

More than 700 central Illinois residents are now equipped with a greater understanding of mental health after Memorial Health in Springfield initiated a training process that spread across the region.

In September 2016, Memorial brought in trainers from Mental Health First Aid (MHFA), an international program that gives participants tools to assist individuals with mental illness. Their initial training of 27 people—from Memorial, public health departments, social service agencies and a school district—kick-started Memorial's initiative.

The newly certified trainers then took MHFA's eight-hour course to over 700 people across Sangamon, Morgan, Christian and Logan counties, including first responders, social service providers, teachers and other community members. MHFA's course focuses on helping community members identify the signs of mental illness and access resources that can help individuals on the path to recovery.

Memorial provided all funding for the training, program oversight and promotion, which totaled nearly \$76,000 in 2016 and \$55,000 in 2017. The initiative was in response to Memorial's 2015 Community Health Needs Assessment, which identified mental healthcare as a top priority in the region served by the health system's four hospitals: Memorial Medical Center, Passavant Area Hospital, Taylorville Memorial Hospital and Abraham Lincoln Memorial Hospital.

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