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Youth Mental Health First Aid Teaches Warning Signs, How To Seek Professional Help

By [MOLLY DOVE \(/PEOPLE/MOLLY-DOVE\)](#) • NOV 6, 2019

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Youth Mental Health First Aid has been offered throughout the Valley for about the last seven years. It is a course for teachers, parents or community members to learn what the warning signs are for different mental health illnesses and substance abuse crises in youth, and what they can do to help.

Not only will they know what to look for, the course also teaches participants how to respectfully encourage those struggling to seek professional help.

Tom Gangel, the Operations Manager at Mind Springs Health, said the Roaring Fork Valley struggles with some of the highest suicide rates in Colorado, so this class will hopefully work to reduce those numbers by helping those struggling to seek help.

“Our ultimate goal is to get to those folks because the vast majority of people that complete suicide in Pitkin County or the Roaring Fork Valley have not sought care,” Gangel said.

The course teaches participants to use the acronym ALGEE when helping and encouraging someone to seek help: assess for risk of suicide or harm, listen non-judgmentally, give reassurance and information, encourage professional help and encourage self-help and other support strategies.

“They can leave the class with at least a little more confidence in being able to go ‘I recognize what’s going on with this person, and maybe I can intervene in a way that I can be helpful,” Gangel said.

All participants will receive a certification after the eight-hour course. A Youth Mental Health First Aid course is Thursday, November 7 from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. at the Snowmass-Wildcat Fire District.

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