



Iowa UCEDD Health Provider Training Program Yields Successful Outcomes

People with disabilities often have trouble accessing quality health care due to medical staff that may have limited understanding of how to communicate with people with disabilities, the experience of living with a disability, and lack of accommodations. Iowa's University Center for Excellence on Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD) created a health care provider training program designed to improve health care access in 2005, with funding from the Iowa Department of Public Health's state Disability and Health grant. The innovative program partners with Iowa colleges and universities to include training on communicating with and accommodating people with disabilities into the health sciences curricula. The program has reached over 5,000 students through large group presentations and small group clinical simulations that increase student comfort levels through exposure to people with a variety of disabilities.

- Large group presentations combine live commentary from individuals with disabilities and family members, video demonstrations of best practices, role play, and interactive discussion. Topics include accommodating disabilities in the office setting, family-centered care, transition from pediatric to adult health care, serving diverse patients, privacy, and respect. An [online discussion guide](#) includes discussion questions for each video, accommodations, and suggestions to improve the quality of care.
- Small group sessions allow pairs of students to conduct two patient encounters over one hour, followed by a debriefing session with patients and UCEDD staff. The encounters include a social history, medical history, and a light, non-invasive physical exam. All simulated patients are people with disabilities or family members who share their experiences in navigating the health care system. Simulated patients receive a stipend and reimbursement for transportation costs.

"The session was very helpful in reminding us that as future healthcare providers, we need to always be comprehensively informed about the needs, strengths, interests, and identities of people with disabilities to provide the best care for them. While it is important to be aware of a person's disability to guide and provide comprehensive care for them, a disability does not define a person. As providers, we need to continually listen and connect with all patients and people. To fully embrace diversity and inclusivity in care, we need to remember that no two people share the same life experiences. ... The educational session was a great opportunity to remind us, that as students and students, we need to advocate for system-level change beyond just caring for patients." –Medical student

In 2018, the UCEDD began evaluating the impact of the small group clinical training through pre- and post-training rating scales. Eight items, each with a 4-point Likert scale, ranging from *Poor* (1) to *Very Good* (4), provide a measure of the students' knowledge, comfort and interest



in working with individuals with disabilities. The table below shows the results of this survey for the most recent academic year ($N = 183$).

	Item	Pre-Training Score	Post-Training Score	Percent Increase
1	<i>How would you rate your knowledge about what to do or say when examining a person with a disability?</i>	2.21	3.06	39%
2	<i>How would you rate your confidence and comfort level in working with people with disabilities?</i>	2.43	3.11	28%
3	<i>How would you rate your level of understanding or empathy for the challenges that people with disabilities face when visiting a doctor?</i>	2.70	3.31	23%
4	<i>How would you rate your skills in being able to help a patient with a disability feel welcome and comfortable during a medical visit?</i>	2.51	3.25	29%
5	<i>How would you rate your overall competence in communicating with people with disabilities?</i>	2.44	3.02	24%
6	<i>How high is your level of interest in working with people with disabilities in the future?*</i>	3.15	3.34	6%
7	<i>How much prior experience have you had with people with disabilities?**</i>	2.60	N/A	N/A
8	<i>What is your overall level of satisfaction with this learning experience?***</i>	N/A	3.65	N/A

* 1= Very Low; 2= Low; 3= Moderate; 4= High

** 1= None; 2= Very Little; 3= Some; 4= Quite a bit

*** 1= Not Satisfied; 2= Somewhat Satisfied; 3= Satisfied; 4= Highly Satisfied

Based on these data, students' reported relatively little experience working with individuals with disabilities before the training but moderate interest in working with people with disabilities in the future. Students' ratings show increased knowledge, comfort, empathy, skills, and competence in working with individuals with disabilities as a result of the training. Additionally, students expressed strong overall satisfaction with the training and experiences.

The Iowa UCEDD will continue to build partnerships with training programs throughout Iowa and consider strategies to expand the reach of the program to students in other areas. To find out more about the program or view the videos, visit the [Living Well Iowa](#) website or email Michael-Hoenig@uiowa.edu.