

The background of the entire page is a repeating geometric pattern of overlapping triangles in various shades of teal and green, creating a textured, crystalline effect. The top and bottom sections of the page are filled with this pattern, while the middle section is white.

# **Youth Mental Health First Aid in the Jewish Community**

**Facilitator's Guide**

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The material presented in this guide is intended to be used in concert with the National Council for Behavioral Health's Youth Mental Health First Aid curriculum and certification program.

## Acknowledgements

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**Section One:  
Bringing Youth Mental  
Health First Aid to  
Your Community**

# Introduction

Since 2016, [The Jewish Education Project](#) has offered training to more than 90 educators and youth professionals throughout the New York Area in Youth Mental Health First Aid, a certification program through the [National Council of Behavioral Health](#). The certification program provides training for educators, caregivers, and counselors to help adolescents (ages 12-18) who are experiencing a mental health or addiction challenge or are in crisis. Following The Jewish Education Project's endeavors with this certification course, several communities within the [Jewish Teen Education & Engagement Funder Collaborative](#) followed suit and held courses for their constituencies. This guide reflects a partnership between the Jewish Education project and Jewish Teen Education & Engagement Funder Collaborative as part of our collective commitment to make the training normative within the Jewish teen engagement landscape.

## **This guide was created to:**

- Provide communities with an easy way to learn about the course and what they may need to consider as they plan to offer the course in their own community.
- Build on the existing course content by adding Jewish values and cultural/religious aspects that address issues that are specific to the Jewish community.
- Better reflect the unique needs of Jewish youth professionals as ongoing support to teens.

**The guide has two parts.** Part one is for anyone seeking to host a YMHFA training in their community. The second is intended only for individuals who are trained and certified as a trainer of Youth Mental Health First Aid by the National Council of Behavioral Health.

## **Understanding Youth Mental Health First Aid (YMHFA)**

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 the course builds mental health literacy, helping the public identify, understand, and respond to signs of mental illness. 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.

The youth course is designed to provide information and skills to adults who regularly interact with adolescents so that they can help the adolescents in their lives. The course introduces common mental health challenges for youth, reviews typical adolescent development, and teaches a five-step action plan for how to help young people in both crisis and non-crisis situations. Topics covered include anxiety, depression, substance use, disorders in which psychosis may occur, disruptive behavior disorders (including ADHD), and eating disorders.

## Benefits of Youth Mental Health First Aid Training

Participants learn to support a youth who is developing signs and symptoms of a mental illness or is in an emotional crisis by applying a core five-step action plan. Participants do not learn to diagnose or to provide any therapy or counseling.

The National Council of Behavioral Health provides [evidence](#) (also found on [www.TheNationalCouncil.org/topics/mental-health-first-aid](http://www.TheNationalCouncil.org/topics/mental-health-first-aid)) that those trained in Mental Health First Aid have greater confidence in providing help to others, greater likelihood of advising people to seek professional help, improved communication with health professionals about treatments, and decreased stigmatizing attitudes toward mental health problems.

At the conclusion of the course, participants take a test to confirm that they have acquired the knowledge and skills presented during the eight hours. Participants receive a certificate stating that they have completed the 8-hour course, are now certified in Youth Mental Health First Aid, and have been trained to provide initial help to young people experiencing mental health problems such as depression, anxiety disorders, psychosis, and substance use disorders.

## The Rationale for a Jewish Lens

The Youth Mental Health First Aid course acknowledges that there is a cultural element to mental health first aid that cannot be overlooked. Since YMHFA engages a generalized population, it assumes an adult will be interacting with a diverse group of adolescents, many from a culture different from their own. YMHFA emphasizes the importance of understanding the youth's culture and that a young person may "be more comfortable talking to an adult from their culture than to someone from a different culture."<sup>1</sup>

Youth Mental Health First Aid recognizes the importance of finding people who understand the youth's cultural background. Someone embedded in a community may be better equipped to recognize the cultural norms within that community, enabling them to communicate with the teen more effectively and avoid cultural taboos within that community.

Cultural awareness includes knowledge and understanding of the rituals and practices of that culture. These rituals and practices can be recognized as protective factors or risk factors for youth within their community.<sup>2</sup> The job of a YMHFA trained professional from a particular cultural community is to be able to bridge the cultural component to the mental health component. This involves recognizing these triggers and possessing an awareness of the adolescents during times that these triggers surface.

The second part of this guide includes additions to the course that reflect the cultural and religious elements for the Jewish community. We recognize that there is significant variety between and within Jewish communities and we thus strove to prepare a guide that would suit the commonalities within these communities.

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<sup>1</sup> Mental Health First Aid™ USA (Washington, DC: National Council for Behavioral Health, 2016), 29.

<sup>2</sup> These protective factors are expounded upon on pages 13-16 in the second part of the guide under "Protective Factors and Risk Factors in Jewish Teen Communities."

## The Goal of this Guide

This guide serves to supplement and adapt the Youth Mental Health First Aid course to:

1) account for the unique nature of the Jewish community; 2) frame the learning with Jewish values that dictate life preservation and the communal obligation to support those facing mental health challenges; and 3) better reflect the relationship of Jewish youth professionals with teens.

Feedback from those who participated in the 8-hour course indicated that youth professionals often serve in a more ongoing support capacity than is assumed in the course training. Therefore, we embarked on the creation of modules—in addition to the 8-hour course—that serve as continuing education to provide further application and relevancy to the Jewish community and our youth professionals' work. We know that our youth professionals often encounter situations involving teens' mental health. This course will equip youth professionals with a full toolkit that will enable them to respond appropriately to the vast majority of scenarios.

## Considerations for Offering YMHA in Your Community

### Scheduling the Course

Youth Mental Health First Aid is an in-person 8-hour course. The course can be held as one 8-hour course, two 4-hour courses, or four 2-hour courses. It is strongly recommended to complete the course in the least amount of time possible so that the material stays fresh. **In order to determine which option is right for you, consider the following:**

- When does your population already meet? Are they more likely to meet for day long programming, half-day programming, or short monthly meet ups?
- Is your population likely to return to complete the training if it is split? Note that participants cannot receive the certification unless they complete all eight hours.
- Are you bringing in a facilitator from outside the community? If so, you will want to consider additional travel and accommodation costs.

	8-Hour Course	2-Hour or 4-Hour Course
Pros	This is the ideal option if you are bringing in a facilitator from outside the community or if you are concerned about participant attrition (consider weather, life emergencies, work obligations).	These make for shorter days which require fewer breaks. This allows you to build in additional content more naturally. It also gives time for participants to digest the content from the previous session(s). Additionally, participants may encounter the content in their settings that they can draw on as they continue their training.
Cons	This is a long day for both the learners and the facilitator. You will want to incorporate additional time for brain and “bio” breaks, and meals. Due to these necessary breaks, you are more pressed for time and have less leeway in adding any additional content to an already content-packed course.	Since participants must complete all 8 hours, you must be confident that your participants will return for each part of the training. This scheduling becomes very expensive if you are working with a facilitator from outside the community.

## Participants

### » *Number of Participants*

A course can be run with 5 to 30 participants. Special dispensation from Youth Mental Health First Aid may be requested to extend beyond 30 participants, though it is not recommended. In our experience, an ideal group size is between 15 to 20 participants. This allows for more conversation throughout the day and for the facilitator to delve deeper into participants' questions.

### » *Knowing Your Participants*

The Youth Mental Health First Aid course is designed for anyone working with teens. It is ideal for early career youth professionals who might not have previously engaged in any training around mental health for youth. It also includes review for professionals with pastoral counseling experience or advanced education in social work or psychology, presenting unique content that focuses on Jewish youth. This guide offers a shared language for people within the Jewish community and those of different religious backgrounds and provides the opportunity for professionals of all backgrounds to practice and hone their skills.

As you plan the session, consider who is in the room. If, for example, you know that you have a diverse group, plan opportunities wherein the early career youth professionals can learn from those with advanced degrees or those who serve in clinical roles and vice versa. When leading training sessions, The Jewish Education Project facilitators have invited those with expertise to weigh in with examples or scenarios where their knowledge and insights would deepen the lessons being taught.

## Facilitation

### » *Choosing One vs Two Facilitators*

Only a Youth Mental Health First Aid trained and certified facilitator may lead a YMHFA course (and use the second section of this guide). YMHFA recommends that two facilitators are present for the course, though you may choose to have only one facilitator.

	One Facilitator	Two Facilitators
<b>Considerations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Some facilitators prefer to lead alone rather than navigate the material alongside someone else, especially a stranger.</li><li>• If you are paying for the facilitation, you may only have the funds for one facilitator.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Some facilitators find it helpful to split the day; having a co-facilitator allows both time to rest.</li><li>• The participant experience may also be enhanced by having two facilitators. This is especially true if you offer an 8-hour course; hearing the same voice all day may be tiresome for participants.</li><li>• Having two facilitators enables one facilitator to step out of the room and check in with participants who may be triggered by course content.</li></ul>



## » *Choosing a Facilitator*

We strongly recommend that you consider a facilitator who understands the unique identity of your target audience. We encourage you to speak to any facilitator you choose to ensure that they are the correct fit for your community. Facilitators who are well acquainted with the community are better equipped to understand the lives and roles of the participants.

- They naturally understand the difference between an educator, a youth professional, and a camp professional.
- They speak a common language with training participants.
- Their knowledge and insight into the community enables them to naturally incorporate relevant examples throughout the 8-hour course.

Note: Only trained facilitators can access the YMHFA curriculum and the related Jewish scenarios and modules.

**There are several paths you can take when deciding upon a facilitator.**

You can:

1. **Find a local facilitator** through the search function on the Youth Mental Health First Aid website or by connecting with a local agency found [here](#) (or by visiting [www.MentalHealthFirstAid.org](http://www.MentalHealthFirstAid.org)).
2. **Consult with Jewish trained YMHFA facilitators** to identify if one of them may be the right fit for your community. [Click here](#) (or visit [www.JewishEdProject.org/YouthMentalHealth](http://www.JewishEdProject.org/YouthMentalHealth)) for a master list of known Jewish communal professionals who are certified as facilitators for the Youth Mental Health First Aid course.
3. **Have a member of your staff trained** to be a YMHFA facilitator. The National Council of Behavioral Health offers “Train the trainer” courses nationally for both Mental Health First Aid and Youth Mental Health First Aid. Certification as a trainer is achieved through a 3-day or 5-day interactive training. (To learn more about opportunities available through the Jewish community, visit [www.JewishTeensThrive.org](http://www.JewishTeensThrive.org).)

**Training Cost to Become a Facilitator\*** (as of March 2019)

**National Council member price:**

- 5-day training for new instructors: \$1,850
- 5-day training for existing instructors who wish to be dual certified: Four spots are available in each class for \$850
- 3-day training for new instructors: \$1,850
- 3-day training for existing instructors who wish to be dual certified: Two spots are available in each class for \$850

**Non-member price:**

- 5-day training for new instructors: \$2,000
- 5-day training for existing instructors who wish to be dual certified: Four spots are available in each class for \$950
- 3-day training for new instructors: \$2,000
- 3-day training for existing instructors who wish to be dual certified: Two spots are available in each class for \$950

**Tuition includes:**

- Lunch
- Training materials
- Ongoing technical assistance once certified, unless otherwise noted

**Training Format**

- Courses typically run from 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. each day, ending at 12:30 p.m. on Friday. (Note: 3-day trainings end at 5:00 p.m. on Wednesday.)
- Each instructor candidate will present and teach an assigned portion of the 8-hour course to the group.
- Each instructor candidate will provide a peer review for their colleagues.
- National Trainers will conduct an individual evaluation of and provide feedback to each candidate.

Certification is not guaranteed for all participants. To become certified, participants must be present for the entire training, satisfactorily deliver the presentation and pass a written exam. You can apply or view a list of upcoming trainings [here](#).

\*These prices are accurate as of 3/19. In order to maintain certification, one must teach (or co-teach) 3 courses a year.

## Budget

The only mandatory cost for Youth Mental Health First Aid is the Mental Health First Aid USA For Assisting Young People manual, which costs approximately \$18.95 per participant as of July 2019. That said, there are expenses often associated with this course beyond the cost of the books.

**As you plan to bring the YMHFA course to your community, consider the following expenses:**

- Printing costs include resource guide for participants, scenarios, mandated reporter laws for your state, etc.
- Supplies, such as markers and Post-it Easel Pads
- Facilitator costs (these vary by circumstance but can include):
  - Costs for facilitator, including travel and accommodations for a facilitator from outside of your community
  - Cost for facilitation training if you choose to have a member of your staff trained
  - Facilitator fee if bringing in someone local
  - Cost for the Follow up Jewish Module Webinar Facilitator if this expense is not built into the YMHFA training contract
- Food (Breakfast and/or lunch, snacks)

As you consider the costs, decide if you would like to collect payment to cover the costs of the day, book fees, etc. Does your organization typically charge for programming? Can you afford to run the course without revenue generation? Are you requiring the cost as part of an existing training?

## Sample Agenda for a One Day Course

Facilitator: Margie Bogdanow, LICSW  
margie.bogdanow@gmail.com

We will take several short breaks and a 20-minute lunch break, although it is hard to predict an exact time for the breaks. If possible, I encourage you to go outside and get some fresh air at some point. By late afternoon you will be glad that you did!

### Part 1

- What Is Youth Mental Health First Aid?
- Adolescent Development and Mental Health Problems in Youth
- The Mental Health First Aid Action Plan
- Signs & Symptoms
- Risk Factors & Protective Factors
- Introduction to Using the Mental Health First Aid Action Plan
- Assess for Risk of Suicide or Harm

### Part 2

- The Mental Health First Aid Action Plan – Understanding the ALGEE steps
- Using the Mental Health First Aid Action Plan
  - In Non-Crisis Situations
  - In Crisis Situations