

Massachusetts Behavioral Health Certificate Program 2017

**Final Evaluation Report from Center for Aging & Disability Education & Research
at Boston University
January 2018**



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

I. INTRODUCTION

Boston University's Center for Aging and Disability Education and Research (CADER), in partnership with the Executive Office of Elder Affairs (EOEA), sponsored an online **Behavioral Health & Aging Certificate Training Program**. The training program was targeted specifically for staff with direct client responsibilities, predominately adult protective service workers. The program began in April, 2017 and was completed on December 31, 2017.

ONLINE BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CERTIFICATE COURSES

In order to receive the certificate, learners were to complete the following five online courses:

1. Mental Health and Aging Issues
2. Mental Wellness and Resilience among Older Immigrants and Refugees
3. Suicide Prevention among Older Adults
4. Substance Abuse among Older Adults
5. Alzheimer's Disease and other Dementias

Learners who completed all online coursework earned **19 CEUs** and a **Certificate of Completion** in Behavioral Health & Aging from Boston University's Center for Aging and Disability Education and Research. In addition to online training, learners were offered an opportunity to attend three in-person sessions where content from the online courses was reviewed and learning applied.

II. DEMOGRAPHICS

One hundred and fifty (150) learners enrolled in this training program. Of the 150 enrolled, seven resigned from their jobs or dropped the program and three individuals were from EOEA, who were not included in this analysis. Of the 140 participants who continued in the program, 127 completed the entire program and received the *Massachusetts Behavioral Health and Aging Certificate* (91% completion rate). The average age of the participants was 42-years-old, and 90% identified as female. Eighty-seven percent (87%) of participants self-identified as White/Non-Hispanic. The majority of participants had a Bachelor's degree or higher (87%). Thirty-five percent (35%) of participants said they work in an Adult Protective Services organization. Thirty-three percent (33%) work for an Area Agency on Aging or ASAP. Six percent (6%) work for a Council on Aging and four percent (4%) work for Aging and Disability Resource Centers.

III. ONLINE COURSE RESULTS

1. *Mental Health and Aging Course*

Increases in the mean scores from pre-test to post-test were statistically significant across all of the nine learning competencies and increases ranged from 20.8% to 61.5% ($p < .05$). Participants rated this course very positively.

- Ninety-eight percent (98%) agreed or strongly agreed that the training expanded their knowledge and understanding in the topic area.
- Ninety-four percent (94%) agreed or strongly agreed that the training would help them apply practice skills in the topic area.
- Ninety-six percent (96%) agreed or strongly agreed that the training will help them in their work with older adults and/or with people with disabilities.

Some of the participant feedback for this course is listed below.

- “Very good. I would recommend this course to my co-workers. Mental health is a growing problem and medical professionals should be aware. This course helps tremendously on what programs are available to help with this growing disease.”
- “Great information, especially the part about culture concepts in mental health and substance abuse.”
- “I am very pleased with this course. I have learned many new things regarding the elderly and will be able to use this knowledge when assisting my clients in the future.”
- “I feel there was a lot of thought in designing this course and it appears those who oversaw the content had a passion in this area. The information was quite consistent with my previous knowledge base in this area which is wonderful.”

2. Suicide Prevention among Older Adults Course

Increases in the mean scores from pre-test to post-test were statistically significant across all of the eight learning competencies and increases ranged from 24.9% to 52.9% ($p < .05$). Participants rated this course very positively.

- Ninety-five percent (95%) agreed or strongly agreed that the training expanded their knowledge and understanding in the topic area.
- Ninety-three percent (93%) agreed or strongly agreed that the training would help them apply practice skills in the topic area.
- Ninety-four percent (94%) agreed or strongly agreed that the training will help them in their work with older adults and/or with people with disabilities.

Some of the participant feedback for this course is listed below.

- “Well presented. Enjoyed the blogs and others responses; helpful.”
- “The content was interesting and eye opening.”
- “I found the information in each chapter extremely important to my line of work. It provided me with more tools and information to better serve the older population who are at risk of suicide.”
- “Very helpful for me as a protective worker. I found examples of how to engage and assess risk very helpful.”
- “The patient stories really helped bring home the theories/concepts learned.”

3. Mental Wellness and Resilience among Older Immigrants and Refugees Course

Increases in the mean scores from pre-test to post-test were statistically significant across all of the eight learning competencies and increases ranged from 63.3% to 110.8% ($p < .05$). Participants rated this course very positively.

- Ninety-four percent (94%) agreed or strongly agreed that the training expanded their knowledge and understanding in the topic area.
- Ninety-three percent (93%) agreed or strongly agreed that the training would help them apply practice skills in the topic area.
- Ninety-one percent (91%) agreed or strongly agreed that the training will help them in their work with older adults and/or with people with disabilities.

Some of the participant feedback for this course is listed below.

- “I found this information extremely helpful, as it is something we face daily in our jobs”
- “I learned a lot from this course very helpful for the work I am currently doing.”
- “I enjoyed this course most thus far since it is an area that I lack greatest competence in since I do work in a more rural area. I'm glad to have received this information to allow it to better inform my future practice.”
- “I really enjoy the varied interactive methods of instruction. From short answers to blog posts to clicking through stories, this is an engaging course sequence. I appreciate all of the resources, links, articles, and various tools I can use immediately in my practice that are available within this course.”
- “Being from a small community in rural MA, I have had little experience with immigrants and minorities. This information was extremely helpful in understanding the background and how to assist older adult immigrants. I sincerely hope that I will be able to utilize this much needed and appreciated information.”

4. Substance Use among Older Adults Course

Increases in the mean scores from pre-test to post-test were statistically significant across all of the nine learning competencies and increases ranged from 37.5% to 273.6% ($p < .05$). This course had the greatest gains from pre to post assessment. Participants rated this course very positively.

- Ninety-seven percent (97%) agreed or strongly agreed that the training expanded their knowledge and understanding in the topic area.
- Ninety-four percent (94%) agreed or strongly agreed that the training would help them apply practice skills in the topic area.
- Ninety-six percent (96%) agreed or strongly agreed that the training will help them in their work with older adults and/or with people with disabilities.

Some of the participant feedback for this course is listed below.

- “As with each of these courses, the resources, reference lists, exposure to the actual screenings for review and learning are all extremely helpful. The scenarios and reflections are also pertinent and realistic for social work practice.”
- “I found this a very applicable unit for my work with older adults. The screening tools and intervention strategies were very helpful.”
- “I enjoyed this course. The content was presented well, and I will be able to use the information I learned in my work.”
- “Working with older adults we often encounter elder with such problem. This course will help us better handle such encounter in the future. Resources section is very helpful.”
- “Substance use is an active barrier in the lives of the elders whom I work with, as well as with the family members or friends who make up their informal network. Having the tools to identify the signs, address the issues as well as the resources to provide, should the elder so choose, makes us better practitioners and this course encompassed all components noted.”

5. Alzheimer's Disease and Other Dementias Course

Increases in the mean scores from pre-test to post-test were statistically significant across all of the ten learning competencies and increases ranged from 8.3% to 73.3% ($p < .05$). Participants rated this course very positively.

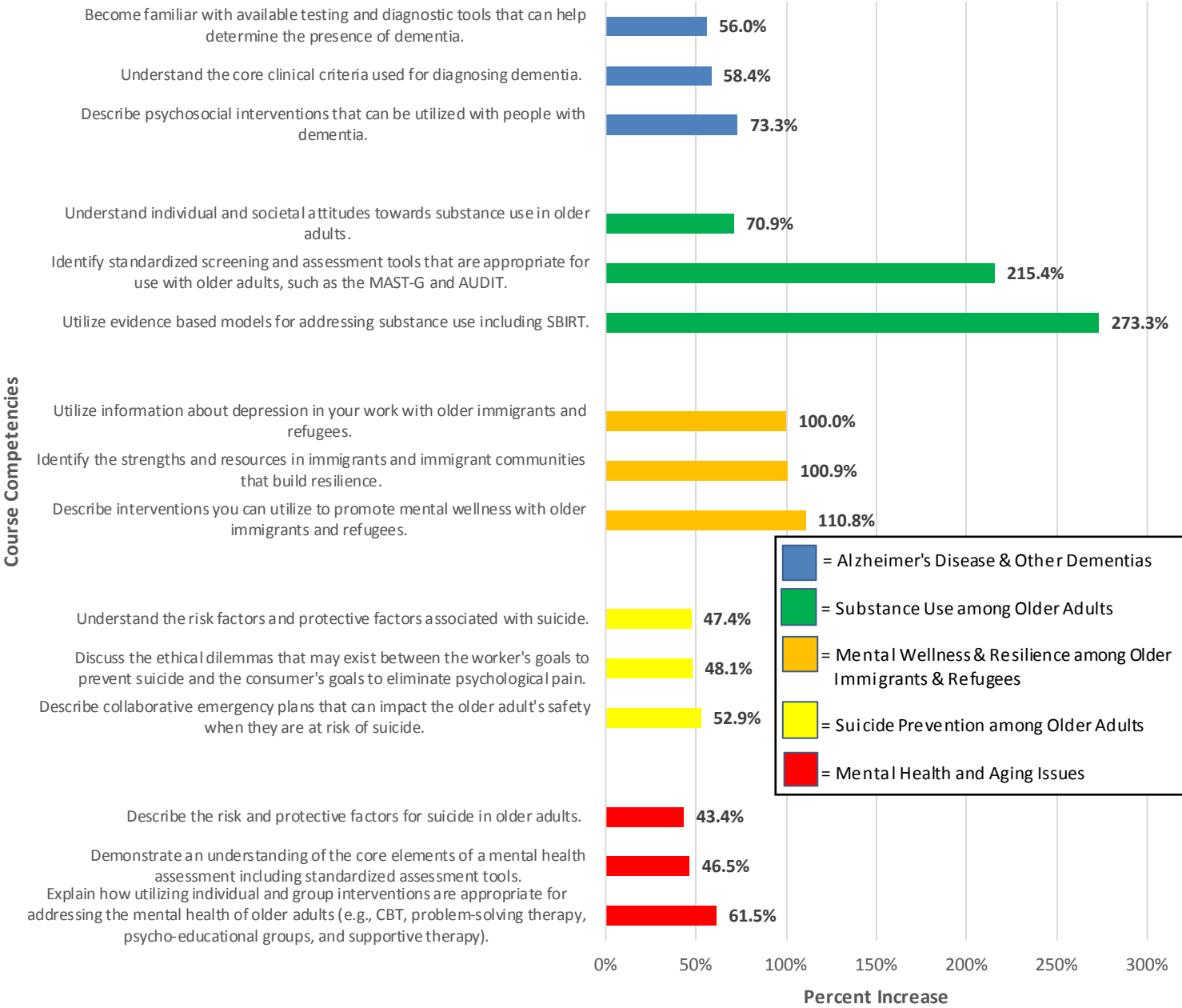
- Ninety-four percent (94%) agreed or strongly agreed that the training expanded their knowledge and understanding in the topic area.
- Ninety-five percent (95%) agreed or strongly agreed that the training would help them apply practice skills in the topic area.
- Ninety-six percent (96%) agreed or strongly agreed that the training will help them in their work with older adults and/or with people with disabilities.

Some of the participant feedback for this course is listed below.

- “This section was immediately applicable to my work. I will change how I work with residents and families as a result. I am also motivated to learn even more about the various types of dementia and stages of Alzheimer's to increase my ability to work with persons facing this diagnosis. I hope to learn more and to review the materials offered as resources in this course to become advanced or expert in all areas listed above.”
- “Very informative material and easy to understand to be applied to my work.”
- “I loved all of these courses”
- “This was a very informative and useful class. I feel much more confident when assisting families that have recently been diagnosed”
- “I found this section of the course to be exceptionally helpful. I thought the videos were very important part of the course in this section.”
- “As a senior center director, this course has enlightened me on how to communicate better with clients who may be suffering from dementia. I found this course very helpful.”
- “This course was wonderful. The tools and information are very applicable to my work with older adults. The videos in this section were very well done. I have been working with older adults for most of my social work career, but felt this course really deepened my knowledge and increased my sensitivity in working with clients and families dealing with ADRDs.”

The competencies with the three greatest increases from pre-test to post-test across each of the five courses are illustrated in the chart on the next page.

Greatest Competency Increase by Course



IV. IN-PERSON TRAINING SESSIONS

In addition to online training, learners were offered an opportunity to attend three in-person sessions where content from the online courses was reviewed and learning applied. These sessions were held every two months for two hours each session. Learners were asked to try to attend all sessions. Twelve learners attended all three sessions. Others attended most, with a total of 81% of sessions attended and 112 hours of in-person training completed.

- Sixty-six percent (66%) agreed or strongly agreed, “the training met its learning objectives.”
- Seventy-eight (78%) agreed or strongly agreed, “what I learned is applicable to my work role.”
- Sixty-six percent (66%) agreed or strongly agreed that “as a result of the training I have new skills and/or confidence to apply what I learned to my work role.”

While some learners found the in-person sessions helpful, “I did find the content to be very informative” and “I found the in-person sessions to be beneficial”, others felt it was too much of a review of the online training. Other comments included that the first session, which was an introduction to the program and held before the online courses were available, should have been held after the start of the online course work. In addition, it was suggested that rather than have three separate two hour sessions, combining all sessions into one all-day session would have saved a lot of travel time. Recommendations in moving ahead include offering the program as online only, offering the in-person sessions in one day, or using tools such as webinars or live classrooms to discuss the online materials.

V. SUMMARY

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

- Increases in the mean scores from pre-test to post-test were statistically significant across all of the learning competencies in each of the five courses ($p < .05$).
- On average, 96% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that the training expanded their knowledge and understanding in the topic area.
- On average, 94% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that the courses will help them apply practice skills in the topic area.
- On average, 94% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that the training will help them in their work with older adults and/or with people with disabilities

VI. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This project was funded by the Executive Office of Elder Affairs (EOEA).