



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **MENTAL HEALTH AMERICA OF CENTRAL CAROLINAS TEAMS UP WITH ATRIUM HEALTH, NOVANT HEALTH AND CARDINAL INNOVATIONS HEALTHCARE TO LOCAL TRAIN FIREFIGHTERS**

Mental Health America of Central Carolinas (MHA) and the members of the Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) and QPR Suicide Prevention Training Collaborative are teaming up to train all Charlotte firefighters in Mental Health First Aid (MHFA). Through a partnership with Atrium Health, Novant Health and Cardinal Innovations Healthcare, the group is on track to train the nearly 1,100 firefighters by the end of June 2018. The effort is a part of a national pilot of the new Fire/EMS Mental Health First Aid curriculum which is written by Fire, Emergency Management, and Behavioral Health experts in conjunction with the National Council of Behavioral Health. Charlotte will be the second East Coast city to train using the new curriculum.

MHFA is designed to increase participants' ability to respond appropriately to someone experiencing a mental health crisis. Specifically, participants learn the following:

- The potential risk factors and warning signs for a range of mental health problems, including: depression, anxiety/trauma, psychosis, eating disorders, substance use disorders, and self-injury
- An understanding of the prevalence of various mental health disorders in the U.S. and the need for reduced stigma in their communities
- A 5-step action plan encompassing the skills, resources, and knowledge to assess the situation, to select and implement appropriate interventions, and to help the individual in crisis connect with appropriate professional care
- The evidence-based professional, peer, social, and self-help resources available to help someone with a mental health problem.

"We are so appreciative of our collaborative partnership with Atrium Health, Novant Health and Cardinal Innovations Healthcare and the hard work they have put into helping make this training opportunity a reality," said MHA's Executive Director Kathy Rogers. "Recognizing that firefighters are most often our first-responders, providing them with MHFA will give them additional tools to address individuals with mental health issues in appropriate ways."

According to Charlotte Fire Chief Howard "Pete" Key, "The Charlotte Fire Department is most appreciative to be afforded the opportunity to undergo this type of training. As First Responders we encounter all types of people and situations on daily basis." He states that "this training will assist our members in recognizing the early signs of mental illness as well as helping us to understand how mental illness can affect a person's life. I know that this training will benefit our members as well as the citizens in the community that we serve."

"Stigma and lack of understanding are pervasive throughout our communities related to mental health, mental illness and treatment," said LaShay Avery, Community Engagement Regional Manager. "Cardinal Innovations Healthcare is proud to be a part of a collaborate effort that will train first responders in Mental Health First Aid."



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It is our hope that by helping individuals quickly identify mental health issues, we can decrease stigma and help more people receive the help they need.”

Judy Moore, Senior Director of Behavioral Health Service Line stated that, “Novant Health is excited to be part of this collaborative. Providing Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) training to our first responders is essential. MHFA helps equip our first responders with the tools needed to help recognize those suffering with a mental health crisis and then take action to get them help. The better job we as a community do in recognizing those suffering and getting them help early, the healthier our community will be as a whole.”

Formed in 2016, under the leadership of Mental Health America of Central Carolinas (MHA), the members of the MHFA & QPR Training Collaborative have trained all sworn CMPD officers and all deputies within the Mecklenburg County Sheriff’s Office in the Public Safety version of Mental Health First Aid at no cost to either organization.

Members of the public who are interested in taking either the Adult or Youth version of Mental Health First Aid can visit the MHA website ([www.mhacentralcarolinas.org](http://www.mhacentralcarolinas.org)) to register for upcoming classes. Due to generous grant funding from the Mecklenburg County ABC Board and United Way of the Central Carolinas, MHA is able to offer courses to the public at no charge.

Information about Mental Health America of Central Carolinas (MHA) – [www.mhacentralcarolinas.org](http://www.mhacentralcarolinas.org)

Information about Mental Health First Aid (MHFA): <https://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org/>

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