



**MENTAL HEALTH  
FIRST AID®**

For Anyone. For Everyone.™

# Building a Mental Health First Aider network for your workplace

Providing mental health first aid can be both challenging and demanding, so ensuring you support your Mental Health First Aiders™ (MHFAider®) is just as important as training them in the first place. This support can include opportunities for them to refresh their skills, debrief and share experiences, ideas, and knowledge.

Providing support is also an opportunity to check in with your MHFAiders to see if they are overwhelmed or under high work demands that may impede their ability to provide mental health first aid to their co-workers.

There are many ways to support your MHFAiders and it's best to develop strategies that will suit your workplace. Here are a few suggestions to get you started:

## Scaffold your MHFAiders with workplace supports



- Develop policies and procedures that clearly delineate their roles, responsibilities and boundaries. (Mental Health First Aid Australia have resources to help you do this.)
- Appoint a central coordinator that your MHFAiders can go to with questions or concerns.
- Meet regularly with your MHFAiders (monthly or quarterly) to provide continuing development opportunities, skills development and networking opportunities (see thought starters below).
- Make EAP services available to MHFAiders who may need to debrief following a difficult conversation.

## Provide resources



- Develop a list of local and workplace specific resources that your MHFAiders can access when providing support.
- If your organisation has an intranet, create a space to post resources, including the training calendar and networking opportunities.

## Acknowledge the efforts of your MHFAiders



- Celebrate the efforts of your MHFAiders – put on a morning tea or lunch or acknowledge them in company wide communications.

## MHFAider support network meeting thought starters:

- Invite a speaker to talk about a topic pertinent to your MHFAiders e.g., mental health problems specific to your industry, self-care, local resources.
- Provide skills development opportunities based on the ALGEE action plan.
- If you've conducted a workplace evaluation, present the results to show the impact of training in your workplace.
- Practice communication styles and approaches to mental health first aid conversations that have proven successful. For example, what to say and do when someone doesn't want support from an MHFAider.
- Discuss how to develop mental health champions within your workplace.
- Plan events for your MHFAiders and employees based on key dates in the mental health calendar, e.g. World Mental Health Day, R U OK? Day.

## Utilise the resources provided by Mental Health First Aid Australia



- Take advantage of the workplace resources on offer from Mental Health First Aid Australia, including the MHFAider Network and Mental Health First Aid on LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

learn more [mhfa.com.au](https://mhfa.com.au)

# Building a Mental Health First Aider training network for your workplace

## Training approach and the impact on the workplace

Who you train will play a part in determining how you will support your MHFAiders. For example, if you train large numbers of staff it may be difficult to meet face to face regularly. There are a number of training approaches that your organisation may adopt, including:

### 1 Training all staff who are interested

Workplaces who adopt this approach often have a relationship with an external Instructor or an employee trained to deliver MHFA training (internal instructor) and MHFA courses will be a regular feature of their training schedule.

#### ✓ Advantages

- Creates an environment where employees have a shared understanding and language around mental health problems.
- With multiple, if not most, employees trained, the positive impacts on workplace culture should be felt quickly.
- Option to be recognised through the Mental Health First Aid Australia Workplace Recognition Program more quickly.

#### ✗ Disadvantages

- This model can be costly in terms of staff time away from core duties.
- If you do not have an internal Instructor, training costs may be high.
- No one appointed to champion Mental Health First Aid in the workplace.

### 2 Training strategic employees within your organisation

This involves choosing either the people who are best suited or the roles where the skills are most needed. Some workplaces who take this approach have an application process and look for people with certain skills and attributes, or they may choose to train, for example all their customer facing staff or all line managers.

#### ✓ Advantages

- This is cost effective as you are only training a limited number of people.
- Those trained may become champions of mental health in the workplace.

#### ✗ Disadvantages

- May take longer for the training to impact workplace culture.
- Depending on who you train, you may not have the best reach. For example, if you train only managers, people may not feel comfortable talking to them about their mental health.

### 3 Training all staff who are interested AND appointing MHFA Officers.

This approach is similar to the first but also involves appointing appropriate people to act as MHFA Officers. An MHFA Officer has completed their MHFA training and accreditation and has been appointed by the workplace as the designated person within their organisation to offer initial mental health support to other employees. Some workplaces choose to pay their MHFA Officers, like they do Physical First Aid Officers. (See [Mental Health First Aid Officers](#) for more information.)

#### ✓ Advantages

- Creates an environment where employees have a shared understanding and language around mental health problems.
- With multiple, if not most, employees trained, the positive impacts on workplace culture should be felt quickly.
- MHFA Officers become champions of mental health in the workplace.
- Option to be recognised through the Mental Health First Aid Australia Workplace Recognition Program more quickly.

#### ✗ Disadvantages

- This model can be costly in terms of staff time away from core duties.
- If you do not have an internal Instructor, training costs may be high.

## We're here to help.

Our dedicated Workplace Engagement Team is here to help with every step of your Mental Health First Aid journey. [workplaces@mhfa.com.au](mailto:workplaces@mhfa.com.au)

learn more [mhfa.com.au](https://mhfa.com.au)

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