



STATE OF MARYLAND

DHMH PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Maryland to Implement Mental Health First Aid

DHMH Kicks off initiative with January 7 training

BALTIMORE, MD (January 3, 2008) – Maryland will implement a Mental Health First Aid program that was first developed in Australia, the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH) announced today. *Mental Health First Aid* teaches people the warning signs of mental illness, so if they see individuals exhibiting those symptoms, they can encourage them to seek help.

The Australian program has demonstrated that an improved recognition of mental disorders provides a decrease in stigma and an increase in confidence for those who provide assistance to individuals with mental health problems.

Betty Kitchener and Professor Tony Jorm of the University of Melbourne, the developers of the program, will instruct the first group of trainees on Monday, January 7 at Sheppard Pratt Hospital's Conference Center in Towson. The program begins at 9:00 a.m.

“Many of us have basic first aid skills, but do not know how to help someone who is experiencing a problem with their mental health,” said DHMH Secretary John M. Colmers. “Similar to CPR, with the appropriate training, the general public can spot important warning signs of individuals needing acute mental health treatment, stabilize the situation and direct people to the professional help they need.”

Upon completion of the four-day training, Maryland's first set of trainees will be certified and thus able to train other individuals and/or educate the general community, including those in colleges and universities, on how to recognize, approach, and assist an individual in distress due to a mental health problem.

Maryland is the first state to implement the Mental Health First Aid program. DHMH will partner with the University of Maryland, local Core Service Agencies, and mental health advocacy groups. The program will be run through the Mental Health Transformation project.

More information about the Australia program is available online at www.mhfa.com.au/.

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