



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

# **E4 Center for Excellence Substance Use and Aging for Faith Leaders Training Initiative 2025**

**Evaluation Report from the Center for Aging &  
Disability Education & Research (CADER)  
Boston University School of Social Work**

**September 2025**





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

## **Executive Summary**

The Center for Aging and Disability Education and Research (CADER) and the E4 Center for Excellence partnered to offer CADER's *Substance Use and Aging for Faith Leaders* course to 32 faith leaders in the Chicago area, with the goal of training faith leaders to identify and respond to substance use concerns in older adults. For all six course competencies, self-reported skill level significantly increased ( $p < .05$ ) from the pre-course competency self-assessment to the post-course competency self-assessment, with percent increases ranging from 43% to 100%. Learners demonstrated a statistically significant increase ( $p < .05$ ) in confidence assisting older adults with substance use concerns. Learners stated that the course provided valuable information and that they will be more involved in identifying and addressing substance use concerns in their faith community.



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

### Evaluation Report

#### I. Introduction

The Center for Aging and Disability Education and Research (CADER) at Boston University is dedicated to bringing evidence-based research into practice through workforce innovation in the aging and disability fields. CADER programs and courses apply a competency-focused approach to comprehensive training, committed to enhancing the skills of practitioners in the field at all levels of experience.

Through a partnership with the E4 Center for Excellence, CADER provided faith leaders in the Chicago area with access to an online training course on substance use and aging. This evaluation report presents learner demographics, findings from competency-based self-assessments, and learner feedback. Information was collected for the enrollment period of July 29, 2025 to September 8, 2025.

#### II. Course Overview

Faith leaders were enrolled in CADER's online course, *Substance Use and Aging for Faith Leaders*. The course is self-paced and takes approximately four hours to complete. The course covers the following learning objectives:

1. Describe the prevalence of substance use among older adults.
2. Examine the impact of substance use on the health of older adults.
3. Identify treatment resources available to older adults.
4. Summarize the roles that faith leaders can play in promoting recovery.
5. Illustrate the impact of culture on substance use among older adults.

CADER provided course management support, including a learner orientation webinar, assistance with program registration, and technical support as needed. CADER tracked learners' progress throughout the course and sent weekly reminder emails.

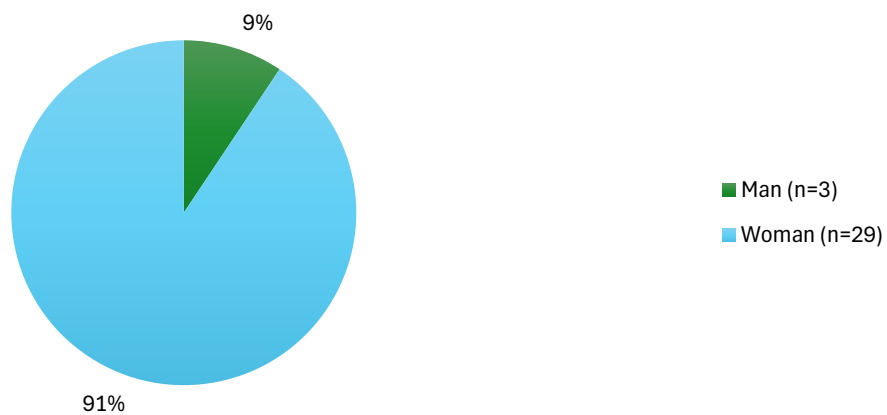
#### III. Completion

A total of 32 learners completed the course.

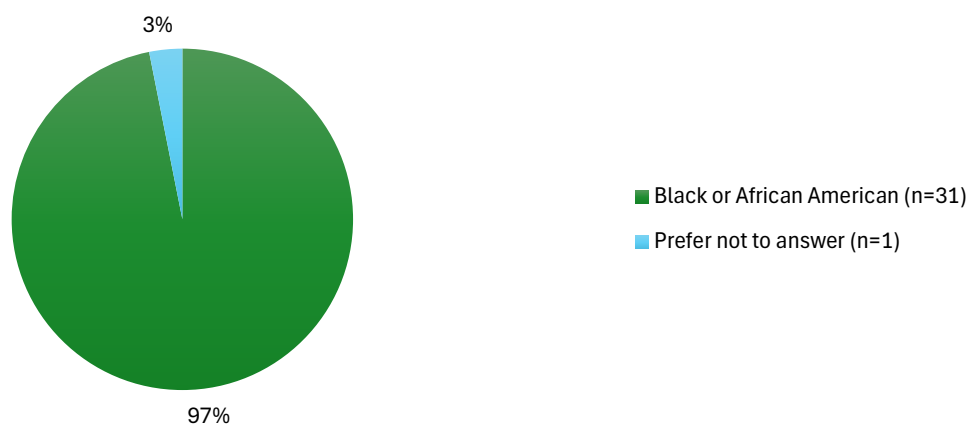
#### IV. Learner Demographics

When registering for the course, learners self-reported demographic information. The following charts show a breakdown of learners by gender, race, ethnicity, age, and educational attainment.

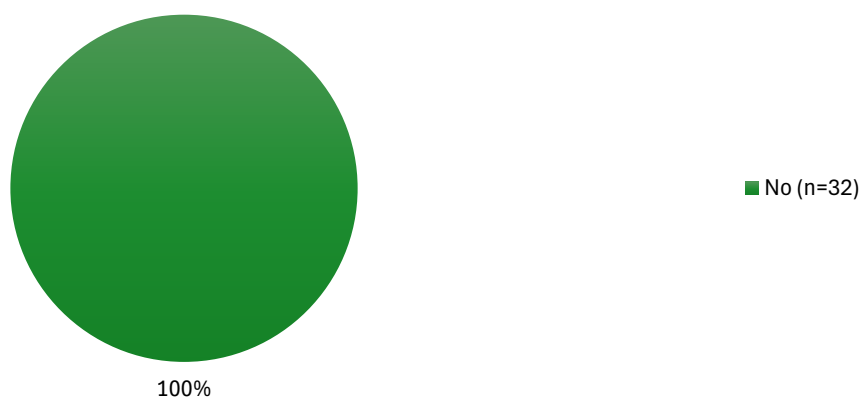
### Gender Identity

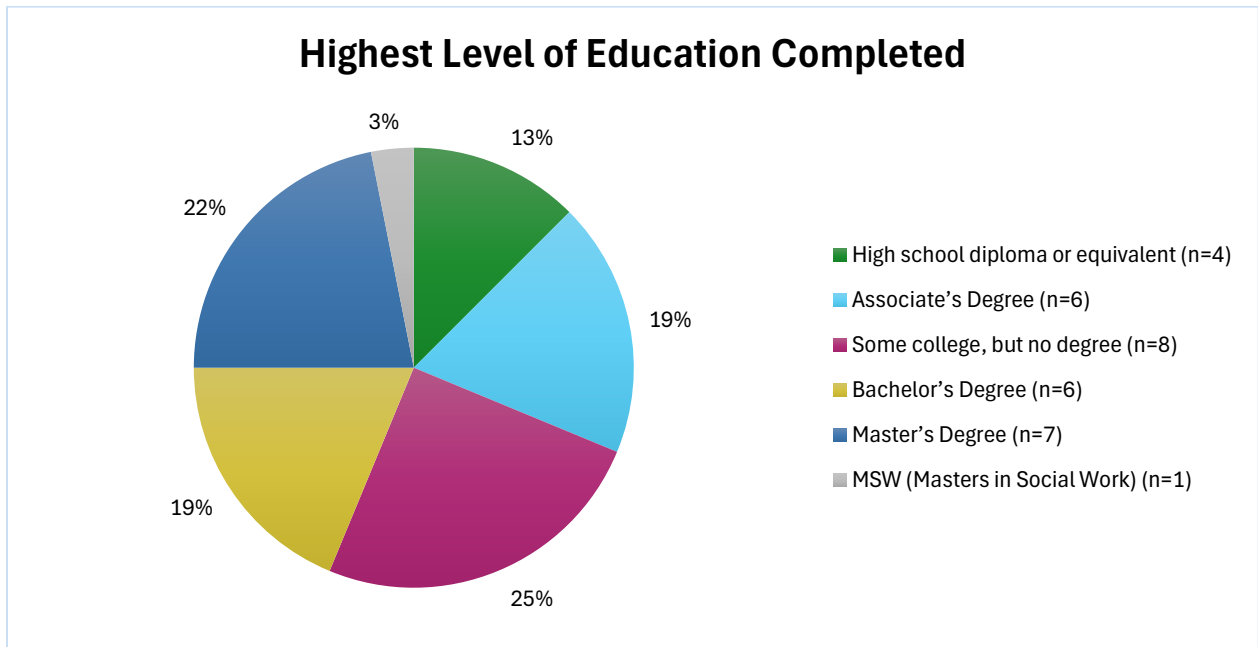
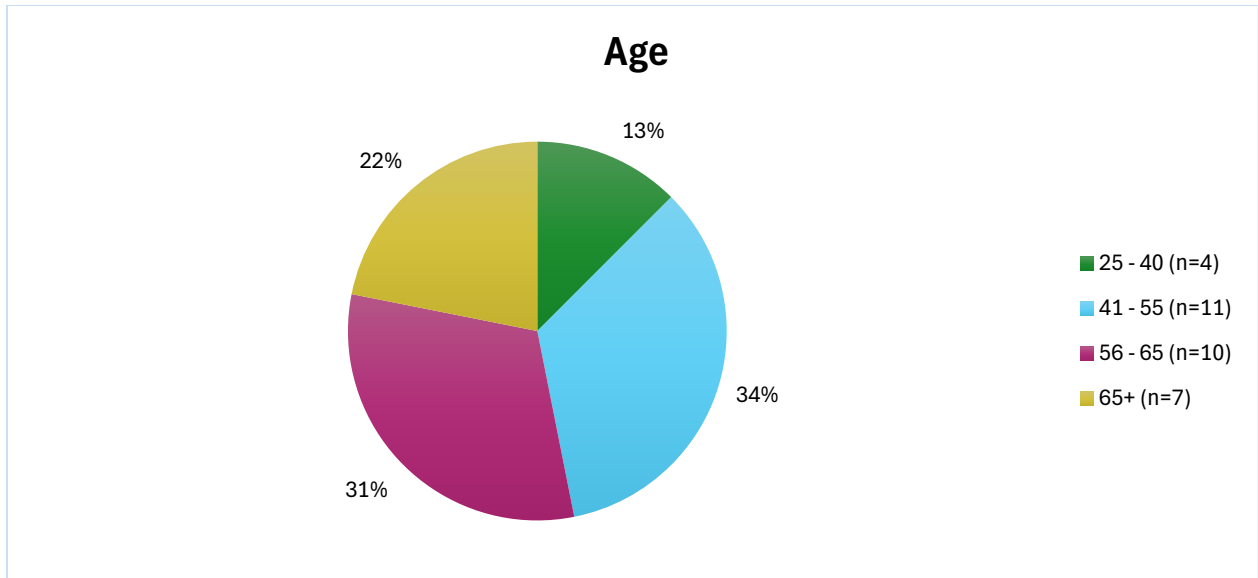


### Race



### Hispanic or Latino/a/x





## V. Course Evaluation Results

### ***Learner Feedback***

After completing the course, learners stated that they intend to be more compassionate and more involved with identifying and addressing substance use concerns.

*“Look for ways to help.”*

*“I will be more involved when I see the need to assist an older adult who may be having substance use problems.”*

*“Show more compassion.”*

Learners completed the course with a deeper understanding of substance use in older adults and knowledge about what actions they can take to help those with substance use concerns.

*“I learned from this course how to address older adults with substance use disorder without judgment and how to refer them to mental health facilities in a way that they would not feel shame.”*

*“Having a deeper understanding of how aging impacts substance use later in life due to loss, grief, retirement, and pain.”*

*“More outreach for connection to relevant resources for the congregation.”*

Learners stated that the video scenarios and other interactive components aided in their learning and understanding.

*“It was easy to comprehend. The knowledge was reinforced with videos, quizzes and stating in different ways.”*

*“The AI conversations were very helpful.”*

*“I found the personal stories to be most helpful.”*

Overall, learners enjoyed the course.

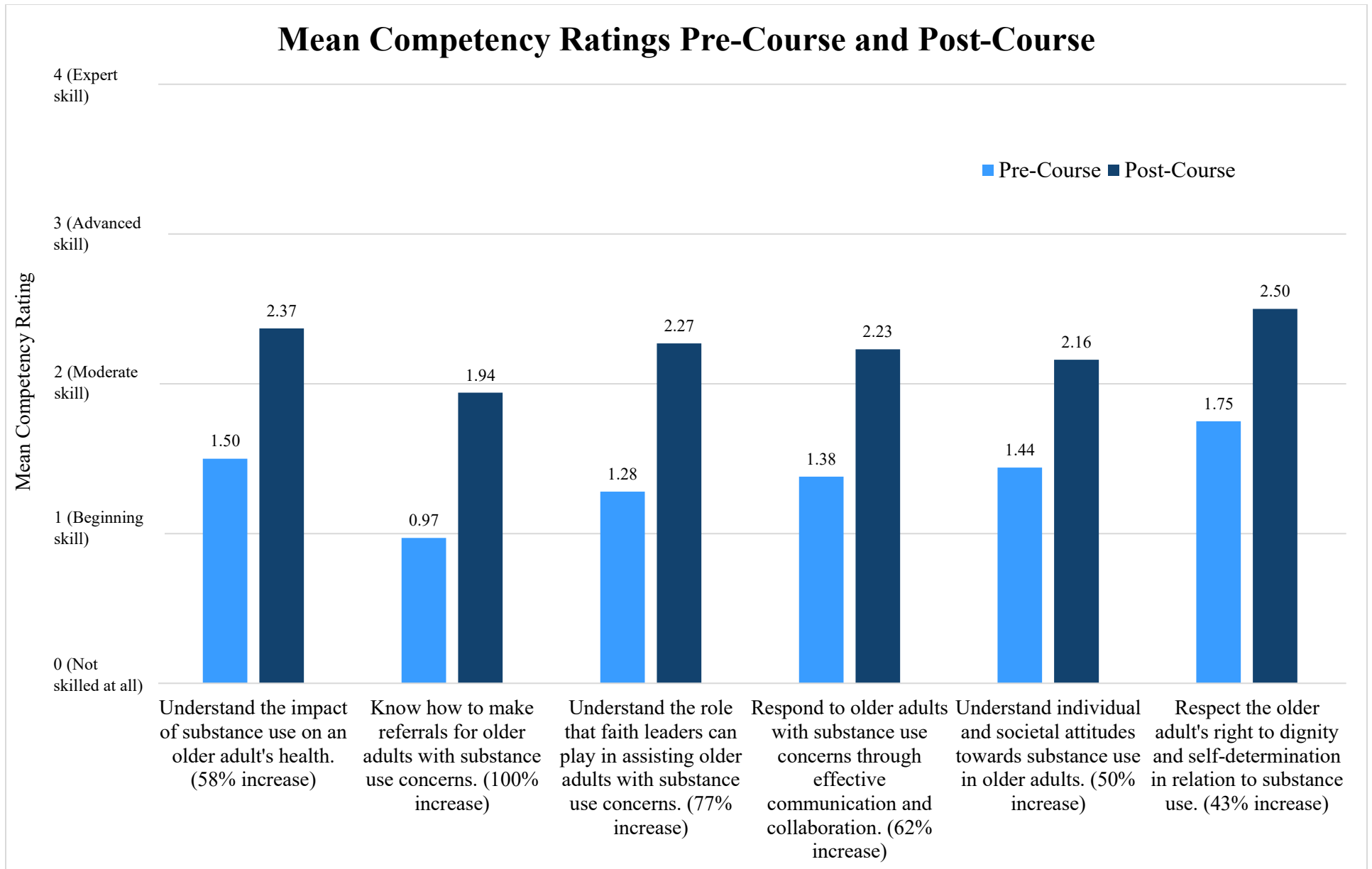
*“This helped me with just the right words to use and how to listen it makes a big difference.”*

*“This was a course with a wealth of information and educational. Thank you.”*

### **Competency Results**

At the beginning and end of the course, learners were asked to rate their skill level in six competencies using the following scale: 0 - Not skilled at all; 1 - Beginning skill; 2 - Moderate skill; 3 - Advanced skill; 4 - Expert skill.

As shown in the following chart, for all six competencies, there was a statistically significant increase ( $p < .05$ ) in mean competency ratings from the pre-course competency self-assessment to the post-course competency self-assessment. Percent increases ranged from 43% to 100%. Additional competency data is displayed in the Appendix Table 1.



***Course Objectives Results***

At the end of the course, learners were asked whether they felt that the course met the learning objectives. Learners rated whether the course met objectives using the following scale: Strongly Disagree; Disagree; Neutral; Agree; Strongly Agree.

The percentage of learners who agreed or strongly agreed that the course met each learning objective is provided in the table below.

<b>Learning Objective</b>	<b>Percent of Learners Who Agreed or Strongly Agreed</b>
Describe the prevalence of substance use among older adults.	97%
Examine the impact of substance use on the health of older adults.	97%
Identify treatment resources available to older adults.	93%
Summarize the roles that faith leaders can play in promoting recovery.	100%
Illustrate the impact of culture on substance use among older adults.	83%

***Course Evaluation Results***

At the end of the course, learners were asked how much they agreed or disagreed with a series of course evaluation statements using the following scale: Strongly Disagree; Disagree; Neutral; Agree; Strongly Agree; Not Applicable.

The percentage of learners who agreed or strongly agreed with each course evaluation statement is provided in the table below.

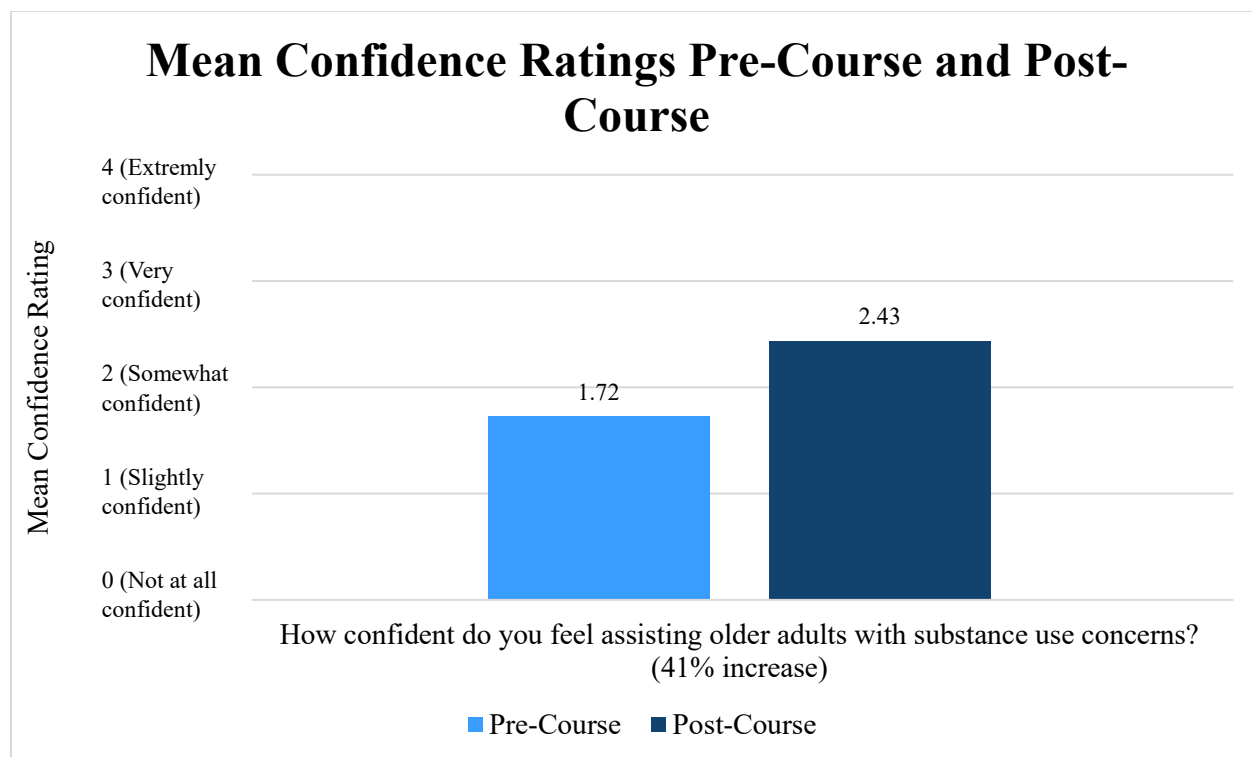
<b>Evaluation Statement</b>	<b>Percent of Learners Who Agreed or Strongly Agreed</b>
The course expanded my knowledge and understanding of the topic area.	97%
The information in the course was effectively presented.	97%
The course will enhance my practice skills in the topic area.	93%
I would recommend this course to my colleagues.	93%

***Confidence Assisting Older Adults with Substance Use Concerns***

At the beginning and end of the course, learners were asked to rate their confidence assisting older adults with substance use concerns using the following scale: 0 - Not at all confident; 1 - Slightly confident; 2 - Somewhat confident; 3 - Very confident; 4 - Extremely confident.

As shown in the following chart, there was a statistically significant ( $p < .05$ ) increase in confidence from the pre-course self-assessment to the post-course self-assessment. The percent increase was 41%.





#### ***Additional Support, Trainings, and Resources***

After completing the course, learners were asked “*What additional supports, trainings, or resources do you need to better support older adults with substance use concerns in your faith community?*” Learners indicated that additional community resources and services are needed.

*“Adding more mental health facilities in the community or including mental health programs in the large hospitals, transportation to treatment centers, include the topic in sermons, and invite professionals to speak at a workshop or seminar.”*

*“Could probably benefit from professionals coming to talk with congregants.”*

*“Partnerships with organizations that can provide the necessary supports needed.”*

*“Having the funds to get them to and from their apt.”*

*“Counseling.”*

Learners also said that they could benefit from additional training.

*“I think additional training would be helpful.”*

*“Learning to identify substance use and practice mock interviewing/questioning.”*

*“Maybe a group training together.”*

*“More hands on training.”*

## **VII. Summary and Conclusion**

Learners provided positive feedback on CADER’s *Substance Use and Aging for Faith Leaders* course, stating that they now have more knowledge about substance use in older adults and are better prepared to respond to these concerns. Results from the competency assessment indicated that learners gained key skills pertaining to aging and substance use. Learners also showed an increase in confidence assisting older adults with substance use concerns.

With older adults often turning to their faith leaders and faith communities for support, providing education and training to members of faith communities may help older adults feel more supported and understood. Members of faith communities will know how to effectively communicate with older adults about substance use and will be aware of available resources. CADER and the E4 Center for Excellence look forward to a continued partnership focused on strengthening the workforce that supports older adults.

## VIII. Appendix

**Table 1. Results from the Pre-Course and Post-Course Competency Self-Assessments**

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.

Mean competency ratings, percent increases, and p-values are shown in the table below.

Competency	Pre-Course Mean Competency Rating	Post-Course Mean Competency Rating	Percent Increase	P-value
Understand the impact of substance use on an older adult's health.	1.50	2.37	58%	<.001
Know how to make referrals for older adults with substance use concerns.	0.97	1.94	100%	<.001
Understand the role that faith leaders can play in assisting older adults with substance use concerns.	1.28	2.27	77%	<.001
Respond to older adults with substance use concerns through effective communication and collaboration.	1.38	2.23	62%	<.001
Understand individual and societal attitudes towards substance use in older adults.	1.44	2.16	50%	<.001
Respect the older adult's right to dignity and self-determination in relation to substance use.	1.75	2.50	43%	<.05