



Kentucky ADRC Options Counseling Certificate Program

**Evaluation Report from Boston University
2013 - 2014**

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I. 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 Kentucky ADRC Options Counseling Certificate Program was developed in partnership with the Kentucky Department for Aging and Independent Living and SE4A University. The effort was led by KIPDA's Area Agency on Aging and Independent Living Director, Barbara Gordon. A major goal of Kentucky's ADRC program is to empower individuals to make informed choices and to streamline access to long-term support. Long-term support refers to a wide range of in-home, community-based, and institutional services and programs that are designed to help both aging individuals and individuals with disabilities. In order to help achieve that goal, a commitment was made to provide workforce training and the program was developed.

Over a six month period, 32 learners across 14 agencies were to complete the CADER/ Kentucky ADRC training program. Curriculum included the following five online courses for a total of 25 hours of training:

- Core Issues in Aging and Disability
- Assessment with Older Adults and Persons with Disabilities
- Consumer Control, Choice, and Direction in Options Counseling
- A Guide to the Aging and Disability Networks
- Mental Health Training in Options Counseling

Key Findings:

Several measures were used to evaluate the impact of the training. The first was course completion. Twenty seven learners (81%) completed the entire certificate program with 91% of courses in the curriculum completed. Other outcome measurements include the pre and post assessments of learning competencies (see Appendix A for full list of competencies) and course evaluations. Participants' competency scores demonstrated statistically significant increases between pre and post training assessments in all courses. Key competency increases included:

- Core Issues in Aging and Disability: *Describe the most common causes of disability through the life cycle* (46% increase)

- Assessment with Older Adults and Persons with Disabilities: *Explain the key diversity and multicultural considerations that practitioners need to consider during the assessment process* (61% increase)
- Consumer Control, Choice, and Direction in Options Counseling: *Understand the history of Disability Rights Legislation and the Independent Living Movement* (156% increase)
- A Guide to the Aging and Disability Networks: *Know what federal, state, and local resources are available to older adults, people with disabilities, and their families* (21% increase)
- Mental Health Training in Options Counseling: *Describe the role of the options counselor with consumers with mental health concerns* (182% increase)

II. 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.

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.

CADER uses several measures to assess the impact of training. This includes a self assessment of competency. At the beginning and end of each course, participants are asked to rate their skill level using the following scale:

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

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

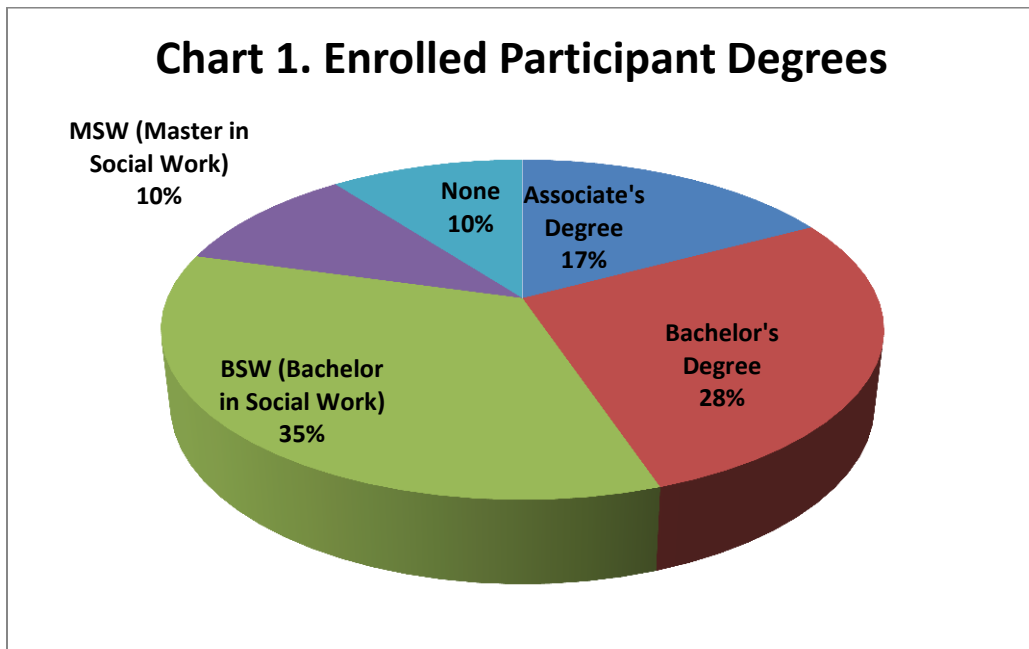
The demographic profile, pre- and post-competency results, and course evaluation results are presented below for each of the five courses in the certificate program.

III. PARTICIPANT PROFILE

The initial cohort of 32 enrolled participants was asked a series of demographic questions. The majority of participants 91% identified as female, and 9% identified as male. The average age of enrolled participants was 38.6 years old. Eighty-eight percent (88%) of the enrolled participants self-identified as White/Non-Hispanic, 3% identified as African American, and 8% did not provide an answer.

Most participants reported having multiple years in the fields of aging and/or disability. The average number of years that participants worked in the field of aging was 6.3 years, while the average number of years they worked in the disability field was 5.5 years. Fifty-three percent (53%) of participants reported that at least 51% of their job involves working with people with physical disabilities of all ages and their families. Additionally, 81% of participants reported that at least 51% of their job involves older adults and their families.

The majority of participants reported having a higher education degree. As demonstrated in Chart 1 below, 51% of participants have either a Bachelors or a Bachelors in Social Work, 9% of participants have a Masters in Social Work, and 16% of participants have an Associates Degree.



IV. INDIVIDUAL COURSE DATA

1) Core Issues in Aging and Disability

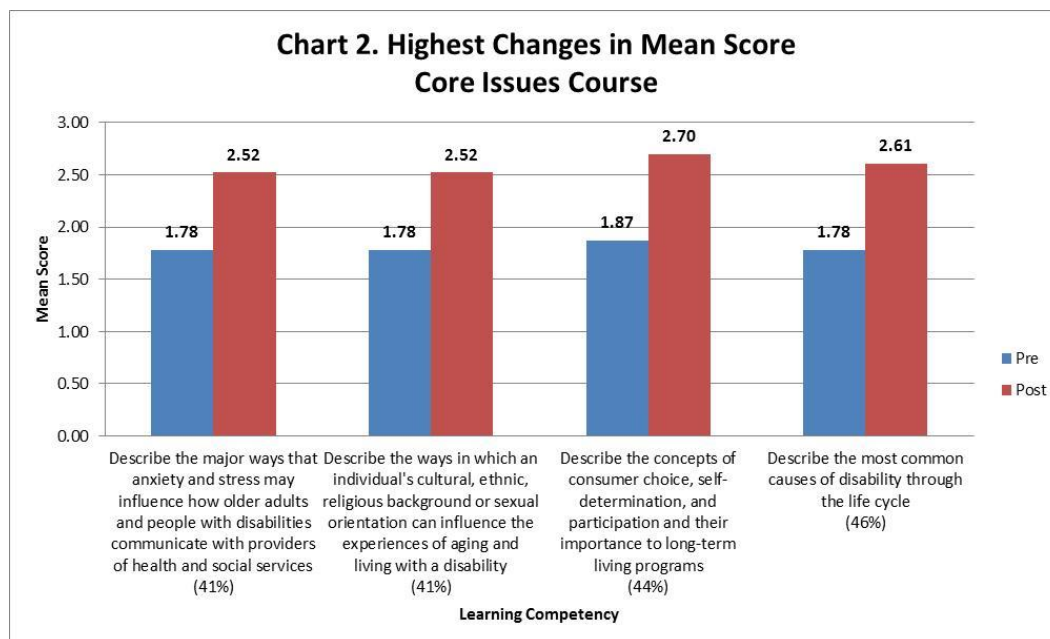
Course Competencies:

Participants were asked to rate their competency level from

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

Increases in scores from pre-test to post-test across the competencies ranged from 21% to 46% showing statistically significant improvements in all competencies, after participants had completed this course. The competencies with the highest increases from pre-test to post-test in this course are outlined in Chart 2 below.

- *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 (41% 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 (41% increase)*
- *Describe the concepts of consumer choice, self-determination, and participation and their importance to long-term living programs (44% increase)*
- *Describe the most common causes of disability through the life cycle (46% increase)*



Course Evaluations:

Participants rated the course very positively. One-hundred percent (100%) of participants agreed or strongly agreed: that the training will help them in their work with older adults and/or with people with disabilities; that the training expanded my knowledge and understanding of the topic area; and that the training will help them apply practice skills in the topic area. Comments about the course included:

“A very interesting course, I really had to reflect on myself when it came to some of the content and blog replies.”

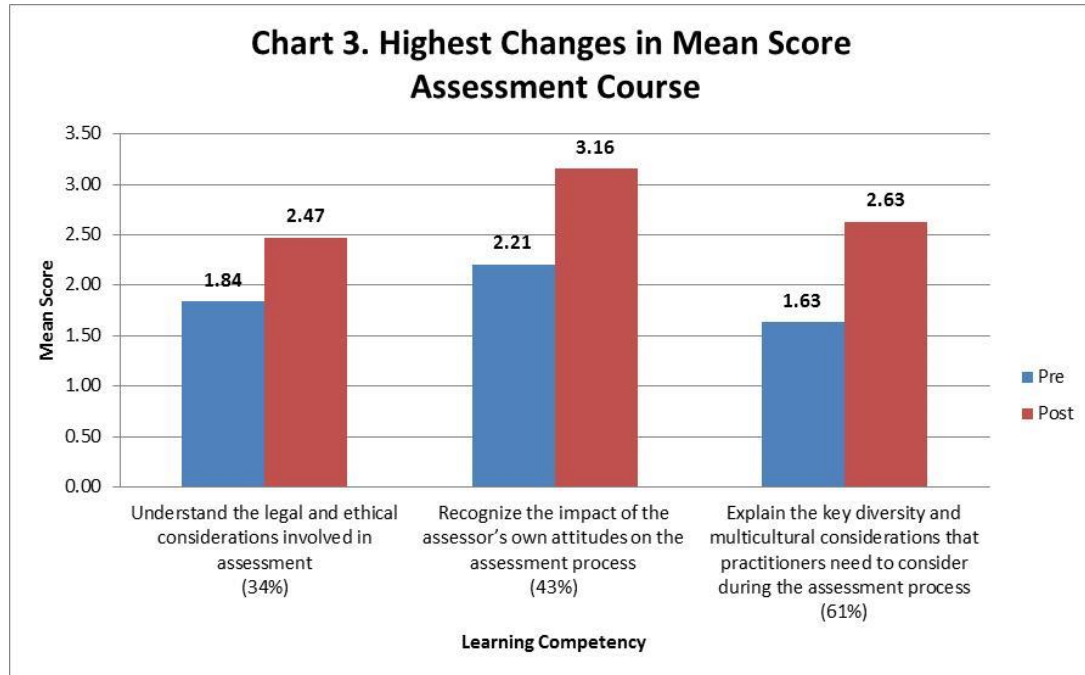
“This training was very informative and I enjoyed it!!!”

2) Assessment with Older Adults and Persons with Disabilities

Course Competencies:

Increases in scores from pre-test to post-test across the competencies ranged from 23% to 61%. All competencies showed statistically significant improvements. The competencies with the highest increases from pre-test to post-test in this course are outlined in Chart 3 below.

- *Understand the legal and ethical considerations involved in assessment (34% increase)*
- *Recognize the impact of the assessor’s own attitudes on the assessment process (43% increase)*
- *Explain the key diversity and multicultural considerations that practitioners need to consider during the assessment process (61% increase)*



Course Evaluations:

The evaluations showed that 95% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that the training would help in their work with older adults and/or with people with disabilities. Ninety-one percent (91%) agreed or strongly agreed that the training will help them to apply practice skills in the topic area. Comments included:

“Enjoyed the ease of the technical part of the program. Enjoyed learning all aspects of a worker and how to assist participants more accurately.”

“The course was very thorough yet easy to follow.”

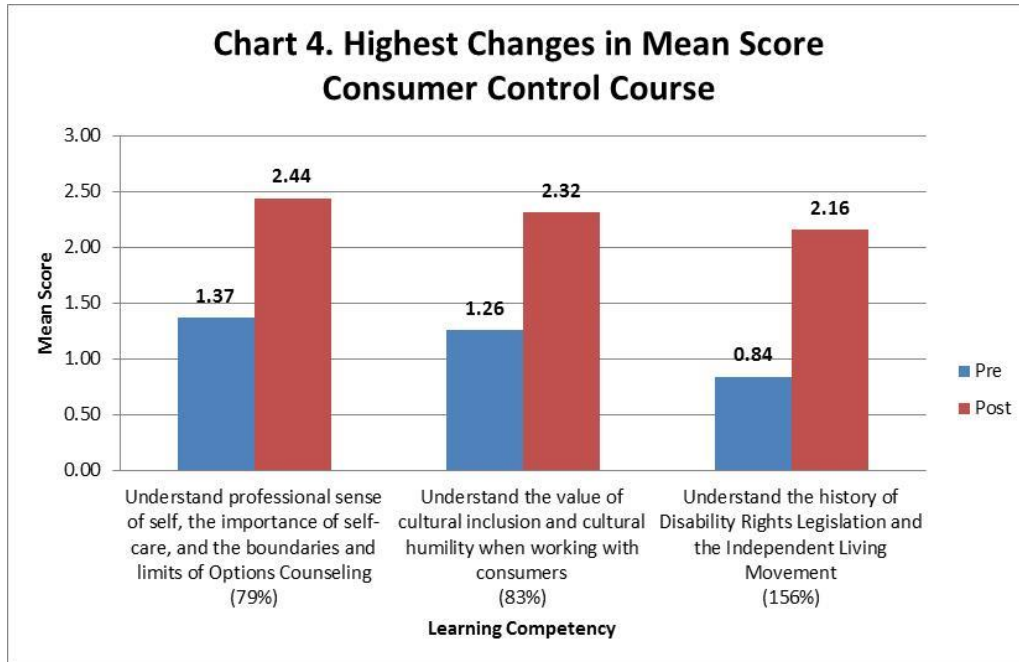
3) Consumer Control, Choice and Direction for Options Counseling

Course Competencies:

Increases in scores from pre-test to post-test across the competencies ranged from 26% to 156%. All competencies showed statistically significant improvements after participants had completed this course. The competencies with the three highest increases from pre-test to post-test in this course are outlined in Chart 4.

- *Understand professional sense of self, the importance of self-care, and the boundaries and limits of Options Counseling (79% increase)*
- *Understand the value of cultural inclusion and cultural humility when working with consumers (83% increase)*

- *Understand the history of Disability Rights Legislation and the Independent Living Movement (156% increase)*



Course Evaluations:

One hundred percent (100%) agreed or strongly agreed that the training will help them in their work with older adults and/or with people with disabilities. Ninety-four percent (94%) agreed or strongly agreed: that training will help them to apply practice skills in the topic area; and that they would recommend this course to their colleagues. Comments included:

“I am really enjoying how the class relies on videos and interactive multimedia to get the topic addressed.”

“Great course! Very informative!”

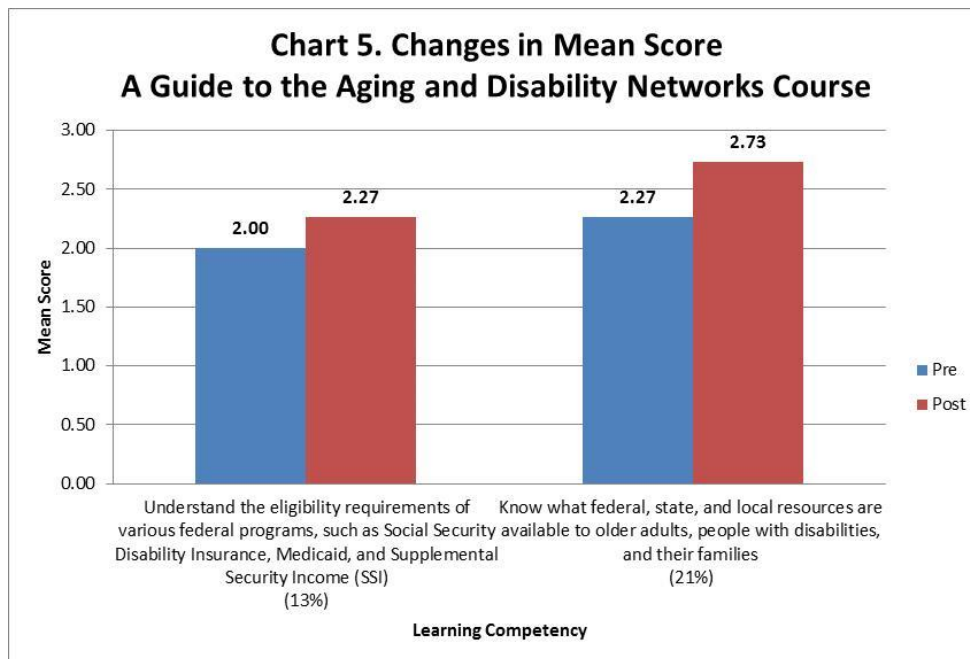
4) A Guide to the Aging and Disability Networks

Course Competencies:

Increases in scores from pre-test to post-test across the competencies ranged from 13% to 21%. The increases for the competencies from pre-test to post-test in this course are outlined in Chart 5.

- *Understand the eligibility requirements of various federal programs, such as Social Security Disability Insurance, Medicaid, and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) (13% increase)*

- *Know what federal, state, and local resources are available to older adults, people with disabilities, and their families (21% increase)*



Course Evaluations:

One hundred percent (100%) of those completing the evaluation for this course, agreed or strongly agreed that the training would help in their work with older adults and/or with people with disabilities. Ninety-five percent (95%) agreed or strongly agreed that this training will help them to apply practice skills in the topic area. Comments included:

“I think this material is a very good summation of social work and practice with the aging population and the disabled. The review of the historical progression of the civil rights of aged and disabled was the most helpful.”

“Good information that will be helpful in my everyday interactions with consumers.”

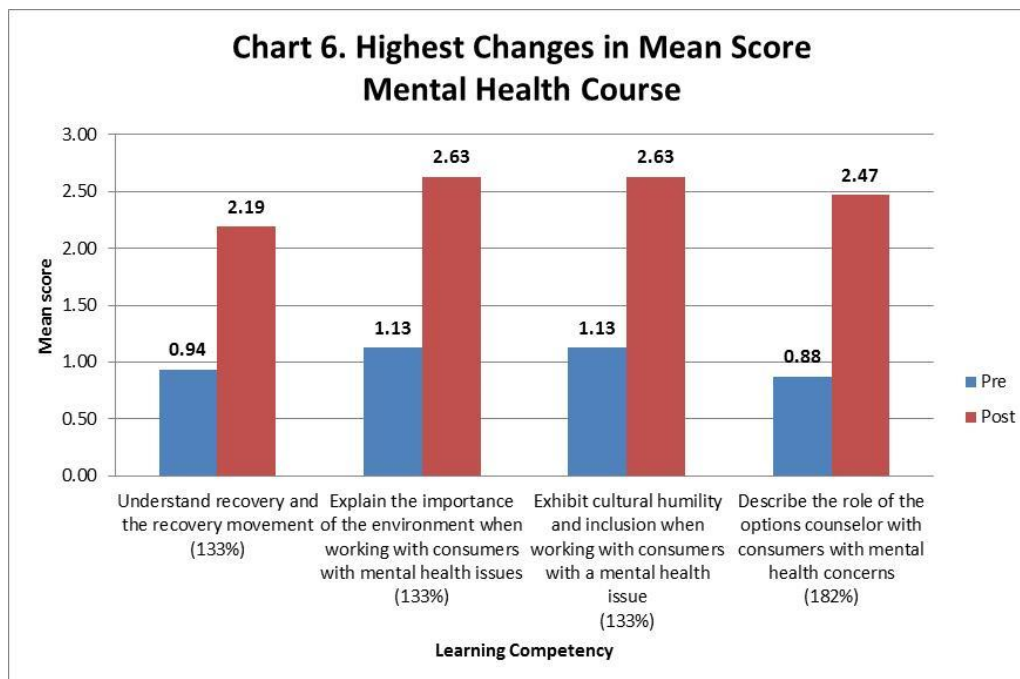
5) Mental Health Training in Options Counseling

Course Competencies:

Increases in scores from pre-test to post-test across the competencies ranged from 59% to 182% – the highest by far of all the courses in the certificate program. The competencies with the highest increases from pre-test to post-test in this course are outlined in Chart 6:

- *Understand recovery and the recovery movement (133% increase)*

- Explain the importance of the environment when working with consumers with mental health issues (133% increase)
- Exhibit cultural humility and inclusion when working with consumers with a mental health issue (133% increase)
- Describe the role of the options counselor with consumers with mental health concerns (182% increase)



Course Evaluations:

One hundred percent (100%) agreed or strongly agreed: that the training will help them to apply practice skills in the topic area; and that the course will help them in their work with older adults and/or with people with disabilities. Ninety-five percent (95%) of participants agreed or strongly agreed that they would recommend this course to their colleagues. Further, a participant commented:

“Very educational and helpful in my working career.”

V. SUMMARY

Overall, participants in this certificate program appreciated the program and reported that they learned a great deal of relevant information that they will use in their work with aging and disability populations. The Consumer Control, Choice and Direction for Options Counseling course and the Mental Health Training in Options Counseling course had the highest percent

increases from pre to post-competency assessment. Given the increase in these specific competencies in particular and all competencies in general, we suggest the state should 1) look to increase the number of people that have access to this training and 2) consider what additional training can be provided for those who have just completed the training.

What's Next?

This has been a successful program with 91% of all courses in the curriculum completed. Based on the significant changes in competencies across all six courses, as well as the participants' course evaluations and responses, CADER highly recommends that the Kentucky Department for Aging and Independent Living establish a long term services and supports online training program. The benefits of such a program would include: greater consistency in measuring skills and competencies across its entire workforce; better quality of care and service to older adults and persons with disabilities throughout the state; and reduction of costs due to lower employee turnover and increased efficiencies in providing clients with the right services and support. With CADER's guidance, we also encourage the use of blended training with face to face sessions or webinars to support the online courses and promote the transfer of learning.

Recommendations for Kentucky Training:

New learners

- Participate in a comprehensive workforce needs assessment prior to beginning online coursework.
- Given the positive feedback we received, we believe these are the right courses for the next cohort of new learners. Learners overwhelmingly felt the training would help their work with older adults and/or with people with disabilities, that the training will help them apply practice skills in the topic areas they studied, and that the training has made them more aware of the importance of their own values and attitudes in the topic areas covered.

Continuing Education Training Programs

In looking at the feedback, we believe that the 2013 cohort of learners would benefit from additional training. We suggest using the following continuing education tracks that participants/agencies can choose from and that it becomes an ongoing training initiative over the next three to five years.

We suggest training in the following tracks with some recommended courses:

- Home and Community Based Track
 - CADER Online course: Geriatric Assessment and Care Planning

- State training on Connecticut's assessment tool
- CADER Online course: Aging in Place
- CADER Online course: Working with Informal Caregivers
- Legal and Ethical Issues Training Program
 - CADER course: Legal Principles and Decision Making In Practice
 - CADER course: Ethics in Practice With Older Adults
 - CADER course: End of Life Issues
- Behavioral Health Training Program
 - CADER course: Mental Health Training In Options Counseling OR Mental Health and Aging Issues
 - CADER course: Substance Abuse among Older Adults
 - CADER course: Suicide Prevention among Older Adults
 - CADER course: Alzheimer's disease and Other Dementias
- Supervision Training Program
 - Supervision for Effective Practice with Older Adults
 - Team Approach: Working Across Disciplines
 - Participant Direction in Managed Long Term Services and Supports

We look forward to our continued partnership and moving ahead to expand this important workforce training effort.

Appendix A
List of Course Competencies

Core Issues in Aging and Disability

- Describe the concepts of consumer choice, self-determination, and participation and their importance to long-term living programs
- Understand the demographics of aging and disability in the United States
- Understand the major biological, psychological, and social issues involved in the aging process and for those living with disabilities
- Describe the major health conditions that cause impairment in older adults
- Describe the most common causes of disability through the life cycle
- Understand how to adapt communication methods to the sensory, verbal, physical, and cognitive abilities of older adults and people with disabilities
- 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
- 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

Assessment with Older Adults and Persons with Disabilities

- Understand the importance of seeing an assessment as a partnership between the assessor and person being assessed
- Understand the value of choice, self-determination, and participation in the assessment process
- Conduct an assessment for service eligibility for older adults and people with disabilities seeking health services, mental health services, and other community-based services
- Demonstrate how communication skills such as active listening, paraphrasing, and decision support can be used to engage the client and family/caregiver during the personal interview and planning process
- Recognize the impact of the assessor's own attitudes on the assessment process
- Identify the key programs, services, and resources available to older adults and people with disabilities in order to complete an assessment and create a service plan
- Explain the key diversity and multicultural considerations that practitioners need to consider during the assessment process
- Describe the core elements of assessment including social supports and functional abilities
- Understand the legal and ethical considerations involved in assessment

Consumer Control, Choice and Direction for Options Counseling

- Understand the history of Disability Rights Legislation and the Independent Living Movement
- Define consumer control, consumer choice, and consumer direction in providing community based long-term living supports and services
- Describe how to recognize one's own personal bias and judgments in an Options Counseling session
- 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
- Demonstrate creative ways to research services and supports as an options counselor
- Determine how to effectively support family members' interest in participation and assist with the problem solving and resources
- Understand the consumer's right to consumer control, consumer choice, consumer direction, dignity of risk, and self-determination
- Recognize the impact of one's own values and biases on one's ability to provide quality options counseling related to aging and disabilities
- Understand the value of cultural inclusion and cultural humility when working with consumers
- Understand professional sense of self, the importance of self-care, and the boundaries and limits of Options Counseling

A Guide to the Aging and Disability Networks

- Understand the eligibility requirements of various federal programs, such as Social Security Disability Insurance, Medicaid, and Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
- Know what federal, state, and local resources are available to older adults, people with disabilities, and their families

Mental Health Training in Options Counseling

- Understand the impact of history on mental health services and supports
- Recognize common mental health conditions that can affect older adults and people living with disabilities
- Know the range of referral resources and organizations available for consumers and families who are in need of mental health services
- Describe peer supports
- Understand recovery and the recovery movement
- Describe the role of the options counselor with consumers with mental health concerns

- Explain the importance of the environment when working with consumers with mental health issues
- Exhibit cultural humility and inclusion when working with consumers with a mental health issue
- Understand the value of choice and self-determination in options counseling
- Develop skills to engage consumers with mental health concerns including establishing rapport and developing trust when doing options counseling