



Mental Health Support Specialist Curriculum

Training Policy and Procedures

2024



Mental Health Support Specialist Curriculum
Department of Health and Human Services
Office of Behavioral Health

Mental Health Support Specialist Curriculum Training Policies and Procedures

Introduction

In early 2024, the Maine DHHS Office of Behavioral Health completed a revised and updated Mental Health Support Specialist (MHSS) curriculum, required for MHRT I certification in Maine's adult mental health system. This revised version is recovery-oriented, written from a trauma-informed perspective, intended to reflect best practices in the field, and to provide the best possible training to those who support adults diagnosed with mental illness. The new curriculum does not reflect a change in the credentialing process, except for the Residential Care Specialist (RCS) certification, which will no longer be valid for MHRT I after September 30, 2024. RCS certificate holders have until then to complete the new MHSS course.

Newly hired individuals providing residential services or daily living support services in Maine's adult mental health system will be trained by certified MHSS trainers across the state, using this curriculum. The purpose of this document is to clarify the roles and responsibilities of the various partners who make that training possible.

The Maine Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), Office of Behavioral Health (OBH), has the responsibility for ensuring both the quality of the MHSS training and that the MHRT I certification program operates in a fair and equitable manner. University of Southern Maine's Catherine Cutler Institute, Center for Learning (CFL), in partnership with the OBH, administers the MHSS training and the MHRT I certification process.

MHSS Trainers

1. Trainer Certification:

Certification is valid for two years. To recertify, trainers must teach the course twice (2) in those two years. Only certified MHSS trainers are eligible to teach the MHSS course. A list of certified trainers is available at the CFL website: <http://www.cfl-muskie.org>. Trainers are responsible to provide updated contact information in the event of a change. CFL will notify trainers of recertification sessions.

2. Training Notification:

Trainers will notify the CFL (using the MHSS Trainer Notification Form) at least 30 days prior to offering an MHSS course for posting on the CFL website. To download the MHSS Training Notification Form go to <http://www.cfl-muskie.org>.

3. Training Format:

The sequence of the training modules is prescribed. It is expected that trainers maintain the integrity of the MHSS curriculum and teach the entire curriculum. Instructors wishing to supplement content are asked to submit the supplementary materials (with source citations) to CFL for posting on the Trainer Resource page, <https://cfl-muskie.org/trainer-resources/>.

Time estimates to cover the material in each module appear at the beginning of the module. These are general guidelines; individual trainers may take more or less time than the estimates.

4. Course Evaluations:

At the end of the course, trainers will provide participants with a link to complete an anonymous online course evaluation. The CFL summarizes the responses and provides a summary to the trainer. It is recommended that trainers administer the evaluation before the final exam to maximize the response rate.

5. Final Exam

Knowledge Check questions appear at the end of each module and comprise the online final exam. The exam consists of 25 randomized true false or multiple-choice questions. Trainers will provide participants with a link to access the exam. The test application produces a certificate of completion with a passing score for the learner to download. A passing score is 80 or above. Participants may take the exam twice (2) to achieve a passing score. If they fail twice, the trainer must work with the individual on a remediation plan, before taking it a third and final time. If the individual fails the exam a third time, they must retake the course.

6. Training Validation:

Upon completion of the course, trainers will submit one MHSS Training Validation Form listing all students who successfully completed the training to the CFL. Trainers will also submit a Student Information Form (completed by the student) for each student who successfully completes the course. Forms must be submitted no later than 30 days after completion of the course.

Catherine Cutler Institute Center for Learning

CFL, in partnership with DHHS OBH, provides the infrastructure necessary to sustain the delivery of Mental Health Support Specialist training across the state.

1. **Center for Learning website:** <http://www.cfl-muskie.org>

The CFL maintains a MHSS web page with a list of upcoming courses, MHSS-related forms for download, Training Policies and Procedures for download, and other pertinent MHSS information.

2. **Student Certificates**

Upon successful completion of the final exam, the exam website will generate the MHSS certificate of completion for the student to download directly.

3. **MHSS Database**

CFL will maintain certificate records in a database should an individual lose their certificate, or an agency wishes to confirm an individual has a certificate. They will also maintain a database of certified MHSS trainers.

4. **Evaluation Records**

The CFL summarizes course evaluation results and generates a summary for each MHSS course offering. Staff shares the summary with the trainer and maintains it as part of the trainer's file. CFL submits these summaries to OBH biannually.

5. **Quality Assurance**

DHHS OBH, in cooperation with CFL, will develop a quality assurance program to ensure that the MHSS training program reflects best practices. This program will include a periodic evaluation of trainers based on course evaluations to ensure that the performance measures detailed in the quality assurance program are being met.

6. **Trainer Certification and Re-Certification**

The CFL, in partnership with DHHS OBH, will provide periodic certification training for new MHSS trainers as well as recertification training for current MHSS trainers.

Adult Behavioral Health Provider Agencies

Provider agencies must ensure that employees have sufficient training to provide quality services to consumers of adult mental health services. Provider agencies will also support MHSS trainers on staff to deliver a minimum of one training per year. OBH expects agencies to make these trainings available to employees of other agencies.

Appendix

Included in the curriculum binder are the following training/student documentation forms:

- MHSS Training Notification Form
- MHSS Training Validation Form
- MHSS Student Information Form

These forms are also available for download at <http://www.cfl.muskie.org>.