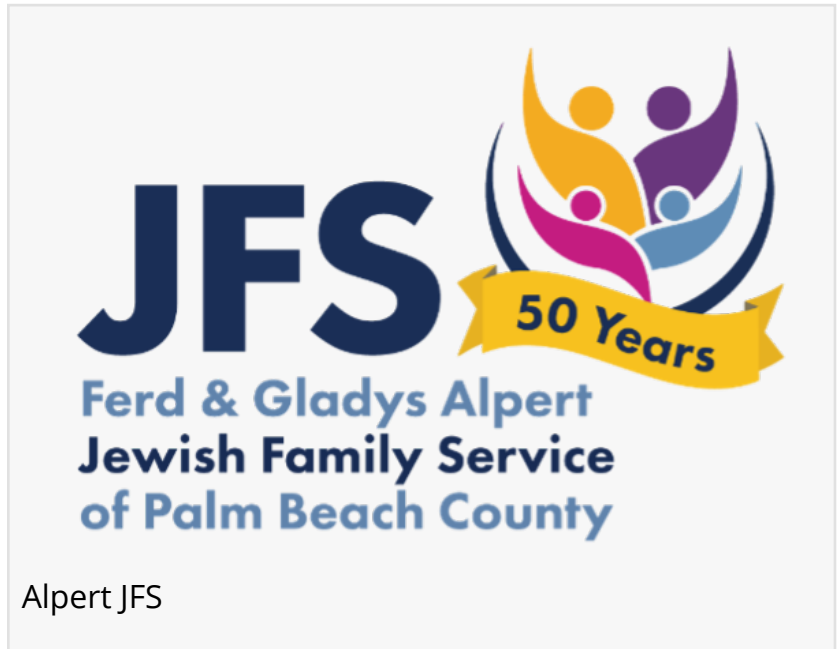


Alpert Jewish Family Service Expands Mental Health First Aid Training to Palm Beach County Law Enforcement

Mental Health First Aid Teaches Participants How to Identify, Understand, and Respond to Signs of Mental Illness & Substance Use Disorders

WEST PALM BEACH, FL, UNITED STATES, May 2, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Alpert Jewish Family Service ([Alpert JFS](#)), a nonprofit serving children, adults, seniors, and Holocaust survivors, is proud to announce the expansion of its Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) program to law enforcement agencies across Palm Beach County. This initiative aims to equip police, first responders, correctional officers, and other public safety audiences with vital skills to identify, understand, and respond to signs of mental illness and substance use disorders within the community.



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I am proud to say that Alpert JFS is the hub for Mental Health First Aid training in Palm Beach County”

Marc Hopin CEO Alpert JFS

Alpert JFS, which first introduced MHFA in Palm Beach County in 2014, has already trained various businesses and organizations including Bethesda Nursing School, Keiser University, Jet Blue, The Breakers, Palm Beach County Bar Association, the City of West Palm Beach, and the Boys & Girls Clubs of Palm Beach County, among others. In 2016, Alpert JFS first trained the Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office (PBSO); the PBSO now has six

certified trainers in their own ranks. To date, Alpert JFS has certified over 80 trainers who have taught the program to over 13,000 community members.

Alpert JFS recently announced its increased focus on public safety organizations and law enforcement personnel in order to enhance community interactions and ensure officers are

better equipped to handle mental health crises. The commitment follows nearly \$2 million in allocations from the State of Florida in 2023, which also prioritized MHFA for public interfacing businesses, at-risk communities, rural communities and public safety officials.

"Police officers and public safety professionals are our community's first responders, who interface with the public every single day. The ability to identify a mental health crisis will allow our first responders to better respond to each individual with compassion and effectiveness," said Courtney Marx, Director of MHFA at Alpert JFS. "As first responders, these individuals are also experiencing and seeing trauma daily. Mental Health First Aid will not just help them serve the community effectively, but their colleagues, peers and themselves as well."



MHFA Training Class

Florida Atlantic University (FAU)'s Police Department is among the first agencies to receive MHFA for Public Safety training from Alpert JFS. More than 120 officers were already trained in January and February of 2024. The eight-hour course teaches a five-step action plan encompassing the skills, resources, and knowledge to help an individual in crisis connect with appropriate professional, peer, and self-help care. Participants learn the unique risk factors and warning signs of mental health problems; builds understanding of the importance of early intervention; and, most importantly, learn how to help someone in crisis or experiencing a mental health challenge.

FAU Police Chief Sean Brammer echoed similar sentiments, emphasizing the importance of proactive measures in law enforcement. "Investing in Mental Health First Aid demonstrates our commitment to holistic community policing. It's essential for our officers to be prepared to address mental health challenges effectively," Chief Brammer stated.

MHFA for Public Safety provides officers with essential tools to de-escalate situations, combat stigma, and connect individuals with appropriate care. With statistics showing a significant intersection between law enforcement and mental health issues, this training becomes increasingly vital.

· According to National Public Radio (NPR), almost 10% of police calls involve individuals with mental illness.

· Additionally, nearly 1 in 4 police officers considers suicide at some point in their lives, highlighting the urgency of addressing mental health within law enforcement.

According to Alpert JFS CEO Marc Hopin, the agency remains committed to expanding Mental Health First Aid training across Palm Beach County. "I am proud to say that Alpert JFS is the hub for Mental Health First Aid training in Palm Beach County," Hopin said. "Through partnerships with law enforcement agencies and community organizations, our goal is to ensure everyone in Palm Beach County has at least one MHFA-certified person in their close circle of friends, family and peers. That means we need to reach approximately 105,000 individuals in Palm Beach County."

In 2021 and 2022, Alpert JFS received grants from The Florida House of Representatives, specifically designated for MHFA, which has enabled the organization to train participants at no cost. Ideal participants include community members, police officers and first responders, employers and employees, teachers and school personnel, health care professionals, and caring individuals. Alpert JFS has announced a goal to bring MHFA to everyone in Palm Beach County.

For more information about Mental Health First Aid at Alpert JFS, visit <https://www.alpertjfs.org/mhfa/>.

About Alpert JFS

Founded in 1974, Ferd & Gladys Alpert Jewish Family Service (Alpert JFS) 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 over 100 skilled professionals delivering high-quality care to over 12,500 people each year, from Boynton Beach to Vero Beach. Alpert JFS was named 2023 Hats Off Nonprofit of the Year (Large Category) by Nonprofits First®. For the last 50 years, Alpert JFS has worked to ensure the well-being of individuals and families, the independence of older adults, and quality-of-life for individuals with disabilities. For more information, visit www.alpertjfs.org or phone 561-684-1991

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