

Report to Leck Grant Committee on Mental Health First Aid for Older Adults Training

Thank you for funding Journey Mental Health Center's request for training Dane County Senior Center staff in Mental Health First Aid for Older Adults. We believe the training was very successful – enabling Journey Mental Health Center to provide this training to those who are on the front line serving seniors throughout Dane County.

Last year, Journey Mental Health Center was privileged to receive funding for Mental Health First Aid training for senior center staff from around Dane County. That training took place on October 6 and 13, 2016. We hosted the training at Journey Mental Health Center.

Mental Health First Aid for Older Adults helps those working with seniors to recognize and respond to signs of emerging mental illnesses and substance use disorders. The program is an interactive 8-hour course that presents an overview of mental illness and substance use disorders in the United States. The training introduces participants to risk factors and warning signs of mental health problems among people age 60 and up. Those who take the 8-hour course to certify as Mental Health First Aiders learn a five-step action plan encompassing the skills, resources, and knowledge to help older adults in crisis connect with appropriate professional, peer, social, and self-help care.

Losses are common among older adults. Deaths of spouses and friends are common. Loss of independence due to failing health can be a very traumatic event. As a result, depression, anxiety and related mental health issues are common. Suicide rates rise substantially among older adults.

Mental Health First Aid for Older Adults training is important for people who work regularly with senior populations. They are often the first to notice changes in the seniors they serve. Mental Health First Aid training gives Senior Center staff the tools necessary to recognize emerging signs/symptoms of a mental health problem. Once recognized, the training enables staff to engage the person and guide them to resources in the community that can help.

Eighteen senior center staff attended the training and were certified as Mental Health First Aiders. Each participant in the training completed an evaluation of the class. These evaluations were very positive. We have attached a copy of the evaluations for your review.

Thank you for making this valuable training possible.