Gardner-Edgerton School District integrates Mental Health First Aid as a strategy to address mental health. Mental health challenges can be a hurdle in the classroom. Teachers and staff are in a unique position to notice mood and behavior changes in students. Additionally, many staff build rapport with their students who often seek support from them.

Gardner-Edgerton School District partnered with Johnson County Mental Health Center to offer Mental Health First Aid to staff across the district. More than 300 staff from the high school, middle schools and elementary schools have become certified Mental Health First Aiders.

Mental Health First Aid equips staff with the skills to intervene during crisis and non-crisis mental health challenges. The training also teaches skills on reaching out, listening non-judgmentally and referring students to services that they may need from the community. As a result, Gardner-Edgerton staff is more skilled at recognizing and responding to mental health concerns and feels more confident in helping students and families who experience a mental health challenge.

Mental Health First Aid provides education and tangible ways for organizations that make up the fabric of our community. The course is beneficial to anyone interested in learning more about mental health problems, including depression, anxiety, psychosis and substance abuse.
Just as CPR helps you assist an individual having a heart attack, Mental Health First Aid helps you assist someone experiencing a mental health or substance use-related crisis. Mental Health First Aid is an eight-hour course that teaches you how to identify, understand and respond to signs of mental illnesses and substance use disorders. It gives you the skills needed to reach out and provide initial assistance and support to someone who may be developing a mental health or substance use problem or experiencing a crisis.

Mental Health First Aid takes the fear and hesitation out of starting conversations about mental health and substance use problems by improving understanding and providing an action plan to teach people to safely and responsibly identify and address a potential mental illness or substance use disorder.

When people are equipped with the tools needed to start a dialogue, more people can get the help they need. **Mental Health First Aiders can save lives.**

— National Council for Behavioral Health

Participants gain useful skills and valuable insight regarding mental illness that can be used in a personal or professional way.

**Sign up for training**

Anyone can provide Mental Health First Aid — first responders, business leaders, health care workers, educators, faith community leaders and caring neighbors.

Upcoming Mental Health First Aid training is available with a cost of $50 per person:

- **Wednesday, Jan. 25**, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the Johnson County Northeast Offices, 6000 Lamar Ave., Mission.
- **Friday, March 3**, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the Johnson County Sunset Building, 11811 S. Sunset Dr., Olathe.
- **Tuesday, May 9**, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the Johnson County Northeast Offices, 6000 Lamar Ave., Mission.

Registration and more information is available by contacting Jenny Rodriguez at 913-715-7880 or jenny.rodriguez@jocogov.org.

**Help is available**

If you or someone you know is experiencing a mental health crisis, help is available.

Johnson County Mental Health maintains professional clinical staff on duty 24 hours a day to provide mental health emergency services. The crisis line is always available by calling 913-268-0156.

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is available at 800-273-TALK (8255) or by text at 741-741.

Learn more about local services, resources and supports online at jocogov.org/mentalhealth.