

# impact

University of Idaho Extension programs that are making a difference in Idaho.

## Mental health first aid training community members and law enforcement

### AT A GLANCE

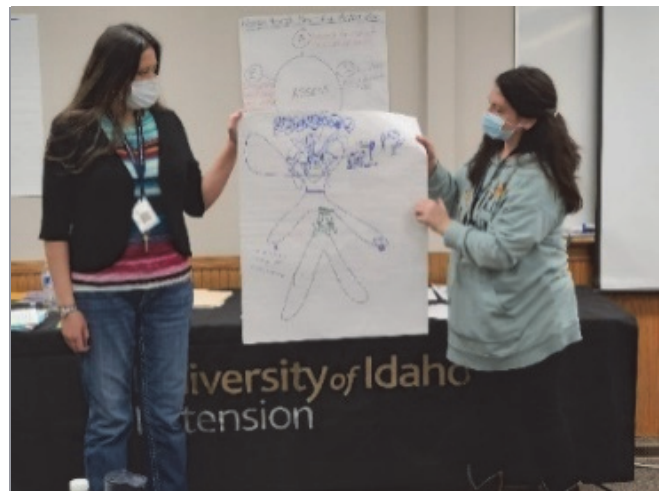
Idaho's death by suicide is one of Idaho's top health issues. In response, UI Extension educators participated in online training to become certified mental health first aid instructors.

### The Situation

In 2017, Idaho had a suicide rate of 22.8 deaths per 100,000 population making our state fifth in the nation for suicide deaths per capita. Idaho County's death by suicide mortality rate (per 100,000) is 36.3, and when combined with the CDC's Social Vulnerability Index risk score, Idaho County's overall suicide risk score of nine was defined as above average. In addition, suicide creates ripple effects that adversely impact communities and families. Survivors of suicide loss often experience guilt and financial instability, and are susceptible to higher risks of anxiety, aggression, isolation and suicide.

### Our Response

In 2020, 16 University of Idaho Extension educators were asked to participate in a three-day online training/workshop provided by the National Council for Mental Wellbeing, to become certified as a mental health first aid (MHFA) instructor. Mental health disparities (anxiety, depression, suicide and other behavioral health disorders) are a national health concern. The COVID-19 pandemic has created an unprecedented rise in mental health and substance use issues,



MHFA participants sharing in graphic format what they thought anxiety “looks” and “feels” like.

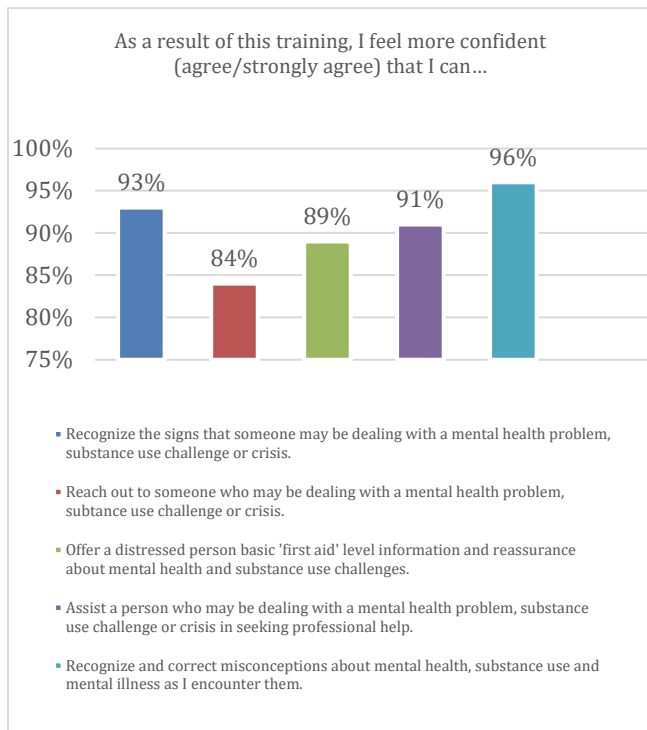
leaving many wondering how we can better support our communities, constituents, friends and loved ones. MHFA is an international, evidence-based program that teaches people to identify, understand, and respond to signs and symptoms of mental health and substance use challenges. MHFA is the initial help offered to a person developing a mental health or substance use challenge or experiencing a mental health crisis. The first aid is given until appropriate treatment and support are received or until the crisis resolves.

In the past two years, three Extension educators have certified 76 adults in MHFA including the Idaho County Sheriff's Department (Public Safety Supplement).

## Program Outcomes

All MHFA participants were required to fill out a post-evaluation survey (see Table 1 for evaluation results).

Table 1. Adult MHFA post evaluation



## The Future

The Idaho Regional Behavioral Health Board is meeting regularly with community leaders, Extension educators, public safety officers, social workers and members of the legislature to establish behavioral health and recovery services (crisis centers) in Idaho County.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

**Kirstin Jensen**, Extension Educator • University of Idaho Extension, Idaho County • 208-983-2667 • [kdjensen@uidaho.edu](mailto:kdjensen@uidaho.edu)

**Kathee Tiftt**, Extension Educator • University of Idaho Extension, Nez Perce County • 208-799-3098 • [ktiftt@uidaho.edu](mailto:ktiftt@uidaho.edu)

37-22-kjensen-health-certified • 10/22