



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**June 5, 2014**

**FOR MORE INFORMATION**  
**Patrick Phelan**  
**President/CEO**  
**(815) 284-6611**  
[patrickphelan@sinnissippi.com](mailto:patrickphelan@sinnissippi.com)

## **Mental Health First Aid Can Save Lives Too**

Sinnissippi Centers Receives Grant to Train local Law Enforcement in Mental Health First Aid

**(Dixon, IL)**

**Sinnissippi Centers is one of eight agencies nationwide selected** by the National Council for Behavioral Health (National Council) who will receive a \$5,000 grant to train rural law enforcement personnel in Mental Health First Aid (MHFA)



“Mental Health First Aid is a program that teaches individuals to identify, understand and respond to signs of mental illness and substance use disorders in real-time, much like CPR,” says **Patrick Phelan**, Sinnissippi Centers’ President/CEO . Funds to support the National Council Mental Health First Aid Training grant program were provided by Aetna and the Aetna Foundation, the independent philanthropic arm of Aetna Inc., The two entities awarded their own \$50,000 grant to the National Council for this initiative.

“The National Council grant will allow Sinnissippi Centers to offer the course at no cost, and will provide support to train up to 100 public safety personnel throughout the area,” says Phelan.

“In our rural communities, the police officers on duty are often the only resource for a person experiencing a mental health crisis,” adds Phelan. “This grant will allow our public safety professionals to participate in this essential training, helping them understand mental illnesses, de-escalate crises, and connect people in need to care.”

When it comes to mental health training, rural law enforcement officers face a considerable disadvantage compared to their suburban and urban peers. Rural areas have tighter training budgets and often lack access to mental health crisis teams and other resources. Mental Health First Aid can help fill the gap between no training, and more comprehensive programs like Crisis Intervention Training — a week-long training program used by many law enforcement organizations, but often out-of-reach for small, rural departments.

“Aetna is committed to promoting the importance of mental wellness and helping individuals get access to the mental health care they need,” said **Louise Murphy**, vice president, Aetna Behavioral Health. “We believe that training rural law enforcement in Mental Health First Aid will positively impact the overall health and well-being of their respective communities.”

Mental Health First Aid is an eight-hour in-person training designed for anyone to learn about mental illnesses and addictions, including risk factors and warning signs. Participants learn a five-step action plan to help people who are developing a mental health problem or who are in crisis. Of the 150,000 people trained across the country, 8,000 are public safety professionals.

***continued on next page***



Sinnissippi Centers is also working toward expansion of Mental Health First Aid by hosting a **“Training of Trainers”** in late June 2014. This training is **the only one of its kind currently scheduled in Illinois.**

“Our larger strategic goal is to develop a robust training program that is available to all residents in our four County service area. “We hope first aid courses for mental health will one day be as common as all other first aid courses,” said Phelan.

To find a Mental Health First Aid course in your community or learn how to become an instructor, visit [www.MentalHealthFirstAid.org](http://www.MentalHealthFirstAid.org).

**For more information about Sinnissippi’s Centers’ Mental Health First Aid courses, call 815-284-6611.**

###