FYI-Mt. St. Mary's Hospital in Niagara Falls, is sponsoring a Mental Health First Aid training session. They are opening it up to any FCN, Nurse, LPN, etc., who wish to be trained. The cost is only your time for one day.

What is Mental Health First Aid?

Mental Health First Aid is an 8-hour course that gives people the skills to help someone who is developing a mental health problem or experiencing a mental health crisis. The evidence behind the program demonstrates that it does build mental health literacy, helping the public identify, understand, and respond to signs of mental illness.

How long does it take to participate in Mental Health First Aid course?

The Mental Health First Aid course runs 8 hours and may be offered in a variety of formats. Most often, it is provided in one day, or in two 4-hour sessions spaced over a short period of time.

What do people learn in a Mental Health First Aid course?

Just as CPR training helps a person with no clinical training assist an individual following a heart attack, Mental Health First Aid training helps a person assist someone experiencing a mental health crisis such as contemplating suicide. In both situations, the goal is to help support an individual *until appropriate professional* help arrives. Mental Health First Aiders learn a single 5-step strategy that includes assessing risk, respectfully listening to and supporting the individual in crisis, and identifying appropriate professional help and other supports. Participants are also introduced to risk factors and warning signs for mental health or substance use problems, engage in experiential activities that build understanding of the impact of illness on individuals and families, and learn about evidence-supported treatment and self-help strategies.

What types of crisis interventions are covered?

Trainees are taught how to apply the 5-step action plan in a variety of situations such as helping someone through a panic attack, engaging with someone who may be suicidal, or assisting an individual who has overdosed. An important component of the Mental Health First Aid course is the opportunity to practice the intervention strategy rather than to just learn about it. This simple experience can make it easier to actually apply the knowledge in a real-life situation.

Is there evidence to support the effectiveness of the program?

Yes. Peer reviewed studies from Australia and across the globe show that the program saves lives, improves the mental health of the individual administering care *and* the one receiving it, expands knowledge of mental illnesses and their treatments, increases the services provided, and reduces overall social distance toward individuals with mental illnesses by improving mental health literacy. One trial of 301 randomized participants found that those who trained in Mental Health First Aid have greater confidence in providing help to others, greater likelihood of advising people to seek professional help, improved concordance with health professionals about treatments, and decreased stigmatizing attitudes.