



HEALTHY LIVING SECTION

Weekly tips and advice from your neighborhood Carolinas HealthCare System Blue Ridge providers.



“I am a person. Not a mental health problem.”

Carolinan HealthCare System Blue Ridge Teams Up to Raise Awareness

Agencies concerned with mental health issues every day have collaborated to raise awareness and promote May as National Mental Health Awareness Month. Representatives from the agencies have appeared before the Burke County Commissioners and at each local township to present a recognition proclamation for approval.

Carolinan HealthCare System Blue Ridge, Burke County Health Department, Adult/Child Collaborative and Partners Behavioral Health Management are offering classes throughout the month and have arranged several educational opportunities throughout the county for Chamber of Commerce members, medical residents and primary care office managers, among others. The goal is to stimulate discussions about mental health and mental illness before it becomes a crisis.

With the slogan, “I am a person, not a mental health problem,” the group hopes people will begin looking at mental health illness like a disease such as diabetes and high blood pressure. “We want you to look beyond the illness to the person underneath,” said Carol Ervin, RN, director of Behavioral Health Services at Carolinas HealthCare System Blue Ridge. “Mental illness is common and treatable.”

“Why are we doing this? We believe it’s important to educate people to observe habits and behaviors that could be signs that their friends, family or co-workers

may be dealing with a mental health issue,” said Lisa Moore, health education supervisor at the Burke County Health Department. “We are providing information and education so people can be positioned to help when needed.”

Most people with mental illness suffer in silence, but you many know someone experiencing problems. Warning signs are:

- Too much sleep or trouble sleeping
- Trouble focusing or having racing thoughts
- Changes in appetite
- Isolating yourself from others
- Losing interest in things you once enjoyed
- Irritability or having a short temper

If you know someone at risk or who is showing some of these signs, encourage them to call the Partners access line at 1-888-235-HOPE (4673) or Vaya crisis line at 1-800-849-6127.

For more information about Mental Health Awareness Month, visit BlueRidgeHealth.org/MHM. This site lists classes being offered on Mental Health First Aid for adults and youth, and suicide prevention and how to register.

Help Spot the Warning Signs

Take our FREE Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Training

To recognize May as Mental Health Awareness Month, several local agencies have collaborated to offer classes to help you identify and assist co-workers, family, friends or students who may be struggling with a mental illness.

Every Wednesday in May, Carolinas HealthCare System Blue Ridge, Burke County Health Department, Partners and Adult/Child Collaborative will offer Adult and Youth Mental Health First Aid trainings. Certified trainers will teach you how to identify, understand and respond to signs of mental illness and substance use disorders.

“These eight-hour classes help a person with no clinical training assist someone experiencing a mental health crisis,” said Carol Ervin, RN, director of Behavioral Health Services at Carolinas HealthCare System Blue Ridge. “Participants learn about risk factors and warning signs.” Mental Health First Aid trainees learn a single five-step strategy that includes assessing risk, respectfully listening to and supporting the individual in crisis, and identifying appropriate professional help and other supports.

“We want to make Mental Health First Aid as common as CPR,” Ervin said. “You can help someone until professional help arrives.”

Trainees are taught how to apply the action plan in a variety of situations such as helping someone through a panic attack, engaging with someone who may be suicidal, or assisting an individual who has overdosed. An important component of the Mental Health First Aid course is the opportunity to practice the intervention strategy rather than to just learn about it. This simple experience can make it easier to apply the knowledge in a real-life situation.

“Anyone can take this class,” said Lisa Moore, health education supervisor at the Burke County Health Department. “We highly recommend it to those who regularly interact with a lot of people, such as police officers, human resource directors, primary care workers, schools, churches and families of individuals who have mental illness or addiction.”

While most of the Mental Health First Aid classes are geared toward helping adults, one class is specifically for youth and designed to help those who work with children 18 years old and younger. Other classes offered include QPR: Question, Persuade, Refer, where participants learn three steps to help save a life from suicide.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Wednesday, May 3

Mental Health First Aid, Carolinas HealthCare System Blue Ridge, Lake James Conference Room, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Call Linda at 828-580-5636 to register.

Wednesday, May 10

Mental Health First Aid, Hildebran First Baptist Church, 8831 Old NC Hwy 10, Hildebran, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Call Linda at 828-580-5636 to register.

Wednesday, May 17

Mental Health First Aid, Oak Hill Methodist Church, 2239 Hwy. 181, Morganton, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Call Linda at 828-580-5636 to register.

Friday, May 19

QPR: Question, Persuade, Refer, suicide prevention class, Foothills Higher Learning Center, Room 211, from 9:00 to 11:30 a.m. Call Kim Sorrell at 828-323-8049 to register. Go to BlueRidgeHealth.org/MHM to register online.

Tuesday, May 23

QPR: Question, Persuade, Refer, suicide prevention class, Foothills Higher Learning Center, Room 213, from 4:00 to 6 p.m. Call Kim Sorrell at 828-323-8049 to register. Go to BlueRidgeHealth.org/MHM to register online.

Wednesday, May 24

Mental Health First Aid, Waldensian Presbyterian Church, 109 Main St. E., Valdese, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Call Linda at 828-580-5636 to register.

Wednesday, May 31

Youth Mental Health First Aid, Foothills Higher Education Center, Room 211, 2128 S. Sterling St., Morganton, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Call Kim at 828-323-8049 to register. Go to BlueRidgeHealth.org/MHM to register online.

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