



# Minnesota ADRC Training Program

**Evaluation Report from Boston University  
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**Center for Aging and Disability  
Education and Research**  
Boston University School of Social Work

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The Center for Aging and Disability Education and Research (CADER), is dedicated to workforce development in both the aging and the disability fields through educational innovation, workforce change, and research. Located at Boston University School of Social Work, CADER builds upon the School's historical commitment aging and disability research and practice.

For this project, CADER partnered with the Minnesota Disability Services Division to provide a competency based online training program that addresses the core skills, knowledge, and values needed for effective practice.

This program is comprised of five of CADER's online courses which were reviewed and selected by staff of the Minnesota Disability Services Division. The five courses needed to receive a certificate were:

- Core Issues in Aging and Disability
- A Guide to the Aging and Disability Networks
- Consumer Control, Choice, and Direction for Options Counseling
- Mental Health Training in Options Counseling
- Legal Principles & Decision Making in Practice

For each of the five courses, participants were asked to complete pre and post self assessments of learning competencies. CADER programs and courses apply this competency-based approach because social service practice with older adults and people with disabilities is complex. It requires competence, professional judgment, and critical thinking to translate knowledge, skills, and values into effective practice behaviors. The purpose of such an approach is to enhance the application of a specific skill set to professional practice. Participants rate their skill level at each of the learning competencies using the following scale:

- 0 - Not skilled at all
- 1 - Beginning skill
- 2 - Moderate skill
- 3 - Advanced skill
- 4 - Expert skill

At the end of each of the five courses, participants were also asked to complete a course evaluation in order to gauge whether they felt that the training benefitted their practice. Participants rated their satisfaction level with each course using a scale of one to five (1, strongly disagree; 2, disagree; 3, neutral; 4, agree; 5, strongly agree). Participants were also asked for

their opinions on course improvements and what other types of courses they would like to see offered through CADER.

The pre and post competency results, and course evaluation results are presented below for each of the five courses in the training program.

## II. PARTICIPANT PROFILE

- Education:
  - Most participants had higher education degrees
  - Nineteen (19) or 86% have a Bachelors degree (32% BSW)
  - Two (2) or 9% have a Masters degree
  - Only 1 (5%) have no degree
- Professional Experience:
  - This cohort of training participants reported being more experience working with individuals with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities compared to their level of experience working with individuals with physical disabilities or older adults.
    - 50% were extremely or very experienced at working with individuals with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities.
    - 40.9% were very experienced at working with individuals with physical disabilities.
    - 9.1% were very experience at working with older adults.
- Twenty-two learners participated in the training program.
- Sixty-one percent of all courses were completed.

## III. INDIVIDUAL COURSE DATA

### 1) Core Issues in Aging and Disability

#### *Course Completion:*

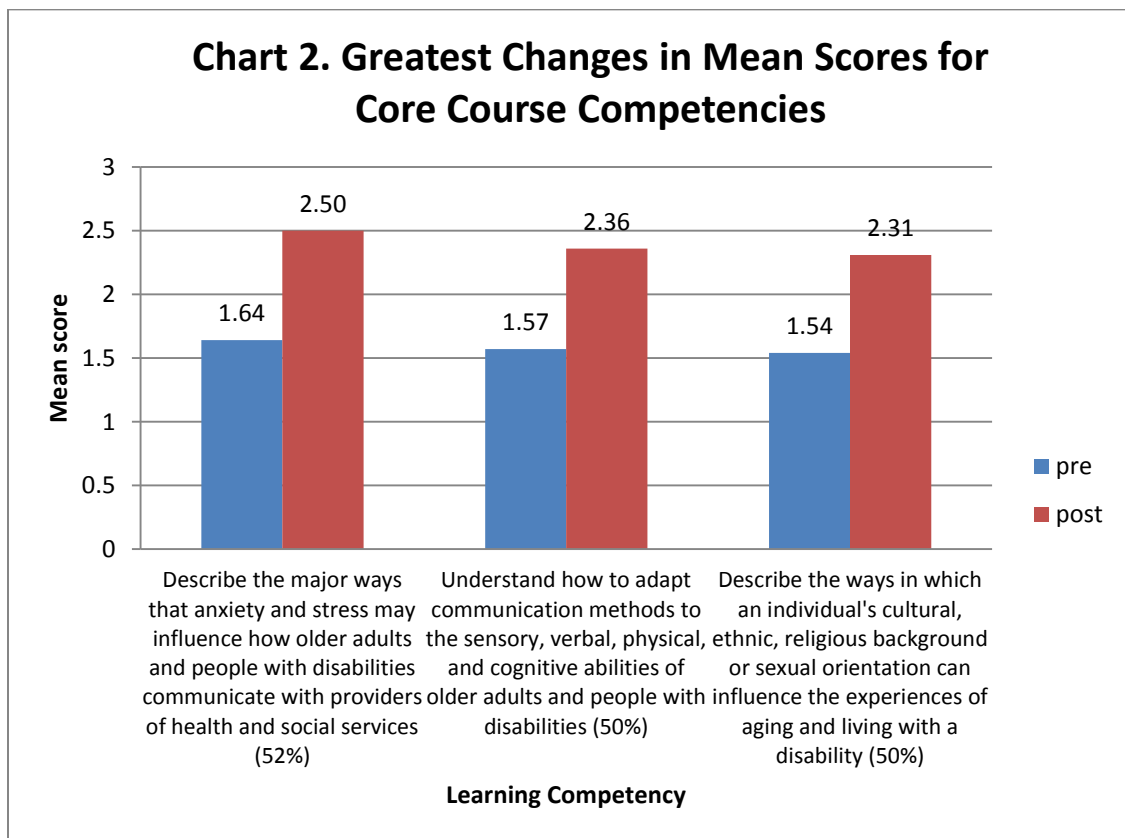
Of the 22 enrolled participants, 15 (68%) completed this course.

#### *Course Competencies:*

The course contained 8 learning competencies.

- Overall, increases in the mean scores from pre-test to post-test across the competencies ranged from 32% to 52%.
- The competencies with the three greatest increases from pre-test to post-test in this course were:

- Describe the major ways that anxiety and stress may influence how older adults and people with disabilities communicate with providers of health and social services. (52% increase)
- Understand how to adapt communication methods to the sensory, verbal, physical, and cognitive abilities of older adults and people with disabilities. (50% increase)
- Describe the ways in which an individual's cultural, ethnic, religious background or sexual orientation can influence the experiences of aging and living with a disability. (50% increase)



**Course Evaluations:**

- Of those completing evaluations, 100% agreed or strongly agreed with the following statements:
  - I am now able to understand the philosophy of consumer choice.
  - I am now able to demonstrate knowledge of resources and programs that support older adults and persons with disabilities.
  - The information in this course was effectively presented.

- The technology was user friendly.
- Further, one participant commented:  
*“I liked the case study portion of the training; where we could apply our thoughts and ideas to the specific issue and see would our colleagues also taking the course had to say.”*

## **2) A Guide to the Aging and Disability Networks**

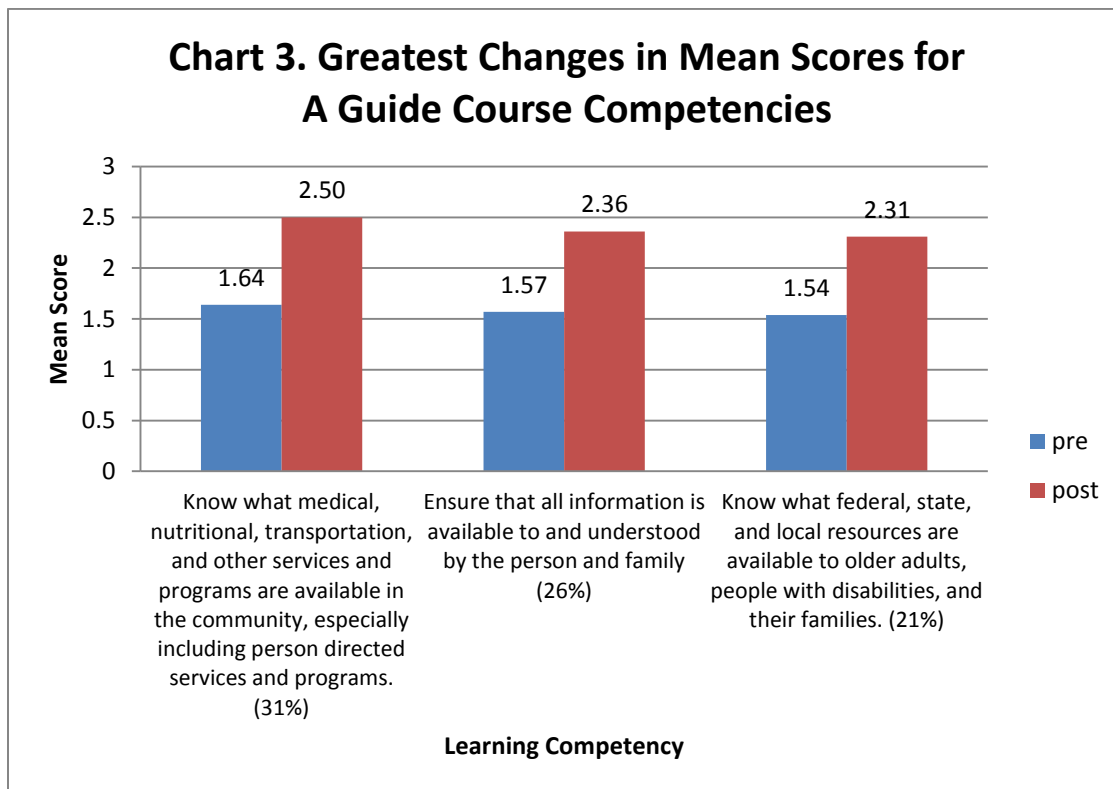
### ***Course Completion:***

Of the 22 enrolled participants, 82% (18) completed this course.

### ***Course Competencies:***

The course contained 6 learning competencies.

- Overall, increases in the mean scores from pre-test to post-test across the nine competencies ranged from 3% to 31%.
- The competencies with the three greatest increases from pre-test to post-test in this course were:
  - *Know what medical, nutritional, transportation, and other services and programs are available in the community, especially including person directed services and programs. (31% increase)*
  - *Ensure that all information is available to and understood by the person and family assessment (26% increase)*
  - *Know what federal, state, and local resources are available to older adults, people with disabilities, and their families. (21% increase)*



### Course Evaluations:

- Of those completing evaluations, 100% agreed or strongly agreed with the following statements:
  - I am now able to explain how eligibility and accessibility impact the use of federal, state, and local programs.
  - The technology was user friendly.
- 92% of these participants agreed or strongly agreed with the following statements:
  - I am now able to discuss methods for identifying and accessing resources for older adults and their families.
  - I am now able to define key terminology in understanding and navigating the aging network.
  - The training will help me apply practice skills in the topic area.
  - The information in the course was effectively presented.
- Further, one participant comment included:
 

*“I enjoyed the user friendly learning format.”*

### 3) Consumer Control, Choice and Direction for Options Counseling

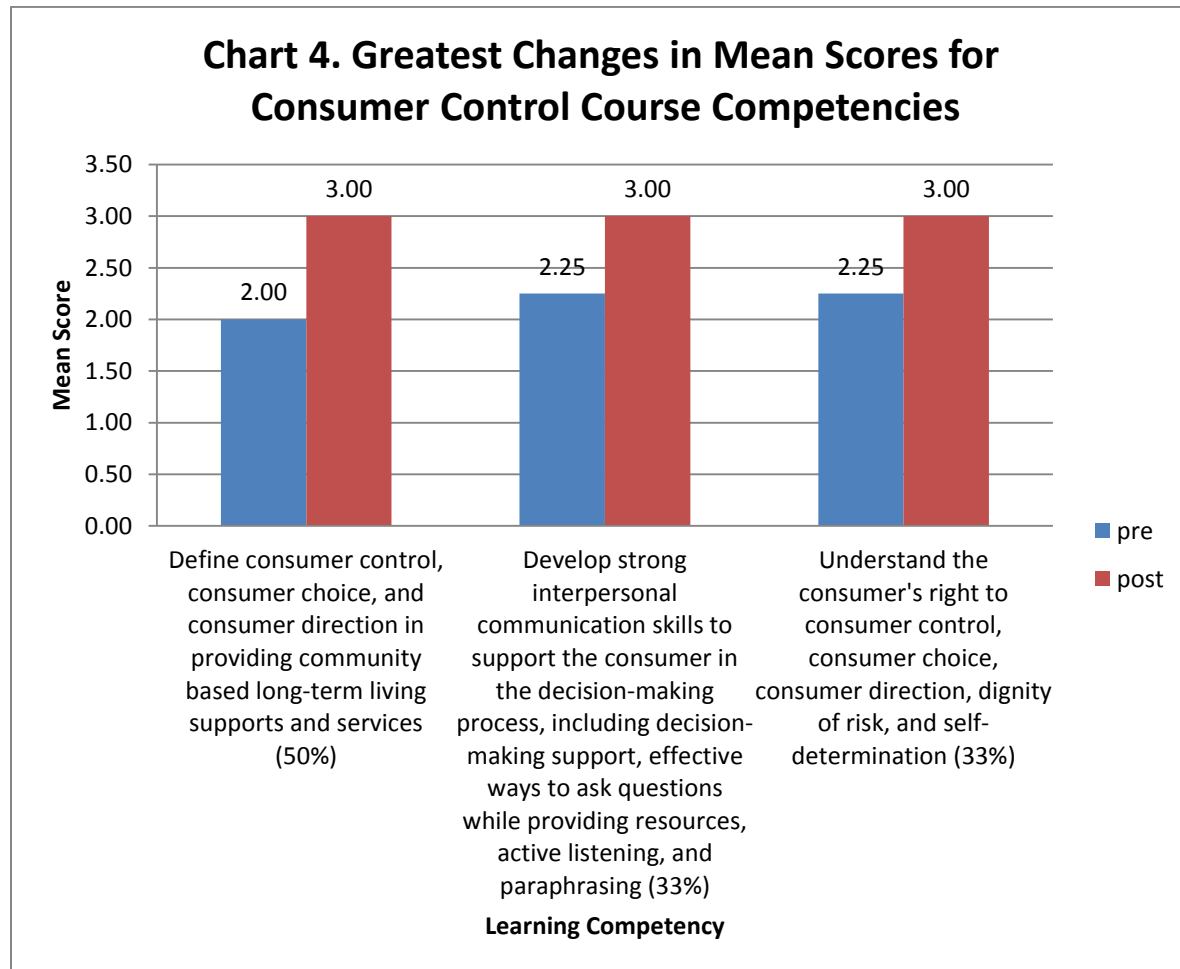
#### Course Completion:

Of the 22 enrolled participants, 41% (9) completed this course.

### ***Course Competencies:***

The course contained 10 learning competencies.

- Overall, increases in the mean scores from pre-test to post-test across the competencies ranged from 11% to 50%.
- The competencies with the three greatest increases from pre-test to post-test in this course were:
  - *Define consumer control, consumer choice, and consumer direction in providing community based long-term living supports and services (50% increase)*
  - *Develop strong interpersonal communication skills to support the consumer in the decision-making process, including decision-making support, effective ways to ask questions while providing resources, active listening, and paraphrasing (33% increase)*
  - *Understand the consumer's right to consumer control, consumer choice, consumer direction, dignity of risk, and self-determination (33% increase)*



***Course Evaluations:***

- Of those completing evaluations, 100% agreed or strongly agreed with the following statements:
  - I now understand the history of aging and disability policy.
  - I am now able to explain how the options counseling process is consumer controlled.
  - I am now able to identify decision-making tools to use with consumers.
  - The information in this course was effectively presented.
  - The technology was user friendly.
  - I would recommend this course to their colleagues.



**4) Mental Health Training in Options Counseling**

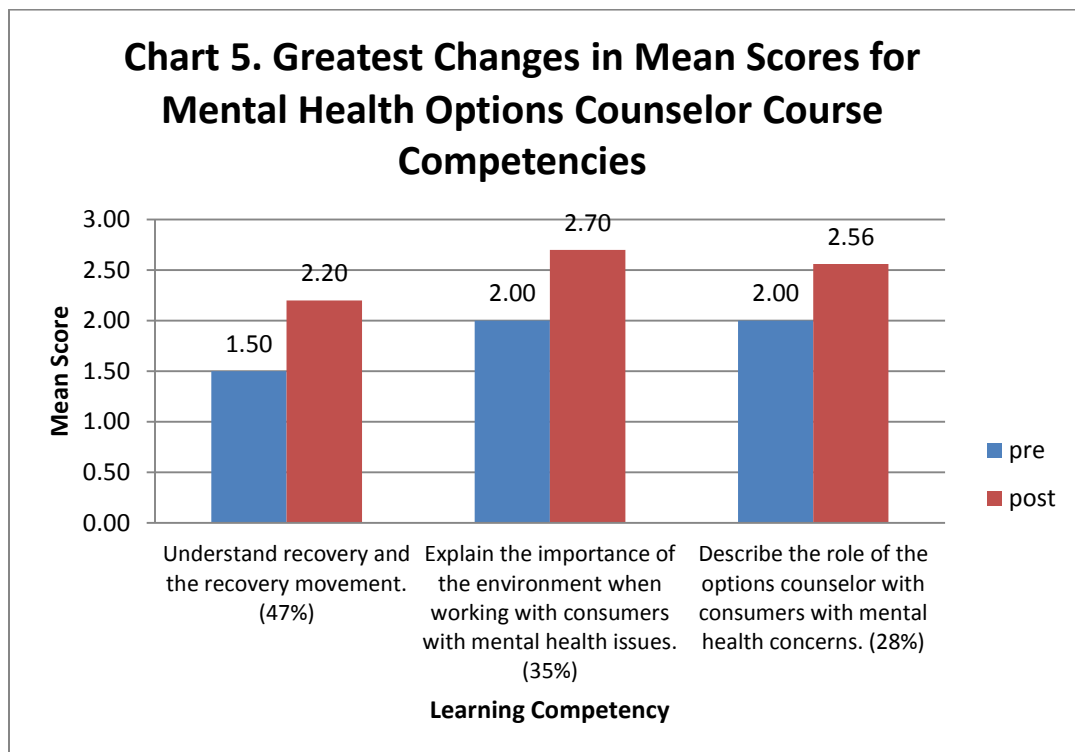
***Course Completion:***

Of the 22 enrolled participants, 59% (13) completed this.

***Course Competencies:***

The course contained 10 learning competencies.

- Overall, increases in the mean scores from pre-test to post-test across the competencies ranged from 4% to 47%.
- The competencies with the three greatest increases from pre-test to post-test in this course were:
  - *Understand recovery and the recovery movement.* (47% increase)
  - *Explain the importance of the environment when working with consumers with mental health issues.* (35% increase)
  - *Describe the role of the options counselor with consumers with mental health concerns.* (28% increase)



***Course Evaluations:***

Ten (10) participants completed the course evaluation for this course.

- Of these participants, 90% agreed or strongly agreed with the following statements:
  - I am now able to explain the role of options counseling in supporting consumer's choice, self-determination, and participation.
  - I am now able to describe the importance of options counselor self-reflection.
  - I am now able to understand the importance of communication skills in interacting with consumers, families, and caregivers.

**5) Legal Principles & Decision Making in Practice*****Course Completion:***

Of the 22 enrolled participants, 55% (12) completed this course.

***Course Competencies:***

Because only two participants completed the post-test for this course, we did not have enough data to do a meaningful competency analysis. However, based on the increases in competency for the previous four courses, it is likely that we would have continued to see similar results. A possible explanation for the lack of responses is that this course was the last in the program and participants were not required to complete the post-test in order to receive their certificate.

***Course Evaluations:***

As with the course competencies, only two participants completed the evaluation for this course. However, both agreed that the training would help them in their work with older adults and/or people with disabilities and that it was appropriate to their education/experience level.

Additionally, both agreed or strongly agreed that they are now able to:

- Explain the ethical principles of autonomy, beneficence and justice
- Understand why autonomy and safety can create ethical and legal problems
- Explain why informed consent is needed, both ethically and legally
- Make a distinction between competence and capacity
- Name the different kinds of guardianships used by the courts and how they are used
- Name the different kinds of advance care directives

## V. SUMMARY

Participants in this training program appreciated the CADER online courses and reported that they learned a great deal of relevant information that they will use in their work with aging and disability populations. Highlights include:

- An average of eighty-four (84%) of training program participants agreed or strongly agreed that the courses would help them in their practice with older adults and/or persons with disabilities.
- An average of eighty-two (82%) of training program participants agreed or strongly agreed that the information in the courses was effectively presented.
- An average of seventy-five (75%) of training program participants agreed or strongly agreed that the courses would help them apply practice skills in the topic areas presented in the courses.

### What's Next?

- Moving ahead, it would be helpful for program sponsors to require learners to participate in all evaluation activities, particularly the pre and post self-assessments of competencies. These data are important in terms of measuring competency gains and determining future training needs.
- In order to increase completion rates, we encourage program management to articulate and support a vision for staff development including stressing program benefits.
- Participants felt that they benefitted from all the courses, so we suggest that the next group of hires also go through the same training program.
- For those who have already been through the program, we recommend an additional training program to continue with skill development. CADER suggests the following courses for a Minnesota ADRC Continuing Education Program:
  - Alzheimer's Disease and Other Dementias
  - Care Transitions
  - Ethics, Critical Thinking and Problem Solving
  - Team Approach: Working Across Disciplines
  - Working with Informal Caregivers