiencing

one of these problems, before appropriate professional help is received. The project involves completing questionnaires and does not require any face-to-face contact with the researchers. We would really appreciate your help with what we believe to be extremely important and worthwhile research.

If you would like to participate in the **Psychosis study**, or if you would like more information, please contact Robyn Langlands via email at robynla@unimelb.edu.au or by phone (03) 9342 3768.

If you would like to participate in the **Deliberate self-injury**, or **Suicidal behaviour** study, or both, or if you would like more information, please contact Dr Claire Kelly via email at ckel@unimelb.edu.au or by phone (03) 9342 3768.

Also, if you know of anyone who may be interested in participating in this study, please pass our contact details on to them.

We'd like your input.

INTERNATIONAL MHFA NEWS

a) Scotland

A very successful inaugural annual SMHFA Instructor Network Day was held in Glasgow's Royal Concert Hall on 27 June. The Instructors were able to attend workshops on marketing the SMHFA course, developing networks, multimedia demonstrations, effective group working and a knowledge clinic.

b) Canada

In March this year the Alberta Mental Health Board and the Calgary Health Region brought the MHFA Program over to the province of Alberta, Canada to train 22 excellent MHFA Instructors. These Instructors are now helping to modify the MHFA Program for Canada. Karen Mackenzie has been appointed Director of the MHFA Canada Program.
Karen.MacKenzie@amhb.ab.ca

c) Finland

In May Betty Kitchener was brought over to Vaasa, NW Finland by the Ostrobothnian Project (<http://www.pohjanmaahanke.fi/>) to introduce the MHFA Program. The Finnish Association for Mental Health (<http://www.mielenterveysseura.fi/english.asp?main=English>) has already adapted the MHFA manual for Finnish circumstances and translated it into Finnish, with plans to do a Swedish translation later this year.

d) Singapore

In June the National University of Singapore, in collaboration with Silver Ribbon (an NGO conducting a national anti-stigma campaign for mental illness) engaged Len Kanowski to train MHFA Instructors in Singapore. He also held meetings with several Singapore Government and University Departments who expressed an interest in the MHFA course and program – notably the Ministry of Education and the Faculty of Law at the National University of Singapore. A cohort of the accredited Singapore instructors and a small research team are presently adapting the MHFA materials for local conditions before rolling out the MHFA Singapore course nationally over the next few years.

e) North Dakota, US

Betty & Len will take the MHFA Program to Grand Forks, ND from 9 to 13 October. Three North Dakota health organizations have teamed to receive a US\$375,000 grant over the next 3 years from the federal Office of Rural Health Policy to establish a Mental Health First Aid Program in North Dakota. The Tribal Health Program of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe in Ft Yates, N.D. partnered with the Center for Rural Health at the University of North Dakota School of Medicine and Health Sciences in Grand Forks, N.D. and West River Health Services in Hettinger, N.D. to apply for the competitive grant. The grant program is designed to encourage the development of new and innovative health care delivery systems in rural communities that lack essential health care services. Ninety-five percent of North Dakota is designated as a Mental Health Professional Shortage Area. This federal designation means that there are an inadequate number of mental health providers relative to both the population and the need for services.

A STORY FROM A MHFA INSTRUCTOR

John White, MHFA Instructor from Western Australia, writes
“Whilst in the UK early this year, I conducted a MHFA course in the town of Calne in Wiltshire for an organisation called MIND. The first day I presented was on January 26, which is Australia Day, so I got them all singing Waltzing Matilda after lunch which worked quite well as an intro to suicide prevention! The MIND Committee of Management was appreciative of the presentation and decided to present me with a goat, which I was pleased to accept. The goat will be delivered to an African villager sometime this year and the first kid will be given to another villager”.



Oxfam goat gifting:

<http://www.oxfamunwrapped.com.au/>

NEW VIDEO ON MHFA FOR PSYCHOSIS

The MHFA team, in collaboration with the Office of Psychiatric Evaluation and Education Newmedia (OPEN) at the University of Melbourne are in the process of developing a short film to demonstrate how members of the public can apply the ALGEE steps to assist a person experiencing psychosis. Professional actors were hired for the production. The film is currently being edited. Once it is completed, it will be made available to purchase from the MHFA Program.

ADOLESCENT MHFA PROGRAM

The Adolescent MHFA Program is a new specialty MHFA course being developed and is aimed at adults who work with / support adolescents, in particular teachers, parents and youth workers. Development of the manual and teaching materials will be completed by the end of 2006 and evaluation of this new program will begin early 2007. The curriculum covers the symptoms, possible causes and first aid steps for the following mental illnesses in adolescents: depression, anxiety disorders, psychosis, substance use disorders, deliberate self-harm and eating disorders. To train as a MHFA Instructor of the Adolescent version, one needs to have already successfully completed the regular 5-day MHFA Instructor Training Course. Additional selection criteria around knowledge and experience with youth mental health problems will need to be met to then complete the 3-day specialty Adolescent Instructor Training Course.

ABORIGINAL MHFA PROGRAM

The Aboriginal MHFA Program is another new specialty course being developed and is aimed to be culturally sensitive for delivery to Aboriginal People. The draft Aboriginal MHFA manual has been reviewed by the National Indigenous Strategies Working Group (ISWG) and an editorial committee including Aboriginal psychiatrist Dr Helen Milroy from Western Australia. The manual will undergo a final edit by Aboriginal mental health workers and other key Aboriginal stakeholders in August this year. Aboriginal artwork will then be added to the manual. The development of the 5-day Aboriginal MHFA Instructor Training Course is presently underway.

There will be two ways to train as a MHFA Instructor who delivers the Aboriginal MHFA Program:

a) For an Aboriginal person who will be delivering the MHFA course only to Aboriginal people, there will be a specialized 5-day Aboriginal MHFA Instructor Training Course. Any applicant for this course needs to meet the selection criteria in the application at this URL:

<http://www.mhfa.com.au/documents/AboriginalMHFAInstructorApplicationMay2006.pdf>

The first 3 of this specialized course will be conducted later this year:

Orange, NSW 23 - 27 October 2006

Cairns, QLD 20 - 24 November 2006

Geraldton, WA 6 - 7 November 2006

More information at this URL: http://www.mhfa.com.au/instructor_courses.htm

b) For a person who wishes to conduct MHFA courses for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, the trainee Instructor will need to successfully complete the regular 5-day MHFA Instructor Training Course plus complete a 3-day specialty course. People who apply for this specialty course will need to fulfil additional criteria which will be set by the MHFA Team in conjunction with an Aboriginal Advisory Group. These 3-day specialty courses will begin in 2007.

E-LEARNING COURSE FOR THE WORKPLACE

To support the Australian Government's recent Welfare to Work Initiative (<http://www.movingintowork.gov.au/>) the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR) has funded the Mental Health Council of Australia to co-ordinate the development of an e-learning course about helping people with mental illness in the workplace. This CD will contain some material from the 12-hour MHFA course as well as information about employment issues for people with mental illness.

The MHFA Program is currently developing a curriculum of a 3-hour face-to-face group course to be available to anyone who has completed working through this CD. This 3-hour course will only be conducted by accredited MHFA Instructors. This e-learning course will be available later this year. More information will be given in the next MHFA Newsletter.

A similar approach has been taken by St John's Ambulance First Aid Training for the Australian public. St John's offers flexible ways to train in first aid. One option is to work through a first aid information on a CD and then complete a one-day first aid workshop. More information about this at this URL: <http://www.stjohn.org.au> Click on → Training → Flexible Learning.