CS01-03
Psychological First Aid Training as Public Health Preparedness: Results of a Demonstration Project

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Background

- Psychological First Aid (PFA) is an evidence-informed approach that provides staff and volunteers with practical ways to help people with their basic needs and immediate concerns during a disaster or other crisis.
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recognizes PFA as an important capability for communities dealing with any public health emergency response or disaster intervention.
- Although PFA training materials exist online, local public health and health care agencies have limited capacity to provide PFA training to new staff members and refresher training to existing staff members, and few agencies have PFA training policies in place.
Needs Assessment & Training Model

Hybrid model:
1. Training Coordinator selects most appropriate online training course for audience
2. Personnel take online course individually
3. Personnel gather for in-person session focused on skills practice, supported by Technical Assistance providers with subject matter expertise
Project Products

To support this model and close the training capacity gap, partners in the PFA Demonstration Project:

1. Developed and disseminated a PFA Training Coordinator Guide including:
   - A comprehensive review and summary of all available on-line PFA training courses
   - 10 scenarios and facilitator guide for face-to-face PFA practice sessions

2. Created three video examples of PFA interactions for use in practice sessions

3. Provided PFA training for Training Coordinators including how to use the PFA Coordinator Guide training and organize face-to-face scenario-based PFA trainings

4. Provided PFA facilitator training for Technical Assistance providers with mental health expertise to assist with face-to-face, scenario-based PFA trainings

5. Provided technical assistance and sample PFA policy to member agencies to encourage implementation of a formal PFA training policy
Interactive Scenarios

Three-person roleplays: Helper, Client, Observer:
1. 10 minutes on scenario between Helper and Client
2. 5 minutes small group discussion, led by Observer using PFA Observer Worksheet as guide
3. Switch roles and scenarios
4. Once all three combinations are complete, large group processing led by Training Coordinator
Interactive Scenarios

Scenario settings:
- Hospital-based Family Assistance Center
- Emergency shelter
- Disaster Recovery Center
- Hospital Emergency Department waiting room
- Homecare setting
- Nursing home evacuation
- Point of Dispensing
- Infectious disease outbreak
- School shooting
- Hospital-based responders to mass shooting

Hospital-based Family Assistance Center following a worksite explosion, assisting a family member.

Note to participant: When you're serving as the Client, you will read the following scenario description to the group before beginning the exercise so everyone understands the situation, but you shouldn't let the Helper see the suggested Client Statements. These are comments you can use to see how the Helper responds using the elements of PFA.

Scenario Description:
The Client is a young woman who has come to the hospital seeking information about her husband, who was working in a local factory when a major explosion occurred. Police are directing family members to the hospital for news about workers and bystanders injured in the accident, and rumors are starting to spread among those gathered.

Client Statements:
- The police told me to come here but now no one will tell me anything about my husband. Why won't they let me see him?
- Why won't anyone tell me what's going on? They must know if he's okay. Why won't they just tell me?
- He's not picking up his phone or answering my texts and he always gets back to me right away. I know something is terribly wrong.
- But maybe he's okay. Maybe he decided to skip work today and he's safe in a movie theater somewhere so he doesn't even know what's happened. I'll kill him myself if that's the case! Do you think he's safe somewhere?
- We just got married a few months ago and moved into this town so he could take the job at the factory. I don't really know anyone here.
- We've been trying to get pregnant and maybe I already am. What if I am and he's really badly hurt or even... But he's not. He's going to be okay for our baby. Right? I should call his mother, I know, but she's just going to blame me for this, like she does for everything. Do I have to call her?
- You know what's going on, don't you? I think you know something you're not telling me.
Results

• In 2016-17, 8 Train-the-Trainer sessions were delivered throughout New York State by the project principal investigator and current presenter

• 104 mental health professionals were trained as Technical Assistance providers to assist with face-to-face, scenario-based PFA trainings
  • Average overall perceived usefulness of the training: 4.3 out of 5
  • 83% reported their willingness to contribute their services to PFA training

• 239 Training Coordinators were trained in how to implement the hybrid model in their facilities
  • 79% indicated interest in providing an interactive face-to-face PFA training to staff in their agency
Results

- Average Training Coordinator confidence increased significantly as a result of the training (from 3.80 pre-test to 4.50 post-test, t=10.56, p<.0001)

- Responses to the post-training survey question “Did you find the interactive face-to-face scenario trainings valuable?” included:
  - “Yes, you can’t understand what it is until you practice.”
  - “I think it is the most valuable component of the training.”
  - “Yes, [you] need the face-to-face scenarios to illustrate how challenging reacting to a client’s emotions is.”
  - “Yes, I liked the on-line course but being able to have the interactive learning was beneficial.”
Results

- Few agencies participating in the project have an institutionalized PFA training policy, but after participating in the sessions, most Training Coordinators felt such policies would be valuable.

- Training Coordinators are beginning to implement the training model in their facilities, with the support of Technical Assistance providers:

  Stony Brook Regional Training Center recently trained 50+ social workers in the Long Island area to incorporate PFA into their responses.

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<th>PFA Training Coordinator Attitudes on PFA Training Policies</th>
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Conclusions

- Trainees reported improved understanding and confidence in applying PFA after participating in the face-to-face, scenario-based trainings.
- Findings regarding perceived usefulness and value of training, as well as interest in providing PFA trainings, suggest a good environment for establishing organizational PFA policies and to maintain PFA trainings.
- A follow-up survey of training participants will soon be launched to measure the impact of the training on policies and practices within member organizations.
- Preliminary results suggest that the hybrid PFA training model may serve as an effective means for translating and disseminating public health emergency response research and training materials to build competency and sustainable capability, in a resource-efficient manner.
Contact Information

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Project materials: Training Coordinator Guide and Training Powerpoint:
http://www.albany.edu/sph/cphp.php