

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**For more information contact:**

**Jennifer Keilitz, Interim Manager of Network Services  
& Continuing Education at (989) 797-3486**

**[jkeilitz@sccmha.org](mailto:jkeilitz@sccmha.org)**



**Saginaw County Community Mental Health Authority  
Expands Mental Health First Aid Training in Saginaw County  
*with the assistance of a Grant from Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan Foundation***

Saginaw, Michigan – Saginaw County Community Mental Health (SCCMHA) is expanding the availability of training in the national Mental Health First Aid program in the Saginaw community assisted by a grant from the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan Foundation.

Mental Health First Aid training is a course supported and endorsed by the National Council for Behavioral Health and US Congress and is featured by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) in their *Registry of Evidence Based Programs and Practices*. To date more than 1.4 million persons in the US have become Mental Health First Aid certified.

Mental Health First Aid is a 8-hour training certification course for adults from all walks of life. The course teaches how to identify, understand and respond to signs of mental illness and substance use disorders. Training participants receive instruction a five-step action plan to assess a situation, select and implement interventions and secure appropriate care for the individual. The certification program introduces participants to risk factors and warning signs of mental health problems and addiction problems, builds understanding of their impact and overviews common treatments. Through research evaluations in randomized controlled trials and a quantitative study, the CPR-like program has been proven to be effective in improving trainees' knowledge of mental disorders, reducing stigma and increasing the amount of help provided to others with mental illness and substance use disorders that they know or may experience in the community.

In its pilot year, the program was introduced nationally in nearly twenty states and more than 40 communities nationwide. Mental Health First Aid originated in 2001 in Australia under the direction of founders Betty Kitchener and Tony Jorm. To date, it has been replicated in twenty other countries worldwide, including the US Hong Kong, Scotland, England, Canada, Finland, and Singapore.

“We welcome SCCMHA’s involvement and enthusiasm in the Mental Health First Aid community,” says Linda Rosenberg, MSW, president and CEO of the National Council for Behavioral Health, the organization who brought Mental Health First Aid to the United States in 2008. “We know they will have a great impact on the mental health communities throughout the Saginaw, and will be key players in improving mental health literacy nationwide.”

The National Council certified the SCCMHA to provide the Mental Health First Aid program in October, 2014 through an instructor certification course in Omaha, Nebraska. Since that time SCCMHA has trained 1,700 persons in Mental Health First Aid. SCCMHA and all the sites across the nation that replicate this program maintain strict fidelity to the original, proven program. SCCMHA will utilize the grant funding from the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan Foundation, to purchase additional training materials and to prepare and certify four (4) additional trainers one of which will be a member of local law enforcement. The goal is to train an additional 1,000 Saginaw community members, to improve mental health literacy – helping them identify, understand and respond to signs of mental illness and addiction.

For more information or to participate in a Mental Health First Aid training in Saginaw, call Alecia Schabel, at (989)-797-3451.

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***Saginaw County Community Mental Health Authority is headquartered at 500 Hancock Street in Saginaw. SCCMHA provides numerous services including evaluations, screenings, treatment and referrals. In 2018, SCCMHA assisted more than 7,000 Saginaw County citizens.***

*The National Council for Behavioral Health is a not-for-profit, 501(c)(3) association of 2,000+ behavioral healthcare organizations that provide treatment and rehabilitation for mental illnesses and addictions disorders to nearly seven million adults, children and families in communities across the country. The National Council and its members bear testimony to the fact that medical, social, psychological and rehabilitation services offered in community settings help people with mental illnesses and addiction disorders recover and lead productive lives.*