

Evaluating the Impact of Completing Graduate Disability Studies Coursework on Public Health Practice:

Findings from the UConn UCEDD Certificate Program

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Background

- Few public health programs nationwide offer disability-related coursework (Akakpo, Lobianco, & Lollar, 2020).
- The UConn UCEDD developed a four-course, online Certificate in 2014 to address this gap. A follow-up evaluation of students who completed at least one course was conducted in 2018 (Lutz & Bruder, 2019).

Research Question

- How do former students apply the knowledge and skills gained from the UConn Disability Certificate courses to their current or future employment, and what professional behaviors or practices have they changed as a result?

Study Purpose

- To explore how former students apply their Disability Certificate training in professional settings and how their practices have changed.

Methodology

- A Qualtrics survey was sent to 222 former students.
- Received 46 completed surveys

Self: 14

Parent: 1

Other family member: 22

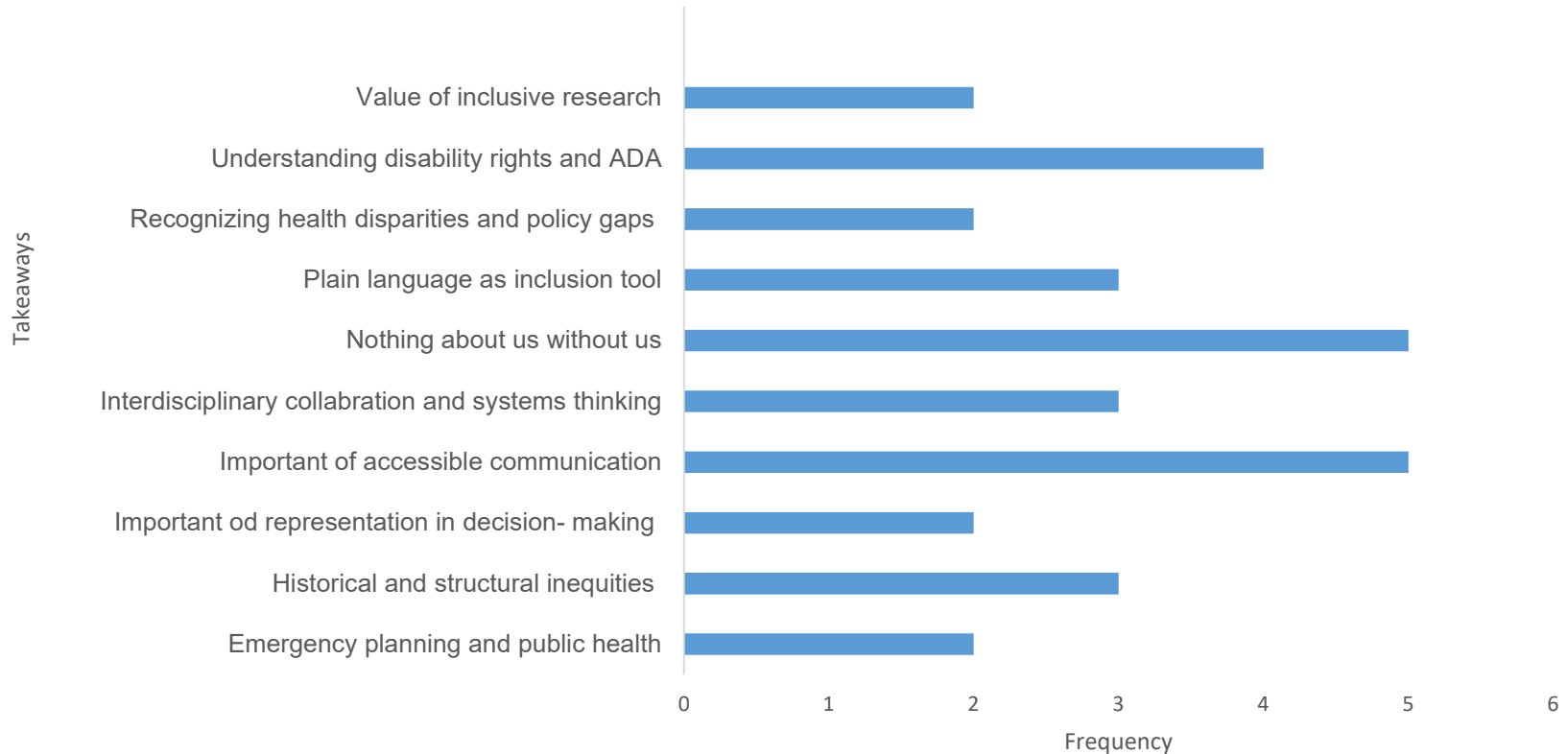
No direct disability relationship:13

Methodology (CON'T)

- Q57: How do the knowledge and skills gained from completing at least one Disability Certificate course relate to your current or future work?
- Q45 How do you (will you) apply the knowledge and skills gained from completing the Disability Certificate in your employment?
- Q35 What is the single most relevant lesson/takeaway you learned from the course(s)?
- Q63 What is the single most useful lesson/takeaway you learned from the course(s)?
- Q41 What are two (2) things you do differently as a result of completing at least one Disability Certificate course?

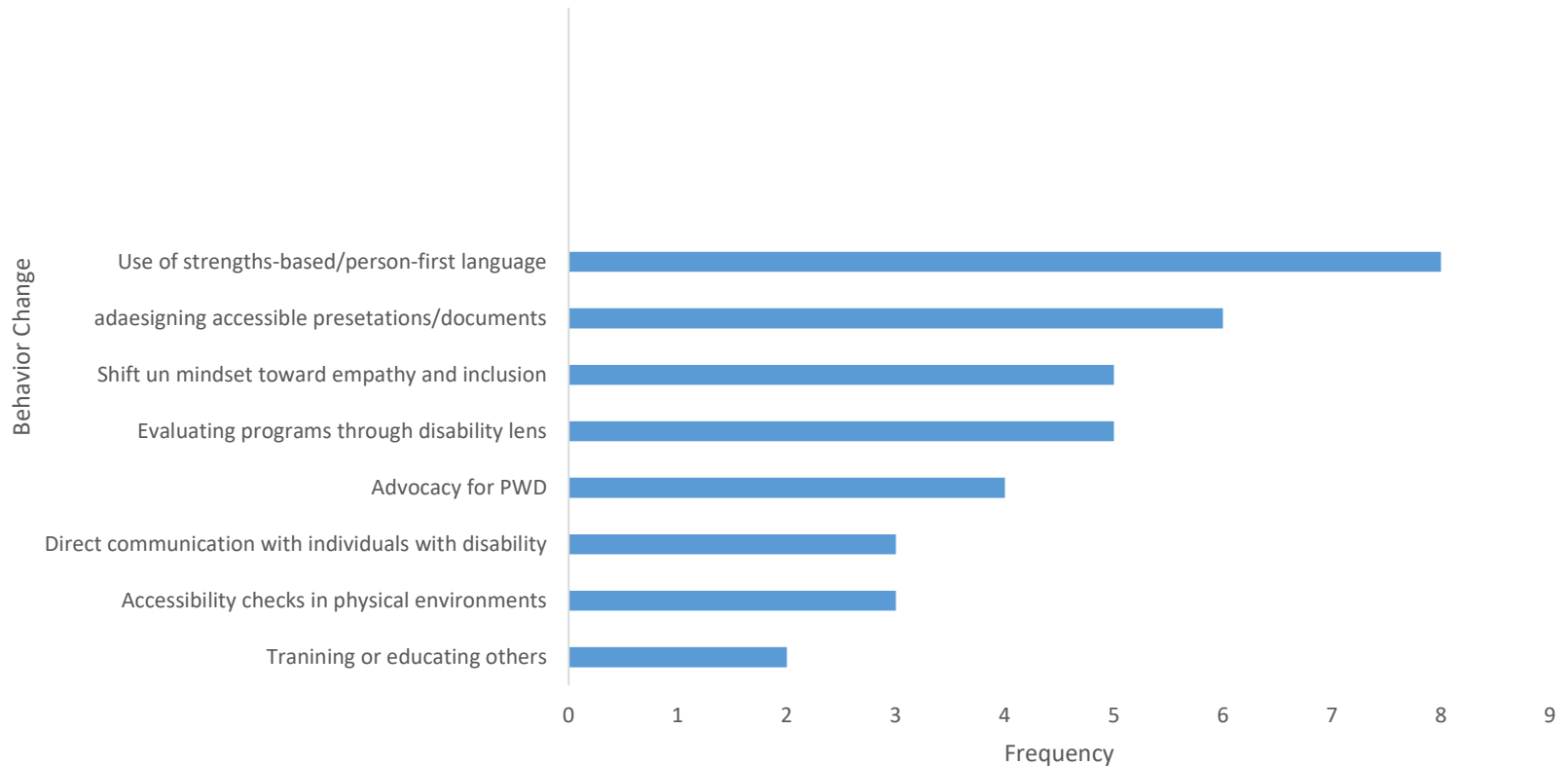
Results

Top Lessons and Takeaways Reported by Students



Results

Top Reported Behavior Changes After Disability Certificate Course



Discussion

- The UConn Disability Certificate led to real-world behavior changes: inclusive language, accessible materials, and disability advocacy.
- The program fosters transformation from passive learners to active, equity-focused professionals.
- Findings support integrating disability content into all graduate public health programs.
- Continued research is needed to assess long-term system-level impact.

Limitations

- Small sample size: Only 46 out of 258 eligible participants responded.
- One-time survey

Conclusion

- The UConn Disability Certificate equips students with tools to drive inclusion, accessibility, and advocacy in their fields.
- Graduates apply what they learn in real-world settings from public health and education to clinical care and policymaking.
- The program transforms learners into reflective leaders who promote equity and systemic change.
- There is a clear need to expand disability-focused training across all graduate public health programs to build a more inclusive workforce.

References

Akakpo, C. W., Lobianco, A., & Lollar, D. (2020). Inclusion of disability content in graduate public health curricula. *American Journal of Public Health, 110*(10), 1509–1511.

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