

## **Mental Health First Aid and QPR-Question, Persuade, Refer Request for Information**

The Detroit Wayne Mental Health Authority (“Authority”) is looking to enter into a contract with various vendors for the implementation of Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) and Question, Persuade, Refer (QPR). Each of the curricula support the efforts that the Authority has worked toward for the past couple of years in educating the community about mental health and how to access treatment; decreasing stigma; preventing suicide; and improving the safety of persons with behavioral health challenges and those in the community.

DWMHA will spearhead the implementation of a mental health awareness and suicide prevention campaign. The targeted populations will include:

1. First Responders: This includes law enforcement, fire department, and emergency medical technicians (EMTs)
2. The Faith Community: Including a broad cross-section of worship communities. We partnered with this population in the last fiscal year by presenting our first annual Faith and Mental Health Conference. This new program expands our partnership.
3. Youth and families through the school system.

The services to be delivered will be training in the evidence-based practice models: **Mental Health First Aid (MHFA)** and **Question, Persuade, Refer (QPR)**.

People diagnosed as mentally ill tend to die 18 to 30 years younger than non-disabled peers (Colton & Manderscheid, 2006). This alarming statistic is explained not only by the disease characteristics, but the inadequate response mounted by community professionals (Carney & Jones, 2006; Kilbourne et al., 2008). Many community professionals enter the field poorly prepared to handle cases of mental illness, so it is difficult for these professionals to mount an effective response. As increasing numbers of professionals receive training around how to respond appropriately to mental health concerns, those experiencing mental health issues will benefit.

### **WHY MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID?**

One in five Americans has a mental illness and many are reluctant to seek help or might not know where to turn for care. The symptoms of mental illness can be difficult to detect — even when friends and family of someone who appears to be developing a mental illness can tell that something is amiss, they may not know how to intervene or direct the person to proper treatment – which means that all too often, those in need of mental health services do not get them until it is too late. As a society, we largely remain ignorant about the signs and symptoms of mental illnesses, and we ignore our role as responsible community members to help people experiencing these illnesses.

## **WHAT IS MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID?**

Mental Health First Aid is an 8-hour course that introduces participants to risk factors and warning signs of mental health concerns, builds understanding of their impact, and overviews common treatments. The course uses role-playing and simulations to demonstrate how to assess a mental health crisis; select interventions and provide initial help; and connect persons to professional, peer and social supports as well as self-help resources.

Mental Health First Aid allows for early detection and intervention by teaching participants about the signs and symptoms of specific illnesses like anxiety, depression, schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, eating disorders, and addictions. The program offers concrete tools and answers key questions like “What can I do?” and “Where can someone find help?” Participants are introduced to local mental health resources, national organizations, support groups, and online tools for mental health and addictions treatment and support.

## **WHY QPR-QUESTION, PERSUADE, REFER?**

Question, Persuade, Refer (QPR) are three simple steps that anyone can learn to help save a life from suicide. QPR is a free, 60-90 minute suicide prevention training that is offered to the public that trains that teaches the participant to recognize a suicide crisis and how to get help. It was designed by Paul Quinnett, Ph.D., Spokane, Washington.

Just like CPR, QPR is an emergency response to someone in crisis and can save lives. Each year, thousands of Americans are saying "yes" to save the life of a friend, colleague, sibling or neighbor by being trained as a QPR specialist.

According to the Surgeon General’s National Strategy for Suicide Prevention (2001), a gatekeeper is someone in a position to recognize a crisis and the warning signs that someone may be contemplating suicide. Gatekeepers include parents, friends, teachers, doctors, nurses, police officers, caseworkers, firefighters and many others trained to recognize and refer someone at risk of suicide

### **A QPR-trained Gatekeeper will learn to:**

Recognize the warning signs of suicide

Know how to offer hope

Know how to get help and possibly save a life