



PSYCHOLOGICAL **FIRST AID**

THROUGH NORTHERN LIGHT ACADIA HOSPITAL

Psychological First Aid (PFA) is an evidence-informed approach to help children, adolescents, adults, and families in the immediate aftermath of a traumatic experience such as a disaster or an act of terrorism. But its usefulness extends much further: **PFA has proven to be effective when a young person is experiencing a mental health crisis at any time.** Challenges brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic is one example.

PFA provides skills for:

- Identifying and responding to those who have experienced trauma
- Strategies for connecting individuals to resources
- Skills for self-care

Similar to Mental Health First Aid, Psychological First Aid is based on the understanding that someone who has been impacted by trauma will experience a range of reactions so severe that initial support is critical to prevent a more serious condition from emerging. Developed by the National Child Traumatic Stress Network and the National Center for PTSD, PFA has been used by the American Red Cross, first responders, and law enforcement to train staff on how to respond to collective trauma experiences. Although targeted for different populations, it offers a consistent approach for everyone.

PFA uses a standardized teaching manual that outlines training modules, core actions, and self-care strategies to ensure program integrity and consistency.

PFA shines a light on the impact of collective trauma, builds resiliency, and assists in self-care action plans by incorporating five evidenced-based principles:

- Safety
- Calming
- Connectedness
- Self and community reliance
- Hope

Psychological First Aid includes eight core elements:

- Engagement
- Safety
- Stabilization
- Information gathering
- Practical assistance
- Connection to social supports
- Information on coping
- Connecting with collaborative services