



CADER

**Center for Aging & Disability
Education & Research**

A Three-Component Community-Wide Approach to Behavioral Health in Aging

American Society on Aging Conference 2025

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School of Social Work:
Center for Aging & Disability Education & Research

Center for Aging and Disability Education and Research (CADER)

- Located at the Boston University School of Social Work
- Dedicated to strengthening the workforce that provides health and long-term supports and services to older adults and people with disabilities
- Offers a wide range of online training courses and certificate programs for learners at all levels of experience
 - Competency-focused approach
 - Enhance the skills of practitioners in the field



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CADER Impact

Since 2002, CADER has:

- Trained over 50,000 health and human services professionals
- Worked with over 500 organizations nationwide

Program Need and Development

- Salem for All Ages is the City of Salem's Age Friendly initiative begun in 2016
 - Gathered input from older adults and developed an action plan to make Salem, MA an age-friendly community
 - Continue to implement various age-friendly initiatives
 - Partnered with CADER in April 2024 to develop a multifaceted behavioral health and aging campaign



Program Overview

Strengthening Age-Friendly Communities by Addressing Behavioral Health Concerns among Older Adults

Three Components:



Media Campaign

To provide the community with information on behavioral health and aging, 9 topics were selected and a flyer was developed for each topic. Flyers were distributed to various community locations and through social media.

All flyers were distributed in English, Spanish, and Portuguese.



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Coping with Loss and Change as We Age



As we age, we often experience loss and change. Below are some changes commonly experienced as we age, along with tips on how you can cope with these changes.

Change: Retirement

How to cope: Retirement can be a major life transition, as employment provides structure, social interaction, and a sense of purpose. To help cope with retirement, find a meaningful part-time job or volunteer opportunity. Establish a structured daily routine that incorporates socialization, physical activity, and hobbies.

Change: Loss of family members and friends

How to cope: Allow yourself time to grieve and remind yourself that grief is natural. Seek support from other personal relationships, or form new connections through volunteering or activities. If you need professional support, talk to your physician or call the free Massachusetts Behavioral Health Help Line at 833-773-2445.

Change: Declining physical abilities

How to cope: Declining physical abilities can make it more difficult to stay active and to attend social engagements. Changes in hearing and vision can also affect social relationships and can make it dangerous to drive. Try low-impact physical activities, such as tai chi, yoga, or swimming. Talk to your physician about assistive devices. Reach out to friends and family to see if they can help with transportation, or contact the Salem Council on Aging (978-744-0924) about their transportation offerings.



SalemforAllAges.org
Fostering Healthy Minds Through
Community Connections



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Media Campaign

Topics included:

- Looking Out for Yourself & Others
- Mental Wellness in Later Life
- Social Isolation
- Coping with Loss and Change as We Age
- Depression in Later Life
- Substance Use
- Alcohol Use
- Alzheimer's Disease and Other Dementias
- Suicide in Older Adults



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A photograph of two women walking outdoors. On the left is a younger woman with dark hair tied back, wearing a white shirt and a blue scarf. On the right is an older woman with short grey hair and glasses, wearing a light purple jacket. They are both smiling and looking towards the right.

Navigating Alzheimer's Disease and Other Dementias

Dementia is a general term used to describe symptoms such as memory loss, challenges with thinking and reasoning, and language difficulties. Alzheimer's disease is a degenerative brain disease that can cause dementia and affects approximately 6.9 million older Americans.


Know the early signs of Alzheimer's and Other Dementias


- Memory loss, such as frequent forgetfulness of new information or events
- Difficulty completing familiar tasks, such as paying bills
- Confusion about time and place
- Trouble with language, such as speaking, following a conversation, or naming objects
- Changes in mood or personality, such as increased anxiety

Tips for caregivers and families of individuals living with dementia:

Daily care should include maintaining a routine, writing things down, encouraging physical activity, and providing enough time to complete tasks.	Create a supportive environment by minimizing clutter, utilizing labels and signage, improving lighting, installing grab bars, and removing tripping hazards.	Communicate by being patient, using simple language, maintaining eye contact, using nonverbal cues, and minimizing distractions.
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Ask for help! Contact the Alzheimer's Association 24/7 Helpline at 1-800-272-3900. Or, learn more about the Salem Memory Café (401 Bridge Street, Salem, MA 01970, open the 4th Thursday of each month from 1:00 – 2:30 PM) by calling 978-744-0924.

 **SalemforAllAges.org**
Fostering Healthy Minds Through
Community Connections

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Media Campaign

Approximately 2,400 printed flyers were distributed to community locations including:

- Salem Council on Aging
- Library
- Grocery stores
- Housing
- Healthcare sites
- Assisted living
- YMCA
- Churches
- Meals on Wheels

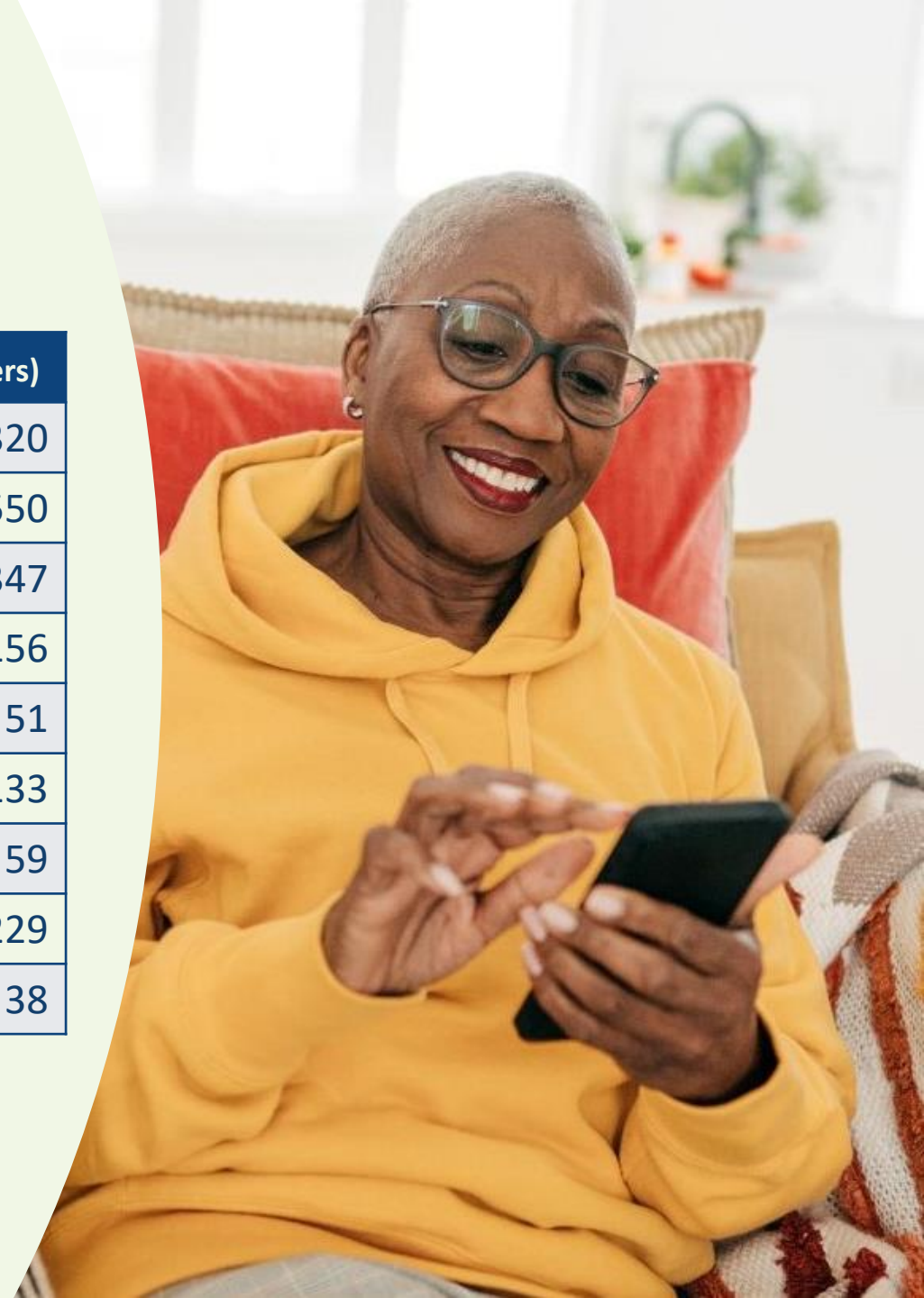


Media Campaign

Flyers were also distributed through social media.

Flyer	Reach (number of unique viewers)
Looking Out for Yourself & Others	119,320
Mental Wellness in Later Life	18,550
Social Isolation	128,347
Coping with Loss and Change as We Age	156
Depression in Later Life	51
Substance Use	133
Alcohol Use	59
Alzheimer's Disease and Other Dementias	10,229
Suicide in Older Adults	38

Note: Looking Out for Yourself & Others, Mental Wellness in Later Life, and Social Isolation were part of a paid ad campaign. Alzheimer's Disease and Other Dementias was boosted.





Community Workshops



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Workshop Programming



TOPICS



LOCATIONS



PRESENTERS



TRANSLATIONS



OUTREACH



EVALUATION

Four Workshops

1. Enhancing Mental Wellness
2. Coping With Loss
3. Understanding Later Life
Substance Use
4. **LinkedIn Salem: Teens and Older
Adults Making Connections**



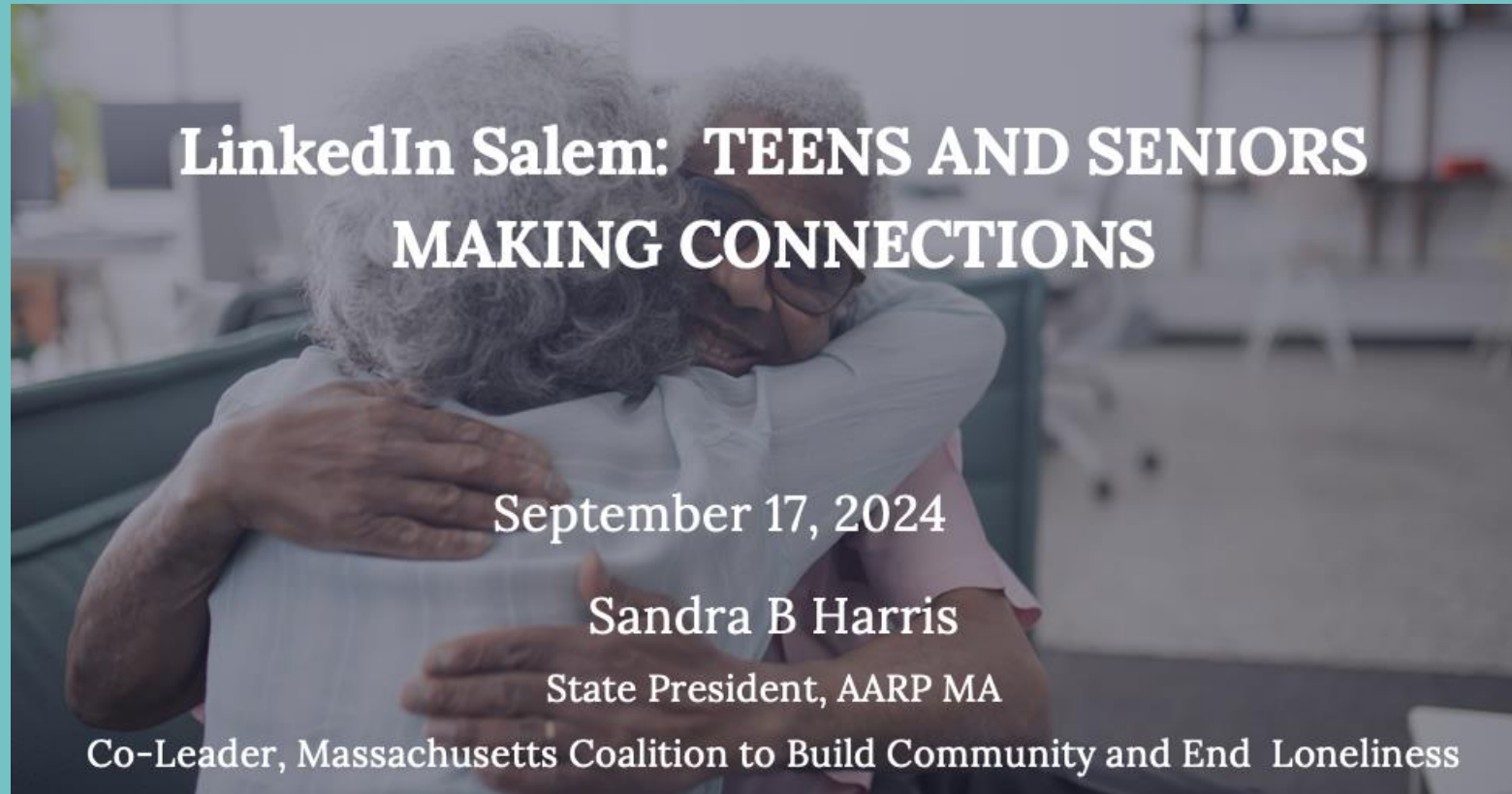
What is “*Old*”?



LinkedIn Salem: Teens and Older Adults Making Connections

Workshop Objective

“To explore and develop strategies where older adults and young people work together to reduce loneliness, building meaningful, bi-directional relationships that enrich both generations and our communities.” Sandra Harris, 2024



Sandra Harris, 2024



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LinkedIn Salem: Teens and Older Adults Making Connections

After the workshop:

97%

of attendees agreed with the statement:
“I know how I can build and strengthen my connections with others.”

97%

of attendees agreed with the statement:
“Building intergenerational connections is a good strategy to reduce loneliness.”

94%

of attendees agreed with the statement:
“I know what I can do to help reduce loneliness in others.”



LinkedIn Salem: Teens and Older Adults Making Connections



“Loved working/conversing with the students.”

*“This intergenerational group was fantastic.
Keep going!”*

*“This was a changing of thoughts for me.
Extremely informative & allowed me to gain
knowledge.”*

“The students are amazing.”

*“I had a really good time! It was nice meeting
new people and I hope we can do this again.”*



Impact & Future Directions

- Workshop attendance
- Accessible spaces
- Positive evaluations
- Importance of location
- Outreach efforts
- Future programs



Behavioral Health in Aging Certificate Program

Five Courses:

- 1 **Mental Health and Aging Issues**
- 2 **Suicide Prevention among Older Adults**
- 3 **Mental Wellness and Resilience among Older Immigrants and Refugees**
- 4 **Substance Use among Older Adults**
- 5 **Alzheimer's Disease and Other Dementias**

- Online, self-paced five course program
- Provides information on:
 - Major mental health conditions and substance use concerns facing older adults
 - Promoting mental wellness and resilience
 - Suicide prevention
 - Screening, assessment, and evidence-based interventions

Scan to view on
CADER's website!



Behavioral Health in Aging Certificate Program

14 learners completed the certificate program between June 20, 2024 to March 14, 2025. Below is a breakdown of learners' job roles, workplaces, and highest level of education.

Job Roles:

- Clerk (2)
- Resident Service Coordinator (2)
- Social Worker (2)
- Case Manager
- Family Self-Sufficiency Coordinator
- Human Service Coordinator
- Library Staff
- Practicum Coordinator
- Sanitarian
- Utilization Review Coordinator
- Workplace Safety Coordinator

Workplace:

- City of Salem (8)
- Healthcare System (3)
- Nonprofit
- State Department
- University

Highest Level of Education:

- Some college, but no degree (1)
- Bachelor's Degree (6)
 - BSW (1)
- Master's Degree (7)
 - MSW (4)



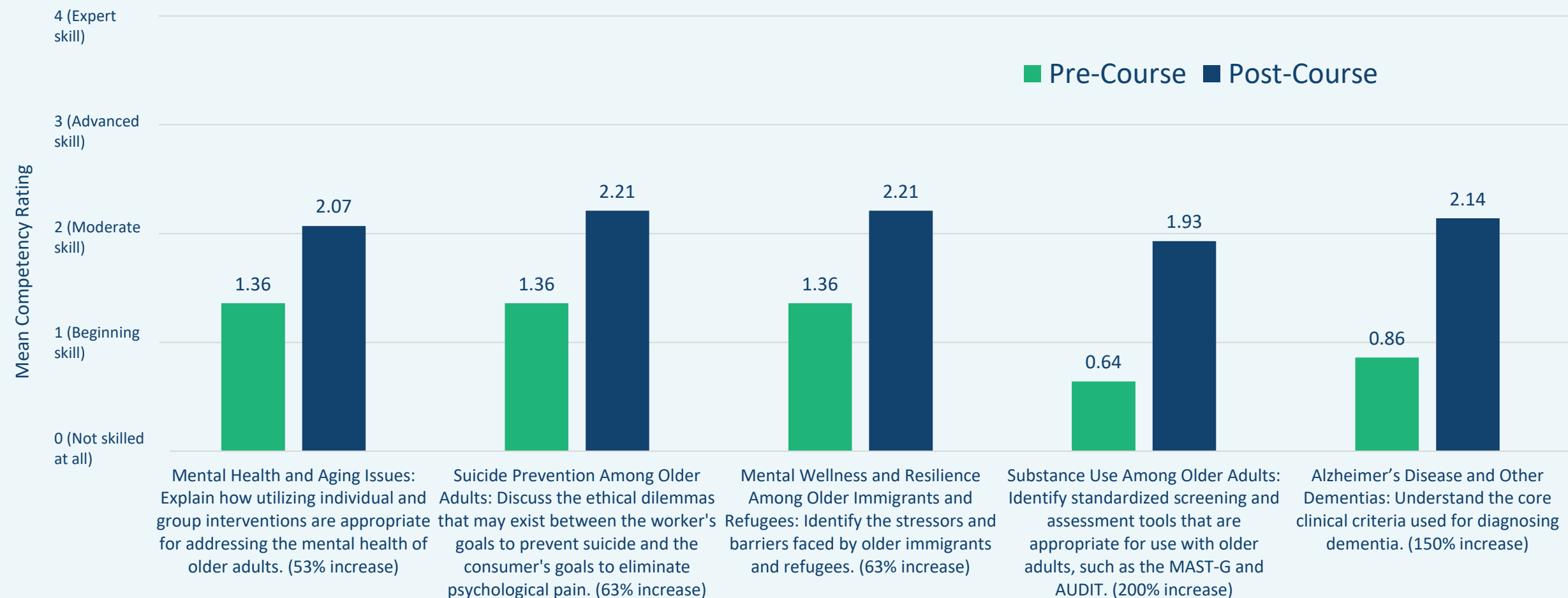
Evaluation Results

- **Competencies:** At the beginning and end of each course, learners were asked to rate their skill level in various competencies using the following scale: 0 - Not skilled at all; 1 - Beginning skill; 2 - Moderate skill; 3 - Advanced skill; 4 - Expert skill.
- **Learner Feedback:** At the end of each course, learners shared their feedback about the course and were asked how the course will impact their practice.



Results: Competencies

Mean Competency Ratings



Results: Feedback

Course 1: Mental Health and Aging Issues

- *“Utilize some of the screening tools, be more informed about the various evidence-based approaches.”*
- *“More understanding and considerate of mental health possibilities with my older clients.”*

Course 2: Suicide Prevention Among Older Adults

- *“Making more informed decisions in risk assessment.”*
- *“Be more observant in what people say and do.”*

Course 3: Mental Wellness and Resilience Among Older Immigrants and Refugees

- *“The examples are always really helpful in developing my understanding.”*
- *“I will have a better understanding of the challenges that older immigrants face.”*

Results: Feedback

Course 4: Substance Use Among Older Adults

- *“Having more awareness of the barriers to older adults receiving substance use disorder treatment.”*
- *“Being more open minded and less bias regarding people struggles with substance use.”*

Course 5: Alzheimer’s Disease and Other Dementias

- *“Use some of the strategies listed when working with these patients and caregivers.”*
- *“Not to judge too quickly, there are so many people out there going through so many different issue that wouldn't have crossed my mind.”*

Conclusion

- Older adults who attended workshops found the workshops helpful and requested additional workshops
 - Participants requested that intergenerational programming continue
- Salem professionals who completed the Behavioral Health in Aging certificate program gained skills in key competency areas and indicated that they felt better prepared to support older adults with behavioral health concerns



Future Directions

- Engage hard-to-reach older adults
- Create a sustainable partnership between older adults and high school students through continued intergenerational programming
- Sustaining community-academic partnerships
- Intergenerational programming to support mental wellbeing at all ages
- For the certificate program, increases in skill level were the highest for the *Substance Use Among Older Adults* course and the *Alzheimer's Disease and Other Dementias* course, indicating that these are key areas for future training initiatives



Discussion

- Have you done intergenerational programming? What was successful in having participants access the program and interact together? And how?
- What additional workshop topics would you have chosen?
- What type of outreach efforts have you found most effective in reaching older adults?
- Have you or anyone you know completed training on behavioral health and aging? What would make a training program effective?





Contact Us

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