

**COLLEGE OF HEALTH SCIENCES**

# GWU Hunt School of Nursing Recently Hosted Mental Health First Aid Training

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## Eight Individuals Participated in National Initiative to Increase Mental Health Literacy

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C.—The Gardner-Webb University Hunt School of Nursing (HSON) recently sponsored a [Mental Health First Aid \(https://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org/\)](https://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org/) Instructor Course. Offered by the National Council for Mental Wellbeing, eight individuals achieved instructor certification through this program.

HSON Associate Director and Associate Professor Dr. Anna Hamrick coordinated the event, and five individuals affiliated with GWU were trained as instructors. Attendees also included a local YMCA staff member, a faculty member from another higher education institution, and a guidance counselor for Cleveland County (N.C.) Schools.

The others from Gardner-Webb were:

- Stephanie Allen, Director of Counseling Services.
- Megan Peek, University Counselor.
- Dr. Ashley Isaac-Dockery, Assistant Professor HSON.
- Dr. Lindsey Goldberg, Doctor of Nursing Practice – Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner (DNP-PMHNP) Program, graduate from May 2022.
- Krystal Pendergraft-Horne – Student currently enrolled in DNP.

“These eight new instructors will be able to turn and teach the MHFA basic course in their circles of influence,” Hamrick shared. “We were pleased that the new instructors included individuals from K-12 public education, higher education faculty and staff, athletic coaches, and the general public.”



This groundbreaking skills-based course teaches people how to identify, understand and respond to signs and symptoms of mental health or substance use challenges. Similar to physical First Aid and CPR, Mental Health First Aid helps individuals assist someone experiencing a crisis until professional assistance is obtained or the crisis is resolved.

One in five Americans has experienced mental illness, and the pandemic has dramatically increased depression and anxiety, but many are reluctant to seek help or don't know where to turn for care. Unlike physical conditions, symptoms of mental health and substance-use challenges can be difficult to see. Friends and family members may find it hard to know when and how to step in. As a result, those in need of mental health services often do not receive care until it is too late.

Mental Health First Aiders learn a Five-Step Action Plan that guides them through the process of reaching out and offering appropriate support. “It's never been more important for our communities to talk about mental health and substance use,” noted Chuck Ingoglia, president and CEO of the National Council for Mental Wellbeing, which helped bring Mental Health First Aid to the U.S. in 2008. “Mental Health First Aid is breaking down barriers and stigma so that together we can learn how to better support one another. Without mental health, there is no health.”

Since its introduction, Mental Health First Aid has certified more than 2.6 million people in the United States as Mental Health First Aiders, and that number is growing every day.

#### *About the National Council for Mental Wellbeing*

*Founded in 1969, the [National Council for Mental Wellbeing](https://www.thenationalcouncil.org/) (<https://www.thenationalcouncil.org/>) is a membership organization that drives policy and social change on behalf of nearly 3,200 mental health and substance use treatment organizations and the more than 10 million children, adults and families they serve.*

#### *About Gardner-Webb University*

*Gardner-Webb University is North Carolina's recognized leader in private, Christian higher education. A Carnegie-Classified Doctoral/Professional University, GWU is home to six professional schools, 14 academic departments, more than 80 undergraduate and graduate majors, and a world-class faculty. Located on a beautiful 225-acre campus in Boiling Springs, N.C., Gardner-Webb prepares graduates to impact their chosen professions, equips them with the skills to advance the frontiers of knowledge, and inspires them to make a positive and lasting difference in the lives of others. Ignite your future at [Gardner-Webb.edu](https://gardner-webb.edu/). (<https://gardner-webb.edu/>).*