

TITLE: Coast to Forest: Evaluation of Virtual (Online) Adult Mental Health First Aid Training in Oregon

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STUDENT SUBMISSION: Yes

TOPIC/TARGET AUDIENCE: Topics: Mental Health Promotion, Program Evaluation Audiences: Mental Health Promotion Professionals, Community Health Workers

ABSTRACT: Background: Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) is an evidence-based training that teaches participants to identify and respond to signs of mental health challenges and substance use disorders. Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic between 2020 and 2022, the Coast to Forest program trained 383 Oregonians in MHFA in virtual/online format. Purpose: To summarize preliminary changes in participants confidence, awareness, helping behaviors, and stigma related to mental health and substance use challenges. Methods: Participants completed baseline and 30-day post assessments (n=34). Individual changes in all measures were assessed using paired t-tests. Results: Confidence to respond to individuals in crisis (mean difference = 0.634***; 95% CI = 0.439-0.829) and awareness of the signs of mental health challenges (mean difference = 0.531***; 95% CI = 0.385-0.677) increased significantly. Although participants reported helping behaviors decreased significantly (mean difference = 0.323**; 95% CI = 0.086-0.559), 30 days may not have provided adequate time to practice newly learned skills. No significant differences were found in participants endorsement of stigma (mean difference = 0.193; 95% CI = 0.034-0.419). Implications: Consistent with previous evaluations of MHFA using in-person instruction, preliminary findings suggest that virtual MHFA training positively impacted participants confidence and awareness of identifying and responding to people in crisis.

OBJECTIVE(S): Audience members will learn about the effectiveness and utility of virtual (online) instruction of MHFA in Oregon.
