



Press Release

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FERD & GLADYS ALPERT JEWISH FAMILY SERVICE TAKES “MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID” TRAINING VIRTUAL

WEST PALM BEACH, FL – September 24, 2020 – Ferd & Gladys Alpert Jewish Family Service (Alpert JFS), in partnership with Palm Health Foundation, Palm Beach County Behavioral Health Coalition, the 14 agencies that comprise the Mental Health First Aid Coalition of Palm Beach County, and the Health Council of South East Florida/Florida Department of Health present “Mental Health First Aid”, the nationally renowned, evidence-based training course that teaches participants the skills to help someone developing a mental health problem or experiencing a mental health crisis. Certified Mental Health First Aiders are able to assess the situation, offer nonjudgmental support, reassure, and give hope while helping the person get the appropriate professional assistance.

Like many other programs and services in the age of COVID-19, Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) has gone from in-person training to online. Participants engage in experiential activities that build an understanding of the impact of illness on individuals and families in a virtual class format that includes two (2) hours of self-paced independent classwork followed by interactive Zoom instruction for up to 20 people at a time.

Thanks to grants from Florida Blue, SAMHSA, and OD2A (Overdose Data 2 Action), residents living in vulnerable communities, first responders, veterans, public safety personnel, firefighters, and those working in addiction recovery can be trained to help family, friends, and neighbors with mental health challenges.

Alpert JFS currently has MHFA training scheduled for participants in legal, hospitality, education, and governmental environments, and the agency offers classes to the public, as well. Sometimes, participants continue their studies, becoming instructors, as was the case with Dr. Nakisha Kinlaw-Williams, DNP, APRN, AGPCNP-BC, who said, “My instructor, Cindy Wides, inspired me to want to become an instructor myself. I remember coming right up to her after class to share that intention and, from that point on, she guided me through each level of growth in my journey as I progressed as an MHFA Instructor, taking me from Adult to Youth and, now, Virtual Instructing.”

To learn how you can be a lifeline to friends, family members, colleagues, and others in the community of the Greater Palm Beaches, visit <https://www.alpertjfs.org/mhfa/>, contact Cindy Wides at 561-238-0251 or email Cindy.Wides@AlpertJFS.org to find a MHFA course near you.

“Now, more than ever, our community needs Mental Health First Aid trainings to help us help others. In today’s reality, faced with an uncertain future regarding our health and well-being, many people are feeling helpless, sad, frustrated and angry; emotions that can lead to an overwhelming sense of anxiety,” said Wides. “We want to make MHFA training as common as CPR training, to help destigmatize mental illness, addiction, and suicide, and debunk the myths attached to these mental health challenges, so those affected can feel more comfortable seeking help and support.”

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“Mental illness impacts the person, their family and the community. Many people with mental illness are reluctant to seek help, or may not know where to turn for care,” said Alpert JFS Clinical Director Elaine Rotenberg, Ph. D. “Symptoms of mental health and substance use abuse can be difficult to detect, and it might be hard for friends and family members to know when and how to help. MHFA training teaches people how to start the conversation.”

Established in 1974, Ferd & Gladys Alpert Jewish Family Service is a nationally accredited service provider for children, adults, seniors, and Holocaust survivors. The non-profit, non-sectarian organization is a trusted leader, with a team of nearly 200r highly skilled professionals delivering high-quality care to community members. Alpert JFS works to ensure the well-being of children and families, independence of older adults and quality-of-life for individuals with disabilities. For more information, visit www.AlpertJFS.org or phone 561-684-1991.