Atlanta Region Certificate in Care Management and Aging

Evaluation Report from Boston University
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Executive Summary

The Institute for Geriatric Social Work (IGSW), now known as 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 **IGSW Atlanta Region Certificate in Care Management in Aging** is designed to provide practitioners with competency-based training that addresses the core knowledge, skills and values needed for effective care management with older adults and people with disabilities. Care management is becoming increasingly important in connecting individuals to needed services and assisting them to remain independent in the community. Providing coordinated care is a vital skill for health and social services practitioners, particularly in a time of rapid change and the new Affordable Care Act. The program is comprised of IGSW online courses, Live Classroom/ Webinars, and Supervisor Guides, all of which support training and the transfer of learning within an agency, region, or network.

Curriculum Includes

➢ Course 1 - Core Training in Aging and Disabilities - 4 hours/CEUs
➢ Course 2 - Geriatric Assessment and Care Planning - 4 hours/CEUs
➢ Course 3 - A Guide to the Aging Network <u>or</u> Mental Health Issues in Aging - 4 hours/CEUs
➢ Course 4 - Care Management Practice - 2 hours/CEUs
➢ Course 5 - Care Transitions - 4 hours/CEUs
➢ Webinar - Effective Documentation - 1 1/2 hours/CEUs

Key Findings

- Participants' competency scores for the certificate demonstrated statistically significant increases between pre and post training assessments in all three major domains: knowledge, skills, and values. Key competency increases included:
  - Knowledge competency, "*List and describe the primary functions of care management, including assessment, planning and care coordination,*" increased 16% in mean score.
  - Skill competency, *"Demonstrate ability to assist client and family/caregiver through care transitions,"* increased 30% in mean score.

- o Value competency, *"Discuss the concepts of consumer choice, self-determination, and participation and how they affect community based care,"* increased 33% in mean score.

- Of learners who completed course evaluations, at least 91.6% felt that learning objectives were met.

- Across the five courses, 100% of participants who responded to the course evaluations either agreed or strongly agreed that the courses would help them apply skills in their work in the topic area.

- Also across the five courses, 100% of participants who responded to course evaluations agreed or strongly agreed that they would recommend the course to a colleague.

- Of the 87 participants enrolled in the course, 77 completed the course (88.5%).

- An Area Agency on Aging staff member reflected on the certificate program: "*I have watched case managers within our agency grow as they completed this certificate. It is our hope that this program might become mandatory as we hire new case management staff. The balance between introductory materials and an overview of the aging population's specific needs as well as the addition of specifically recommended interventions is ideal for any AAA...*"

I. Introduction

For ten years, the Institute for Geriatric Social Work (IGSW), now 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. IGSW 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.

In October 2012, IGSW changed its name to the **Center for Aging and Disability Education and Research (CADER)**, because of our part in the growing movement to integrate supports and services for older adults and people with disabilities and our efforts to meet the corresponding education and training needs of workers and providers who increasingly serve both groups. The Center is now dedicated to workforce development in both the aging and the disability fields.

The Atlanta Region Certificate in Care Management in Aging program was developed to provide practitioners with competency based training that addresses the core knowledge, skills and values needed for effective practice with

older adults and people with disabilities. Care management has become increasingly important in connecting older adults and those with disabilities to needed services and assisting them in remaining independent in the community. This Certificate provided participants with an understanding of the core functions and responsibilities of care managers as well as content on care coordination, management of care transitions, and a review of the resources available to support care in the community. Also covered in the program were the common medical and psychological conditions that impact functional abilities in both younger and older adults. All of these issues were discussed in the context of consumer choice and self-determination.

II. Participant Profile

Of the 87 participants enrolled in the certificate program, 77 (88.5%) completed the certificate. Each participant was asked demographic questions. The vast majority, 97%, of enrolled participants identified as female, while only 3% identified as male. These percentages remained the same for those who completed pre and post competencies. The average age of enrolled participants was 48 years old. Forty-seven percent (47%) of enrolled participants self-identified as White/Non-Hispanic, 52 % identified as Black/African American, 1% identified as other.

Chart 1 indicates the agency type of enrolled participants. Many participants (36%) did not identify their work setting. However, 25% reported they worked in an Area Agency on Aging (AAA), 25% in Adult Day Care, 12% in other settings, 1% in a home health agencies and 1% in private geriatric care management.

Chart 1. Enrolled Participant Self-Reported Work Setting
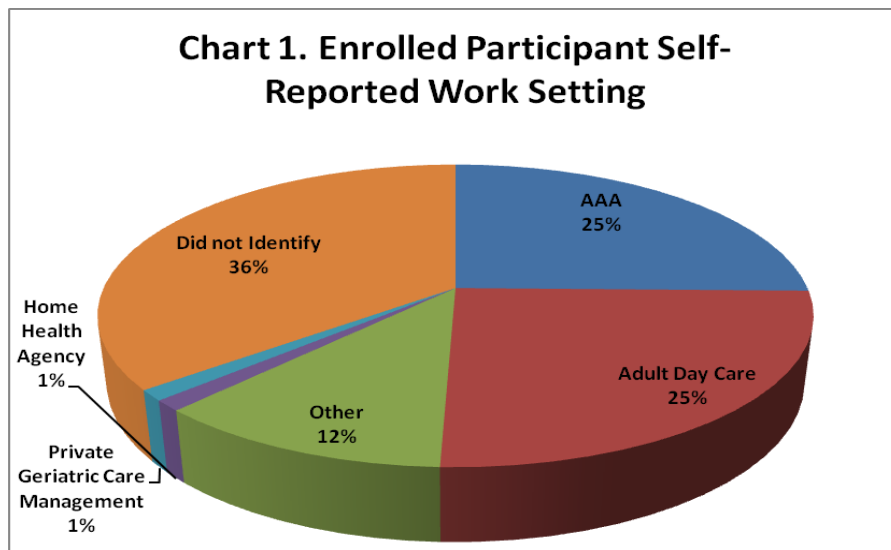
Most participants did not report on their education level by degree received, but 79% indicated that they had taken courses on aging as part of their degree program. Nineteen percent (19%) had not taken courses on aging as part of their degree, while 1% said the question was not applicable and 1% did not respond. See Chart 2.

Chart 2. Enrolled Participants Who Took Courses on Aging as Part of a Degree Program

N/A 1%   Did not Respond 1%

No 19%

Yes 79%
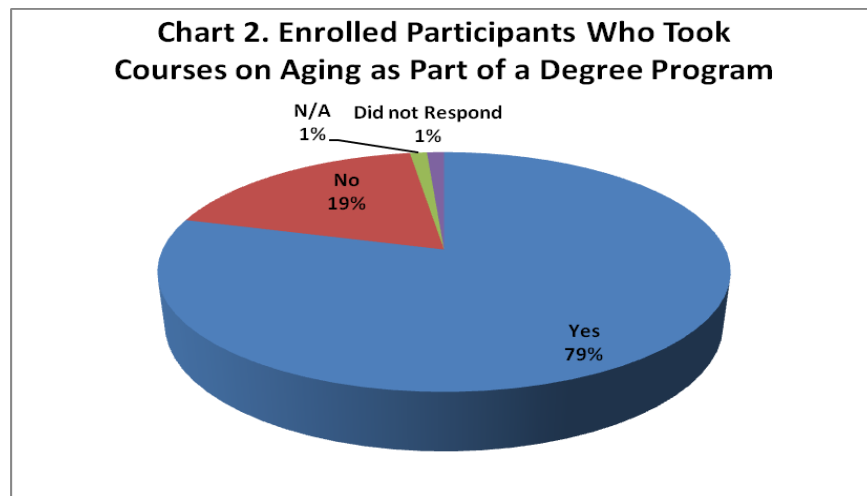
III. Competencies

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 22 competencies analyzed for this certificate program, focused in the three topic area domains: knowledge, skills, and values. A list of all 22 competencies can be found in **Appendix A**. Thirty-seven learners (42.5% of enrolled participants) completed the certificate and both the pre and post competency self-evaluation scales. For participants who completed both the pre and post competency assessments, there was a statistically significant increase in self-reported competence levels for 20 out of the 22 competencies from when participants took the pre-test to when they took the post-test ($p </= .013$). The average increase in scores across all competencies was 21%, with increases in all 22 competencies ranging from 2% to 33%.
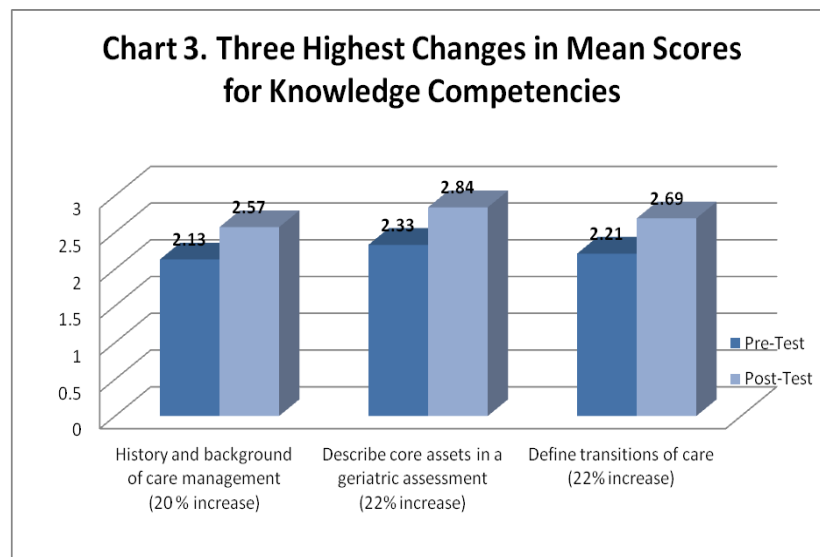
Knowledge Competencies
This competency domain consisted of seven questions regarding participant knowledge of care management, challenges in the life cycle, geriatric assessments, care transitions, programs/services/resources for participants and extended networks, and the importance of cultural diversity. At pre-test, the mean score in this domain was 2.38, and at post-test, the mean score was 2.75, an average increase

of 15.5% from pre to post-test. Chart 3 highlights the three largest changes from pre-test to post-test in questions within this domain (competencies 1, 4, and 6).

- Competency 1, found in the Care Management Practice Course, asked participants to "*Describe the history and background of care management.*"
- Competency 4, found in the Geriatric Assessment Course, asked participants to *"Describe the core areas that are addressed in a geriatric assessment including physical health, mental and cognitive health, social supports and functional abilities."*
- Competency 6, found in Care Transitions, asked participants to *"Define transitions of care which includes a safe and timely transfer to the next care setting."*

These three competencies come from three different courses. The largest increases in knowledge scores in these three competencies reflect that students' knowledge increased across different courses within the certificate program. They also reflect achievement of the certificate program's goals to teach learners the core functions of care managers and the management of care transitions.
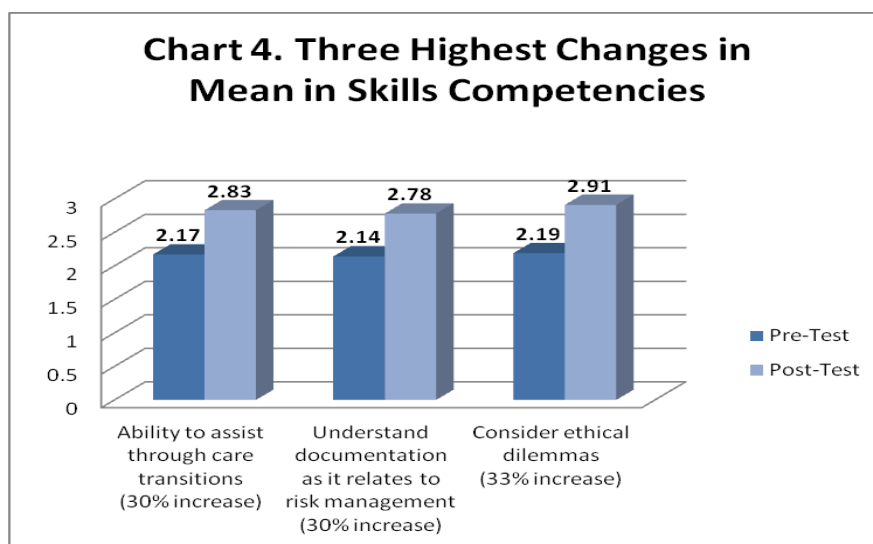

Chart 3. Three Highest Changes in Mean Scores for Knowledge Competencies

Skills Competencies

This competency domain consisted of eleven questions regarding the skills needed for care management plans, geriatric assessments, care transitions, enhancing client self-advocacy, and being aware of cultural values and beliefs. At pre-test, the mean score in this domain was 2.29. At post-test, the mean score was 2.83. The average score increase was 23.5% from pre to post-test. Chart 4 highlights the three largest changes from pre-test to post-test within this domain (competencies 13, 16, and 17).

- Competency 13, from Care Transitions, asked participants if they could *"Demonstrate ability to assist client and family/caregiver through care transitions."*
- Competency 16, from Core Training and the Webinar, asked participants to assess their ability to *"Understand documentation as it relates to risk management."*
- Competency 17, from Geriatric Assessment, asked participants to assess their ability to *"Consider ethical dilemmas that can arise in seeking to balance respect for an older adult's right to self-determination with the protection of the individual and community."*

Once again, these competencies came from three different courses, showing an increase in skill across different courses within the certificate program. Increases in competencies 13 and 17 reflect achievement of the program's objectives to teach learners the management of care transitions within the context of client self-determination. Further, competency 17 is particularly important, as social service practitioners must balance their dual responsibility to clients as well as to the broader society. It had the highest percentage increase (33%) in mean score from pre-test to post-test among all competencies.

Chart 4. Three Highest Changes in Mean in Skills Competencies

	Pre-Test	Post-Test
Ability to assist through care transitions (30% increase)	2.17	2.83
Understand documentation as it relates to risk management (30% increase)	2.14	2.78
Consider ethical dilemmas (33% increase)	2.19	2.91

Values Competencies

This domain consisted of four questions regarding competencies of professional values and ethics. At pre-test, the mean score for this domain was 2.37, and at post-test, the mean score was 2.90, an average increase of 23% from pre to post-test. Chart 5 highlights the two largest changes from pre-test to post-test within this domain (competencies 19 and 20).

- Competency 19, from Core Training, asked participants to rate their ability to *"Discuss the concepts of consumer choice, self-determination, and participation and how they affect community based care."*
- Competency 20, from Core Training, asked participants to rate their ability to *"Identify the ways in which long-term living systems can supports consumer choice, self-determination, and participation."*

The high increases in scores for these two competencies reflect increased knowledge in the principle of self-determination, one of the key tenets in effective practice with older adults and people with disabilities. Understanding care management within the context of consumer choice and self-determination was also a key objective of this certificate program. With one of the highest increase in mean score (33%) from pre-test to post-test across all competencies, competency 19 suggests that this program objective was met.

Chart 5. Two Highest Changes in Mean in Values Skills
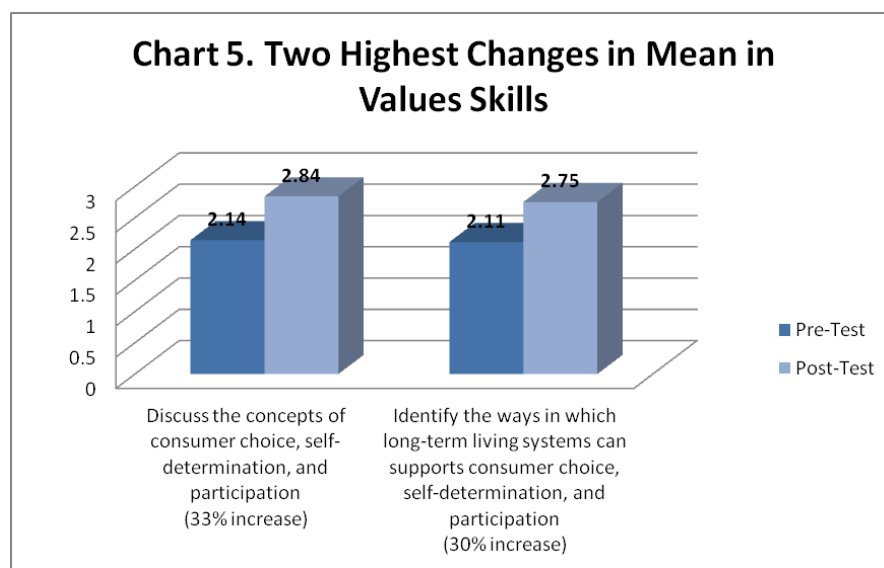
IV. Course Evaluations

At the end of each course within the certificate program, students were asked to complete a course evaluation, in order to gauge whether they felt that the training benefitted them and 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 are also asked for their opinions on course improvements and what other types of courses they would like to see offered through IGSW.

Overall, responses across all courses were very good when asked questions about whether the training expanded their knowledge and understanding of the topic area; if they believed that the training would help them apply practice skills within the topic area; and whether they would recommend the course to a colleague. Across all courses evaluated, 100% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed the training would help apply practice skills, and that they would recommend the course. For *Geriatric Assessment*, *Care Management*, and *Mental Health*, 100% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the course expanded knowledge of the topic area, with 91% and 88% agreeing or strongly agreeing for *Core Training* and *Care Transitions*, respectively.

Further, users provided positive feedback in their comments for courses, stating:

- *"A very good course with basic information for practicing Care Managers."*
- *"The Mental Health and Aging Issues course was extremely helpful in understanding how to work with persons with mental challenges as we age in place."*
- *"This course* (Care Management) *was quite informative, even for a seasoned professional. Thank you for a wonderful overview."*

V. Summary

A high percentage (88.5%) of participants completed all the courses necessary to receive the Care Management Certificate. For the certificate's one elective, 79% of those who completed the certificate chose to take the course in Mental Health, instead of Guide to the Aging Network. Results from the certificates' pre-to-post competency tests showed increases in the average self-rated scores for all 22 competencies. Statistical analysis suggests that the average increase in scores for 20 of these competencies were statistically significant. These results imply the certificate program significantly increased participants' knowledge in the topic fields of the five courses they completed. Further, competency increases were particularly high regarding understanding care management, care transitions, and clients' rights to consumer choice and self-determination. These topics relate to major goals of the certificate program, indicating that goals of the Georgia Care Management Certificate Program were met. Finally, respondents who completed course evaluations indicated the courses expanded their knowledge and understanding of the given topic area; the training would help them apply practice skills within the topic area; that they would recommend the course to a colleague; and that each course met the pre-determined learning objectives.

APPENDIX A

Competencies of the Care Management Certificate Program:
Listed below are the competencies covered in each of the courses. The course in which the competency is found is in bold italics.

Knowledge competencies for the certificate include topics such as:
1) History and background of care management (***Care Management Practice***);
2) Primary functions of care management (***Care Management Practice, Geriatric Assessment***);
3) Challenges that occur throughout the life cycle (***Core***);
4) Areas addressed in a geriatric assessment (***Geriatric Assessment***);
5) Programs/services/resources available to participants and extended networks (***Core, Guide to the Aging Network***);
6) Transitions of care (***Care Transitions***);
7) Impact of cultural diversity in the client-case manager relationship (***Core***, ***Geriatric Assessment***).

Skills competencies for the certificate include topics such as:
8) Functions of a case manager including comprehensive assessment (***Care Management Practice , Geriatric Assessment***);
9) Communication skills used to engage the client and family/caregiver during assessment and care planning process (***Core***, ***Geriatric Assessment, Care Management Practice***);
10) Conducting and interpreting a comprehensive geriatric assessment (***Geriatric Assessment***);
11) Documenting key elements of a care plan--presenting problems, outcomes, and services (***Geriatric Assessment***);
12) Collaborating within one's practice setting and interdisciplinary care teams (***Care Transitions***);
13) Assisting client/family/caregiver through care transitions (***Care Transitions***);
14) Enhancing client/family/caregiver problem-solving and self-advocacy (***Core***);
15) Documentation in assessments, intervention plans, and the coordination/delivery of services (***Core, Webinar***);
16) Documentation as it relates to risk management (***Core, Webinar***);
17) Ethical dilemmas in balancing older adult's right to self-determination with protection of the individual and community (***Geriatric Assessment***);

18) Importance of cultural values and beliefs (***Core, Geriatric Assessment, Case Management***).

Values competencies for the certificate include:

19) How consumer choice, self-determination, and participation affect community based care (***Core***);
20) Ways long-term living systems support consumer choice, self-determination, and participation (***Core***);
21) Importance of valuing client strengths and respecting client wishes, values and preferences (***Core, Geriatric Assessment***);
22) Recognizing client strengths/right to self-determination and dignity (***Core, Geriatric Assessment, Care Management Practice***).