

## General Convention of The Episcopal Church 2022 Archives' Research Report

**Resolution No.:** 2022-A108  
**Title:** Training of Trainers for Episcopal Provinces in Mental Health First Aid  
**Proposer:** Task Force on Ministry with Individuals with Mental Illness  
**Topic:** Health

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### Directly Related: (Attached)

2018-C034 Create a Task Force on Mental Illness  
2015-C020 Increase Ministry and Mission to the Mentally Ill  
2000-C032 Urge Congregations to Commend and Support Mental Health Support Groups  
1991-D088 Encourage Understanding of Mental Illness and the Needs of the Mentally Ill

### Indirectly Related: (Available in the [Acts of Convention](#) database, searchable by resolution number)

1991-D100 On the Topic of Mental Illness (Rejected)

*In preparing this report, the Archives researched the resolutions in the Acts of Convention database for the period 1973 through 2018, selecting “direct” resolutions that have a substantive bearing on the proposed legislation. The “direct” resolutions are attached and “indirect” resolutions are available in the Acts of Convention database. Committee members who require other research assistance should contact the Archives through the [Research Request Form](#) or call 800-525-9329.*

# A108 - Training of trainers for Episcopal Provinces in Mental Health First Aid

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**Final Status:** Not Yet Finalized

**Proposed by:** Task Force on Ministry with Individuals with Mental Illness

**Requests New Interim Body:** No

**Amends C&C or Rules of Order:** No

**Has Budget Implications:** Yes

**Cost:** \$35,000.00

**HiA:** HD

**Legislative Committee Currently Assigned:** 14 - Christian Formation & Discipleship

**Completion Status:** Incomplete

**Latest House Action:** N/A

**Supporting Documents:** No

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## Resolution Text

*Resolved*, the House of \_\_\_\_\_ concurring,

That the 80th General Convention authorize launch of training people in dioceses, congregations, schools, seminaries, and other entities of the Episcopal Church in the forming of caring relationships with people with mental illness and their families, in recognizing possible mental health crises and interacting in healthy and supportive ways with people in crisis, and in advocacy and bridge-building support, using the resources and training processes of Mental Health First Aid and the National Alliance on Mental Illness, as well as the Interfaith Network on Mental Illness, WISE for Mental Health, and other helpful organizations and networks; and be it further

*Resolved*, That the 80th General Convention authorize and fund the training of at least 15 regional trainers in Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) for the sake of providing basic MHFA training in the Provinces of the Episcopal Church, drawing as well upon MHFA trainers who are part of the Union of Black Episcopalians along with other Episcopal MHFA trainers, with training to be completed by June, 2023, so that they will become available as resource trainers for the dioceses in each Province; and be it further

*Resolved*, That the 80th General Convention recommend requirement of training in Mental Health First Aid and general awareness of mental health and illness for all active clergy and lay staff in the church entities of each diocese, with issuance of certifications beginning by the next General Convention in 2024; and be it further

*Resolved*, That the 80th General Convention request that the Joint Standing Committee on Program, Budget, and Finance consider a budget allocation of \$35,000 to help fund the training of the regional trainers for the Provinces.

## **Explanation**

Weakness in response to the challenges of mental illness, within the Episcopal Church as well as across community life, is directly linked to lack of awareness and of developing habits and practices for responding. The lack of awareness and healthy response is the result of avoidance of the topic altogether due to shame and stigmatization. We fail to learn what we avoid and intentionally banish from awareness.

This is a nationwide and worldwide problem that persists because of inaction. People facing challenges in mental health often remain in hiding. Others avoid approaching those facing such challenges because of uncertainty about what to do, embarrassment about raising a “touchy” subject, and fear of doing unintended harm. Still others communicate harmful ideas that blame people for the mental health challenges they are experiencing. All of this adds to a default culture of stigma, shame, and silence.

Different networks of support, training, and advocacy have emerged in the past decades. The National Alliance of Mental Illness (NAMI) began in 1979 and has spread across the U.S. with local affiliates helping build networks of support, education and advocacy for those with mental illness. Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) was first developed and created in Australia in 2001, to help people in all areas of public life to think differently about mental illness, become more aware of its frequency and impact, and become confident in effective ways to help people who are experiencing mental health distress. MHFA is now present in 24 countries and launched in 2007 in the United States. Other faith-based networks began to emerge, to help strengthen congregational and ministerial capacities for care, support, companionship, and advocacy for people with mental illness. These include the Interfaith Network on Mental Illness, the WISE for Mental Health resources of the United Church of Christ, and the Partnership Center for Faith and Opportunity Initiatives of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Each of these networks is developing tools and resources that are compassionate, affirming of dignity, and evidence-based in their helpfulness.

The Episcopal Church can benefit greatly by tapping into the resources and tools of these various networks and by forging partnerships to increase opportunities for training of its laity and clergy. After reviewing the various resources and methods of instruction, the Task Force for Ministry to Individuals with Mental Illness determined that MHFA provided solid, consistent training with resources that could become widely adopted. The Task Force supports use of all networks’ training resources and tools, with MHFA leading the way in training the Episcopal Church’s laity and clergy in skills for helping people who are in the midst of distress. The training helps people become skilled enough to step in and help pave the way for other professionals and supportive networks. The skills learned focus on how to approach someone experiencing distress, how to assess the situation and be particularly attentive to potential for self-harm, how to listen non-judgmentally and with care, when and what to offer as helpful information, and how to encourage someone to seek support. The training helps people understand some of the experience of mental illness and thus goes a

long way to destigmatizing the realities of mental illness. The website for Mental Health First Aid USA is at <https://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org/>. Information on courses in Spanish is at <https://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org/toma-un-curso/>.

The Task Force on Ministry with Individuals with Mental Illness considers this MHFA training as an essential baseline of skills and habits to develop in all congregations, schools and seminaries, and other entities of the Episcopal Church. The Union of Black Episcopalians has also recognized and embraced the value of MHFA training for its leaders and congregations, and already has at least four of its members who have been certified by MHFA as trainers. These members are in Provinces II, III, and IV. Other certified Episcopal MHFA trainers are in a range of Provinces, including VII and VIII. NAMI also supports MHFA and has agreed to provide training for the Episcopal Diocese of Delaware. The Task Force is coordinating with other dioceses to pilot training, using currently certified MHFA trainers in the Episcopal Church or in NAMI.

The Resolution to train and certify Episcopal trainers across Episcopal Provinces, if affirmed, will anchor MHFA training in each Province and its dioceses. The number of new trainers to be certified will secure a minimum of two trainers per Province Number of regional trainers. In addition, Provinces are increasingly sharing resources across territories, allowing for MHFA to extend its reach to more remote areas. During the COVID-19 pandemic, MHFA pivoted to create online training possibilities. These adaptations also allow for a wider reach across regions.

MHFA training is recommended as a foundation for demystifying, destigmatizing, and naturalizing the reality of mental illness, and for helping Episcopal Church laity and clergy learn and become confident in healthy and helpful interaction with people who are experiencing distress and challenge in mental health. Next steps will include local and regional partnership and resource utilization with NAMI, INMI, WISE, and other networks.



**Resolution Number:** 2018-C034  
**Title:** Create a Task Force on Mental Illness  
**Legislative Action Taken:** Concurred as Substituted  
**Final Text:**

***Resolved, That the 79th General Convention authorize the establishment of a Task Force on Mental Illness to further the Episcopal Church's commitment to, with and for persons with mental illness and their families as reflected in the General Convention resolution 2015-C020, as adopted and which reads:***

(2015-C020)

***Resolved, That the 78th General Convention of the Episcopal Church calls upon diocese, congregations, schools and other entities of The Episcopal Church to explore and adopt best practices for the vitality and increased capacity of their mission and ministry in the inclusion, support and spiritual care for persons with mental illness and their families; and be it further***

***Resolved, That dioceses, congregations, schools and other entities of The Episcopal Church increase understanding about mental illness by providing educational material and training; utilizing existing programs such as the National Alliance on Mental Illness, veterans groups, government departments on mental health, local organizations and other programs; and sharing the information so it is readily accessible.***

And be it further;

***Resolved, That this task force be appointed jointly by the Presiding Officers, with between 10 and 12 members, two or three of whom shall be bishops, two or three of whom shall be clergy, and not more than six lay persons, and all of the members shall have some professional, family or personal background with mental illness, and that this task force report back to the 80th General Convention; and be it further***

***Resolved, That the General Convention request that the Joint Standing Committee on Program, Budget and Finance consider a budget allocation of \$30,000 for the implementation of this resolution.***

**Citation:** General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Austin, 2018* (New York: General Convention, 2018), p. 894.



**Resolution Number:** 2015-C020  
**Title:** Increase Ministry and Mission to the Mentally Ill  
**Legislative Action Taken:** Concurred as Substituted  
**Final Text:**

*Resolved, That the 78th General Convention of the Episcopal Church calls upon dioceses, congregations, schools and other entities of the Episcopal Church to explore and adopt best practices for the vitality and increased capacity of their mission and ministry in the inclusion, support, and spiritual care for persons with mental illness and their families; and be it further*  
*Resolved, That dioceses, congregations, schools and other entities of the Episcopal Church increase understanding about mental illness by providing educational material and training; utilizing existing programs such as the National Alliance on Mental Illness, veterans groups, governmental departments of mental health, local organizations, and other programs and organizations; and sharing the information so that it is readily accessible.*

**Citation:** General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Salt Lake City, 2015* (New York: General Convention, 2015), p. 369.



**Resolution Number:** 2000-C032

**Title:** Urge Congregations to Commend and Support Mental Health Support Groups

**Legislative Action Taken:** Concurred as Amended

**Final Text:**

*Resolved, That the 73rd General Convention urge all congregations of the Episcopal Church to seek out and commend local members of the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill and other mental health support groups for their valiant struggle of many years to support and educate the general public, that many mental illnesses are brain disorders that may be treatable with new medications and other forms of treatment; and be it further*

*Resolved, That congregations be encouraged to read, study, and implement relevant portions of Resolution D088, entitled "Encourage Understanding of Mental Illness and Respond to the Needs of the Mentally Ill" (see explanation) adopted by the 1991 General Convention; and be it further*

*Resolved, That congregations offer their facilities to local members of the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill, and other mental health support groups, for the purpose of educating and supporting family members of the mentally ill.*

**Citation:** General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Denver, 2000* (New York: General Convention, 2001), p. 610.



**Resolution Number:** 1991-D088  
**Title:** Encourage Understanding of Mental Illness and the Needs of the Mentally Ill  
**Legislative Action Taken:** Concurred As Amended  
**Final Text:**

*Resolved, That members of the Episcopal Church are encouraged to become knowledgeable about mental illness in order to reduce stigma and stereotypes which are prevalent within the Church body and the Community-at-large; and be it further*

*Resolved, That the Episcopal Church and all its units and organizations, be encouraged to reach out, welcome, include and support persons with a mental illness, particularly those who have a prolonged, serious mental illness, and the families of those persons, and recognize the abilities and celebrate the gifts of those who have a mental illness; and be it further*

*Resolved, That the church encourage the development of specific programs to equip the clergy and laity for ministry to the mentally ill and their families and that clergy and lay ministers seek out training and opportunities to minister to the spiritual needs of those who are affected by a mental illness; and be it further*

*Resolved, That dioceses and congregations work with existing agencies and organizations to assist with and initiate programs, such as support groups, drop-in centers, housing and employment opportunities, which lead to an improved quality of life for people who have a mental illness, with specific attention to those who have become homeless; and be it further*

*Resolved, That dioceses, congregations and individual parishioners become advocates for public policy and adequate funding to provide comprehensive community-based services, hospital care and research into the causes and treatment of mental illness; and be it further*

*Resolved, That dioceses, congregations and individuals utilize the resources and support services offered by the Episcopal Mental Illness Network (EMIN) of the Presiding Bishop's Task Force on Accessibility.*

**Citation:** General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Phoenix, 1991* (New York: General Convention, 1992), p. 822.