



DPH Mental Wellness and Resilience Among Older Immigrants and Refugees

**Evaluation Report from Boston University
[June 2014]**

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Executive Summary

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 to aging and disability research and practice.

The CADER Mental Wellness and Resilience Among Older Adult Immigrants and Refugees training program, was designed to provide practitioners with competency-based training that addresses the core knowledge, skills, and values needed for enhancing mental wellness and resilience among older adults. It was targeted to community health workers, mental health, substance abuse, and aging service practitioners who work primarily with immigrant and refugee populations. The training used a blended model of face to face sessions and an online course.

Key Findings

Participants' competency scores from the online course showed statistically significant increases based on pre and post training self-assessments in all three major domains: knowledge, skills, and values. For example:

- o Knowledge competency, *"Identify the strengths and resources in immigrants and immigrant communities that build resilience."* increased **41%**.
- o Skill competency, *"Describe methods of recognizing and promoting resilience."* increased **76%**.
- o Value competency, *"Discuss your own cultural attitudes and beliefs and how they may affect your work with immigrants and refugees."* increased **38%**.

One hundred percent (100%) agreed or strongly agreed that they would recommend the course to a colleague.

When asked if they believed that the training would help them in their work with older adults or people with disabilities, 100% either agreed or strongly agreed.

Participants provided positive feedback in their evaluations regarding the course content and learning model:

"Great class, a must for more people in the society."

"This course was very informative. I would definitely recommend this course to others."

I. Introduction

For ten years, the **Center for Aging and Disability Education and Research (CADER)**, at the Boston University School of Social Work has been a leader in providing state-of-the-art, high quality online training in aging for those who work with older adults. Programs are designed especially for busy social service and health professionals who need a flexible, convenient, and effective way to obtain crucial knowledge, information, and skills that can be put to use right away.

CADER's Mental Wellness and Resilience Among Older Immigrants and Refugees training brings together the often separate worlds of health, mental health, aging, and immigrant and refugee programs, using an already existing statewide coalition, with the goal of creating system change through training.

II. Participant Profile

In total 22 people enrolled and participated in the training. Based on the demographic information collected from enrolled participants, the majority (86%) identified as female, while 14% identified as male. From those who provided information, the average age of enrolled participants was 39 years old. In terms of education level for the 21 participants, 62% had a Bachelor's Degree (1 had a Bachelors in Social Work), 29% had a Master's Degree (2 had a Masters in Social Work), 16% had an Associate's, and 4% reported having no degree.

Chart 1 indicates the race of enrolled participants who reported this demographic information. Fifty-four (52.4%) of enrolled participants self-identified as White/Non-Hispanic, 23.8% identified as Latino, 14.3% identified as Asian, and 9.5% identified as Black/African American.

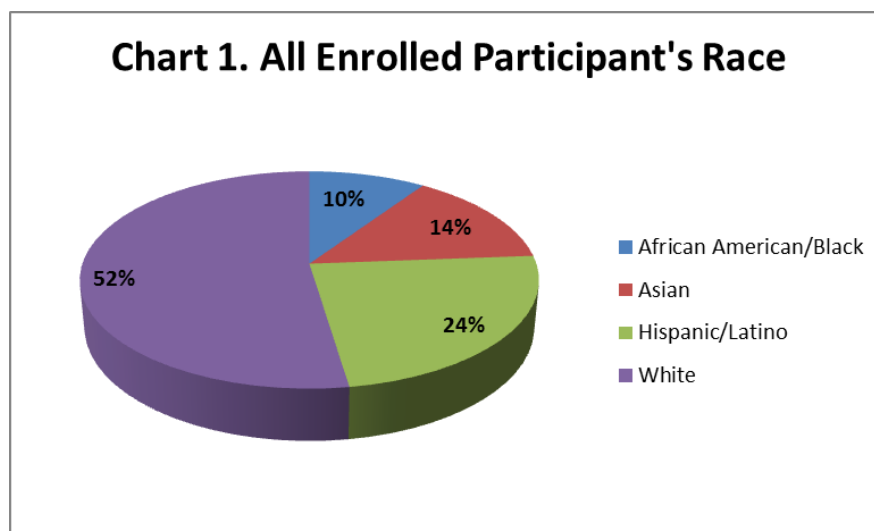
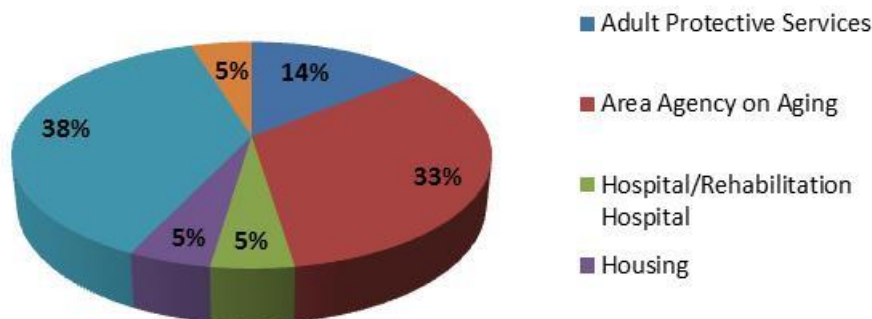


Chart 2 indicates the agency type of enrolled participants. The three most frequent agencies settings were: Other (38.1%), Area Agencies on Aging (AAA) (33.3%), and Adult Protective Services (14.3%).

Chart 2. Enrolled Participants' Agency Setting



Though participant linguistic data is not collected by CADER, we learned anecdotally from the face-to-face trainings that some of the languages spoken by participants included: Spanish, Portuguese, and Russian. Some participants were immigrants themselves from countries/territories like Brazil, Vietnam, India, Puerto Rico, and Russia. Finally, in their applications to the program, participants indicated that they worked with Chinese, Russian, Cambodian, Nepalese, Congolese, Brazilian, Indian, Puerto Rican, Haitian, and other Latin American immigrant groups.

III. Competencies

CADER programs and courses apply a competency-based approach. 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 your professional practice.

Competency Score Results

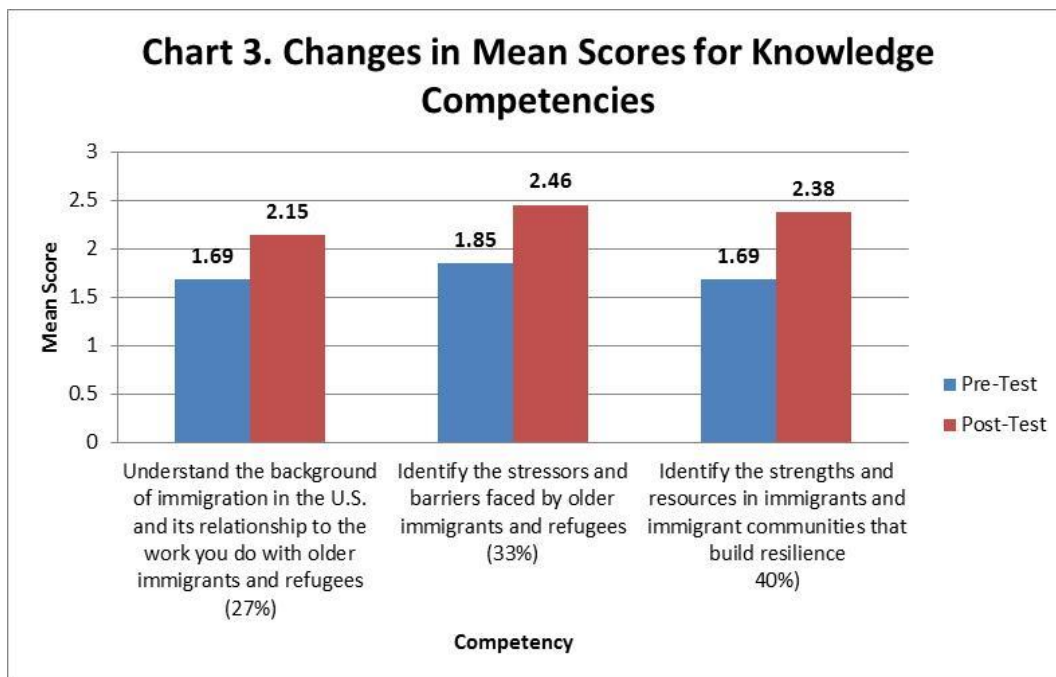
There were 8 competencies analyzed for this program, focused in three topic area domains: knowledge, skills, and values. A list of all 8 competencies can be found in **Appendix A**. The average increase in scores across all competencies was 46%, with increases in all competencies ranging from 27% up to 76%.

Knowledge Competencies

This competency domain consisted of 3 questions.

- At pre-test, the mean score in this domain was 1.74, and at post-test, the mean score was 2.33, an average increase of 34% from pre to post-test.

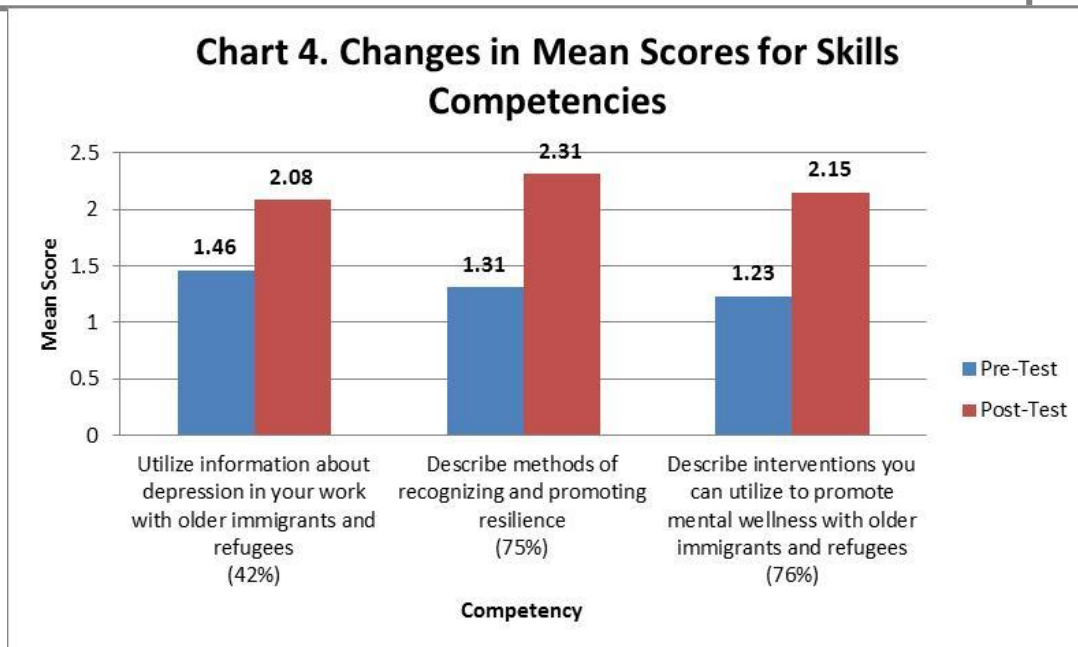
- Chart 3 highlights the three changes from pre-test to post-test in questions within this domain.
 - *Understand the background of immigration in the U.S. and its relationship to the work you do with older immigrants and refugees (27% increase)*
 - *Identify the stressors and barriers faced by older immigrants and refugees (33% increase)*
 - *Identify the strengths and resources in immigrants and immigrant communities that build resilience (40% increase)*



Skills Competencies

This competency domain consisted of 3 questions regarding skills.

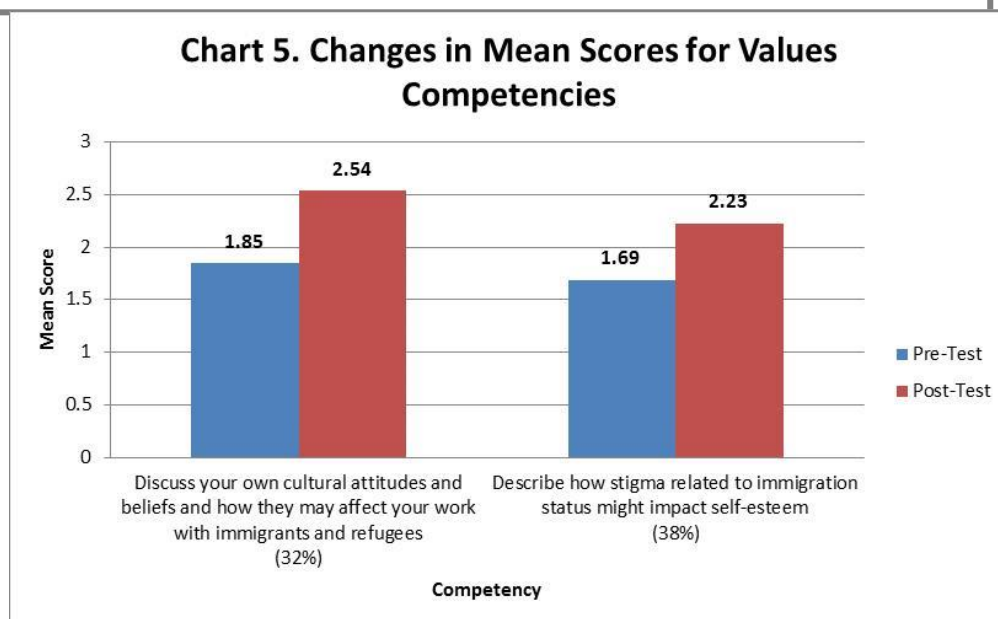
- At pre-test, the mean score in this domain was 1.33, and at post-test, the mean score was 2.18, an average increase of 63% from pre to post-test.
- Chart 4 highlights the three changes from pre-test to post-test within this domain.
 - *Utilize information about depression in your work with older immigrants and refugees (42% increase)*
 - *Describe interventions you can utilize to promote mental wellness with older immigrants and refugees (75% increase)*
 - *Describe methods of recognizing and promoting resilience (76% increase)*



Values Competencies

This domain consisted of 2 questions regarding competencies of professional values and ethics. At pre-test, the mean score for this domain was 1.77, and at post-test, the mean score was 2.25, an average increase of 27% from pre to post-test. Chart 5 highlights the two changes from pre-test to post-test within this domain.

- *Describe how stigma related to immigration status might impact self-esteem (32% increase)*
- *Discuss your own cultural attitudes and beliefs and how they may affect your work with immigrants and refugees (38% increase)*



IV. Course Evaluations

At the end of the course, participants were asked to complete an evaluation of the course in order to gauge whether they felt that the training benefitted them and their practice.

Participants rated their satisfaction level with the course, using a scale of one to five (1, strongly disagree; 2, disagree; 3, neutral; 4, agree; 5, strongly agree). Evaluations for the course had high levels of satisfaction with average scores being between four and five for 7 out of 8 quantitative questions. Participants are also asked for their opinions on course improvements and what other types of courses they would like to see offered.

All thirteen participants who completed the online course completed the course evaluation. Seventy-seven percent (77%) of participants who completed course evaluations agreed or strongly agreed that learning objectives were met. Further, when asked if the training expanded their knowledge and understanding of the topic area, 100% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed. When asked if they believed that the training would help them apply practice skills within the topic area, 100% either agreed or strongly agreed. When asked if they believed that the training would help them in their work with older adults or people with disabilities, 92.3% either agreed or strongly agreed.

Qualitative participant feedback, as seen by comments in course evaluations, also supports program outcomes, stating:

“This is a great class to learn and get familiar with what is all about the topic. It helped me to understand more about what resilience means as well as the difference between assimilation and acculturation. I like the sample stories and questions I tried to

answer. Although I may not give the best answer to the question; however, I think this part is fun learning exercise. Overall, it has been a great class."

"I truly enjoyed the class and feel empowered with the information I received. I have no suggestions at this time, and look forward to attending another class."

Face-to-Face Data

Of the 12 people who completed the face to face training, 100% agreed or strongly agreed that the training will help them apply practice skills in their area. Ninety-two percent (92%) of participants agreed or strongly agreed that the training expanded their knowledge and understanding of the topic area, and that it increased their knowledge of ethical issues in the topic area.

One-hundred percent (100%) of participants agreed or strongly agreed that the speaker was well prepared and organized, as well as engaging. Further, 92% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that the presenter was knowledgeable about the topic, the space for the training session was adequate, and the audiovisual aids worked properly.

One-hundred percent (100%) of participants agreed or strongly agreed that the training was organized in a professional and efficient manner. Further, some participants commented:

- *"Useful. I look forward to implementing some of the ideas."*
- *"Great class, a must for more people in the society."*
- *"There are not a lot of trainings on immigrants and refugees so this was appreciated."*

V. Summary

Twenty-two (22) individuals participated in this blended training program. The respondents who completed course evaluations indicated that the course expanded their knowledge and understanding of the given topic area; the training would help them apply practice skills within the topic area; the training would help them in their work with older adults and people with disabilities; that they would recommend the course to a colleague; and that each course met the pre-determined learning objectives. Further, very high increases in the course competencies: *Describe interventions you can utilize to promote mental wellness with older immigrants and refugees*. (75% increase), and *Describe methods of recognizing and promoting resilience* (76% increase), reflect that program goals of bringing together the often separate worlds of mental health, aging, and immigrant and refugee programs, as well as training participants using a blended model of training were achieved.

APPENDIX A. List of Course Competencies**Knowledge:**

- 1) Understand the background of immigration in the U.S. and its relationship to the work you do with older immigrants and refugees.
- 2) Identify the stressors and barriers faced by older immigrants and refugees.
- 3) Identify the strengths and resources in immigrants and immigrant communities that build resilience.

Skills:

- 4) Utilize information about depression in your work with older immigrants and refugees.
- 5) Describe methods of recognizing and promoting resilience.
- 6) Describe interventions you can utilize to promote mental wellness with older immigrants and refugees.

Values:

- 7) Discuss your own cultural attitudes and beliefs and how they may affect your work with immigrants and refugees.
- 8) Describe how stigma related to immigration status might impact self-esteem