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## Jefferson Center Trains Over 650 People in Mental Health First Aid for Law Enforcement

WHEAT RIDGE – Over the last year, Jefferson Center Mental Health has partnered with multiple community law enforcement agencies to train nearly 650 people in Mental Health First Aid. Jefferson County Sheriff's Office patrol, detentions and civilians staff, as well as a few first responders from West Metro Fire Rescue have been trained in 17 sessions by two of Jefferson Center Mental Health First Aid Trainers: Jefferson Center clinician, Emily Richardson and Retired Wheat Ridge PD Division Chief Joe Cassa.

"When the Mental Health First Aid for Law Enforcement curriculum rolled out, we saw an opportunity to partner with law enforcement agencies in the communities" Richardson said.

"The payout from these efforts has been huge," Richardson said. "We had a commitment from the Jefferson County Sheriff's Office to deliver Mental Health First Aid to every staff person, sworn and civilian, through their annual in-service training program beginning January 1, 2015."

This involved training everyone from sworn deputies to detentions and civilian staff, totaling nearly 650 individuals in 17 classes.

While the numbers are impressive, the results are even more powerful. In addition to JCSO staff, class participants have included first responders from West Metro Fire Rescue. After one of the trainings, Emily and Joe received an email from one of these individuals, which included the following comments:

**Thanks so much for your attentiveness; it is a hard, but an important topic to talk about. The other firefighters and I were pleased with the training. Perhaps it was as therapeutic to us as it was helpful training; our agency has experienced four suicides in the last 18 months with the funeral of one on the day we sat in class.**

This testimony is just one illustration of the impact of both Mental Health First Aid and Joe and Emily's trainings have had on people who work under difficult and stressful circumstances every day.

To learn more about Mental Health First Aid, please contact Canice Rupp at 303-425-5137 or [CaniceR@jcmh.org](mailto:CaniceR@jcmh.org)

### About Jefferson Center for Mental Health

Celebrating its 57th year, Jefferson Center for Mental Health helps to bring hope for a brighter future to thousands of community members who struggle with mental health challenges. As the community's nonprofit mental health center, Jefferson Center serves people throughout Jefferson, Gilpin and Clear Creek counties at over

23 locations, as well as schools, nursing homes, senior centers and other community settings. Last year Jefferson Center served more than 28,700 people in need. Center staff has expertise in numerous areas including children and family issues, adults with serious mental illness, suicide prevention, early intervention, juvenile justice, and trauma treatment. For more information about Jefferson Center, visit [www.jcmh.org](http://www.jcmh.org).

**Mental Health First Aid** is an evidence-based training program developed in Australia in 2001. It is an interactive 8-hour course designed to give participants the tools to recognize a range of mental health problems and the skills and confidence to help someone with a mental health issue. It teaches a 5-step action plan to help someone in crisis connect with appropriate professional, peer and self-help care.