



STATE OF MARYLAND

DHMH PRESS RELEASE

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MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID

*DHMH Kicks off Initiative
Training Begins January 7*

BALTIMORE, MD (January 2, 2008) – Maryland replicates Australia's Mental Health First Aid program, an initiative to help the general public assist individuals with mental health problems. It is similar to first aid for individuals with physical problems. January 7th kicks off the initiative with Australia's developers, Betty Kitchener and Professor Tony Jorm of the University of Melbourne, presenting the program for Maryland's first group of trainees. The training will be held at Sheppard Pratt Hospital's Conference Center, located in Towson. The program begins at 9:00 a.m.

The Australian program has demonstrated improved recognition of mental disorders, decreased stigma, and increased confidence in providing assistance to individuals with mental health problems.

“Maryland is excited to implement this program as part of a series of efforts in the Department's response to addressing communities in crisis, such as the tragic events that occurred at Virginia Tech,” said John M. Colmers, Secretary of the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. “If we can educate the general public on warning signs of mental illness, we can help individuals with mental health problems recognize they need help and direct them to appropriate services.”

Through Maryland's Mental Health Transformation project, Maryland will be one of the first state's to implement the MFHA evidence-based program. In partnership with the University of Maryland, local Core Service Agencies, and mental health advocacy, the Department will implement the initiative state-wide. Upon completion of the 4-day training, Maryland's first set of trainees will be certified and then be able to provide similar trainings and educate the general community, including colleges and universities, on how to recognize, approach, and assist an individual in distress due to a mental health problem.

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