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**FIRST LADY CHIRLANE MCCRAY ANNOUNCES OVER 75,000 NEW YORKERS
NOW TRAINED IN MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID**

Milestone in citywide training comes as New York recognizes Suicide Prevention Month

NEW YORK—First Lady Chirlane McCray and Acting Health Commissioner Dr. Oxiris Barbot announced that 75,000 New Yorkers have now been trained in Mental Health First Aid as part of the City’s goal to train 250,000 New Yorkers by 2021. Mental Health First Aid, which is [free as a part of ThriveNYC](#), is an evidence-based curriculum that teaches participants how to recognize the signs and symptoms of mental illness and substance misuse

The curriculum, designed by the National Council on Behavioral Health, also provides trainees with the skills to respond when someone close to them is experiencing a mental health or substance use crisis. The New Yorkers trained in Mental Health First Aid join over a million Americans who have also been certified. The training is free for New Yorkers as part of ThriveNYC, New York’s comprehensive plan to create a mental health system that works for everyone. New Yorkers can find a free class [here](#).

“There are now 75,000 New Yorkers who are mental health helpers and healers, and ready to serve as the FIRST first responders for their families and friends.” said **First Lady Chirlane McCray**. “The training these New Yorkers have received is similar to CPR, but focused on behavioral health. Many of those trained will save lives, and many more will help people, in their faith communities, work places and neighborhoods. Any New Yorker, age 17 or older can take Mental Health First Aid for free. During Suicide Prevention Month, we want everyone to know that they can make a difference by joining us in our mission to train 250,000 New Yorkers in Mental Health First Aid.”

“Under the Mental Health First Aid program, 75,000 New Yorkers have already received the necessary trainings to properly recognize when someone is suffering from substance abuse and mental illness,” said **State Senator Gustavo Rivera**. “In this Suicide Prevention Month, I applaud First Lady Chirlane McCray and Acting Health Commissioner Oxiris Barbot for their continuous efforts to not only shed light on the importance of mental health but, more importantly, to get rid of the stigma surrounding it once for all.”

“By training New Yorkers how to recognize the signs and symptoms of mental illness and substance abuse, the Mental Health First Aid program is helping make New York a healthier city and providing an important resource to help New Yorkers improve their mental health,” said **Assembly Member Richard N. Gottfried, Chair of the Assembly Health Committee.**

“Mental Health First Aid trainings play a critical role in equipping New Yorkers with the tools necessary to identify the signs of mental illness and substance misuse. I am pleased to learn 75,000 people have been certified and I look forward to collaborating with ThriveNYC to ensure our City meets its goal of training certifying 250,000 people by 2021,” said **Council Member Diana Ayala, Chair of the Committee on Mental Health, Disabilities, and Addiction.**

“I commend First Lady MCray and Commissioner Barbot in getting Mental Health First Aid up and running so successfully as part of the ThriveNYC initiative,” said **Councilwoman Carlina Rivera, Chair of the City Council’s Committee on Hospitals.** “More importantly, I thank the tens of thousands of New Yorkers who have participated in this training which helps identify people who are facing challenges with addiction or mental illness, including suicide. I look forward to helping promote this program so that we can incorporate as many New Yorkers as we can into a support network for those neighbors who need it most.”

“Through its Mental Health First Aid program, New York has demonstrated an unwavering commitment to the behavioral health of its citizens,” said **Betsy Swchwartz of the National Council on Behavioral Health.** “With engagement in almost every sector, more people than ever will be able to recognize and respond to people experiencing a mental health or substance-use crisis.”

Trainees for Mental Health First Aid are taught about a variety of situations including: helping someone through a panic attack and assisting an individual who has overdosed. The program also focuses on how to engage with someone who may be suicidal. The risk of suicide is greater if any of the behaviors below are new, have increased, and if they seem related to a painful event, loss, or change. The following signs may mean someone is at risk for suicide:

- Talking about wanting to die or to kill themselves.
- Looking for a way to kill themselves, such as searching online or buying a gun.
- Talking about feeling hopeless or having no reason to live.
- Talking about feeling trapped or in unbearable pain.
- Increasing the use of alcohol or drugs.
- Acting anxious or agitated; behaving recklessly.
- Sleeping too little or too much.
- Withdrawing or isolating themselves.
- Showing rage or talking about seeking revenge.
- Displaying extreme mood swings.

Mental Health First Aid training is offered six days a week in all five boroughs. Courses are offered in English, Spanish, Mandarin, Arabic, Haitian Creole, and French. Courses are tailored to people who regularly interact with youth ages 12 to 18, older adults, or veterans and people who work in higher education and public safety. The adult MHFA course teaches participants a

five-step action plan to help someone 18 years or older who is displaying signs of mental illness or emotional crisis. New Yorkers interested in taking a free MHFA class can sign up at nyc.gov/mhfa.

New Yorkers experiencing suicidal thoughts or concerned about the mental health of their loved ones can contact NYC Well by calling 1-888-NYC-WELL, texting “WELL” to 65173 or going to nyc.gov/nycwell.

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