

# Evaluating the Effectiveness of PAs as Mental Health First Aid Instructors: Outcomes of the Mental Health Outreach Fellowship

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## Purpose

To evaluate the effectiveness of PAs as Mental Health First Aid instructors.

## Background

- Mental health disorders are common and nearly half of adults will experience a mental health disorder during their lifetime.<sup>1</sup> While the prevalence of mental health disorders is high, the number of individuals who seek treatment is concerning with only 41% receiving professional healthcare or other services.<sup>2</sup>
- Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) is an international evidence-based course designed to help the general public acquire the knowledge and skills needed to respond to a person in a mental health emergency and offer support to someone in emotional distress. MHFA has been shown to increase mental health literacy, increase supportive behaviors towards individuals with mental health problems, decrease stigmatizing attitudes, and improve mental health in those who attend the MHFA course.
- In 2018 the PA Foundation launched the Mental Health Outreach Fellowship. The goals of the fellowship were to connect PAs' clinical expertise and compassion to the mental health needs in their local communities.

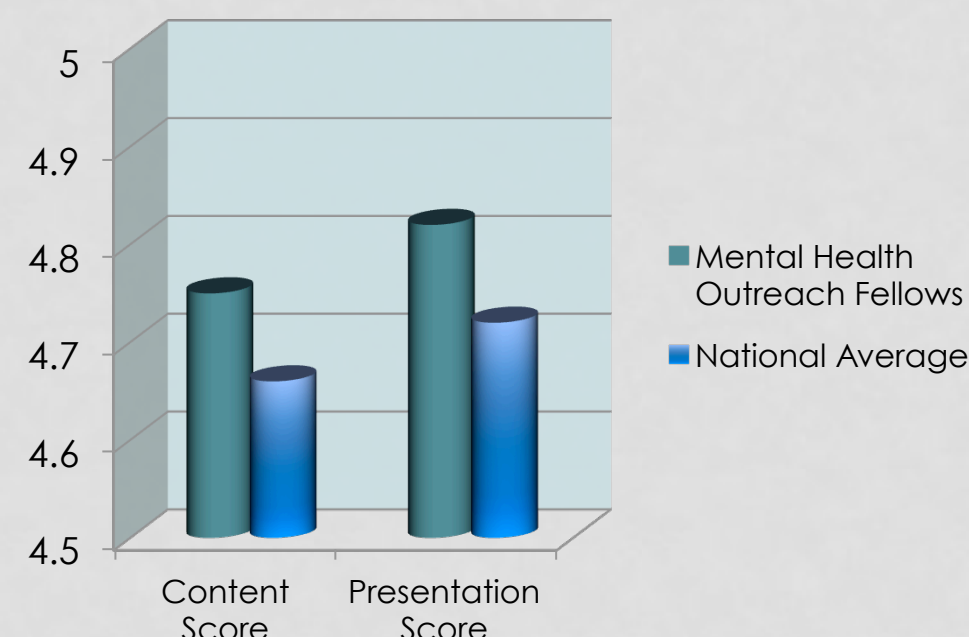
## Methods

- 16 PAs from across the U.S. were selected as Mental Health Outreach Fellows and conducted outreach in their communities as MHFA instructors over a one-year period.
- Upon completion of each MHFA class, course participants evaluated the course content and instructor presentation.
- The Mental Health Outreach Fellows submitted their course feedback evaluations, completed by the course participants, at the conclusion of the fellowship year.
- The mean evaluation scores for course content and instructor presentation were calculated and compared to the national mean for all MHFA instructors.

## MHFA Course Evaluation Participant Feedback

One of the best courses I have ever taken, can't wait to tell others about this class	Will be a tremendous asset in my daily job role and personal life
Thoughtful and informative course, full of activities	I have never felt more engaged and interested in an all-day training
Very engaging and collaborative course	Course was easy to follow and practical
Provides vital information to help people with mental health issues	The instructor's passion about mental health was conveyed throughout the presentation
Excellent content and activities	Great job of presenting difficult topics
Loved how the instructor used personal experience to give examples and insight	Instructor was open, receptive, and encouraging of student stories and participation
Instructor had a great healthcare background and was very knowledgeable	Strengths of the course were the instructor's interactions with the class an unbiased presentation of the information

## Instructor Evaluation Report Mean Scores



## Results

- MHFA training was provided to 1,595 community participants through 116 MHFA courses taught by the Mental Health Outreach Fellows.
- 14 fellows completed the fellowship and submitted their instructor evaluation reports from the fellowship period.
- The mean instructor presentation score of the fellows was 4.82 and the average course content score was 4.75 (all scores are out of a maximum of 5).
- The national mean for instructor presentation was 4.72 and the course content score mean was 4.66.
- An unpaired t-test was used and while the results did not reach statistical significance when comparing the means of the national MHFA instructors to the fellows, the fellows did have a higher mean for both content and instructor presentation than the national average.

## Conclusions

The outcomes reported here support the effectiveness of the Mental Health Outreach Fellowship PAs as MHFA instructors. There are numerous benefits to having a PA serve as the MHFA course instructor including positively impacting local communities by increasing the mental health literacy of the public, reducing the stigma associated with mental illness, increasing visibility and promotion of the PA profession, and enhancing a PA's individual career through education and service.

## References

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