



Mental Health First Aid – Supporting Older Adults Course Outline

Context

The Mental Health Commission of Canada reports that one in every five Canadians experiences a mental health or substance use problem within a given year. These problems can affect older adults in a unique way. While people often know a lot about physical illness, most people have less knowledge about mental health or substance use problems. This lack of understanding often leads to fear and negative attitudes towards those living with these problems. It prevents people from seeking help for themselves and from providing appropriate support to people around them.

Course Objectives

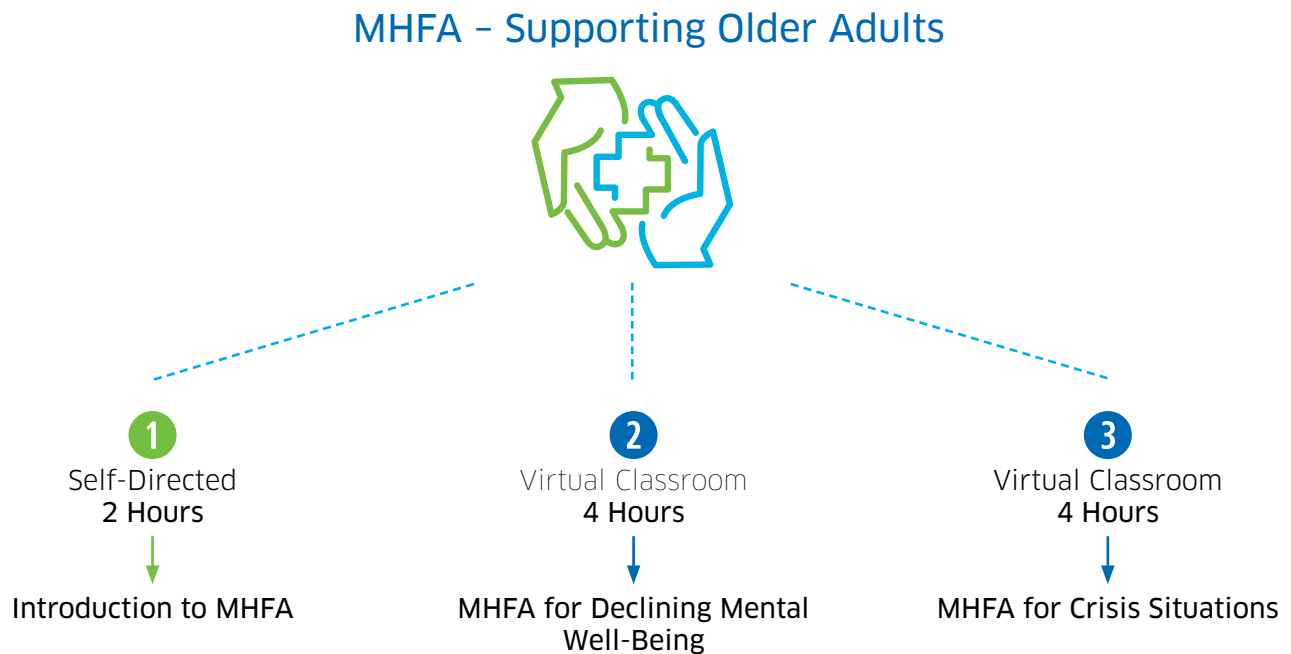
Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) is the help provided to a person who may be experiencing a crisis or a decline in their mental well-being. The course is designed for people who have frequent contact with older adults, for example, family members, friends, public and private caregivers, community health workers, and volunteers.

Course participants will learn how to:

- recognize signs that an older adult may be experiencing a decline in their mental well-being or a crisis
- have conversations that encourage an older adult to:
 - talk about declines in their mental well-being
 - discuss professional and other supports that could help with recovery
 - reach out to these supports
- assist with helpful actions in a mental health or substance use crisis
- use MHFA actions to maintain one's own mental well-being.

Method

This 10-hour course opens with a self-directed module (Module 1) that focuses on the information and strategies that participants will discuss and practice throughout the virtual classroom modules (Modules 2 and 3). Upon registration, participants receive a link to the “MHFA – Supporting Older Adults Reference Guide” that outlines MHFA actions for assisting people who might be developing mental health and substance use problems or undergoing mental health crises.



Topics

- The Mental Health First Aid Action Plan
- Things that a first aider needs to know to help an older adult:
 - The relationship between mental health problems and aging
 - Signs of declining mental well-being and of crisis situations
 - Helpful resources for older adults living with a mental health and/or substance use problem and the people who care for these individuals
 - How to communicate effectively with older adults, including those from marginalized populations
 - Roles and responsibilities of people who assist an older adult
- Practise applying MHFA actions to:
 - Common disorders: anxiety, depression, or substance use problems
 - Crisis situations: suicidal thoughts and behaviours, onset of dementia, reaction to a traumatic event, or severe effects from substance use.