

The Arc's Future Planning Training: An Evaluation of Multi-State Trainings for Professionals

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Background

Future planning is a critical issue for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) and their families. Key aspects of future planning include finances and benefits, living arrangements, and decision-making supports.

Despite the significance of these considerations, less than half of families have made plans for future living arrangements (Heller & Caldwell, 2006; The Arc, 2011), and some families make plans that could jeopardize their relatives' benefits or needlessly deprive them of their rights (Heller & Factor, 1994).

Nationally, some evidence-informed future planning interventions have been implemented to support individuals with I/DD and their families. These interventions, which couple information with peer support, have been effective in enhancing self-efficacy and sparking future planning activities (Heller & Caldwell, 2006; Smith et al, 1996).

However, there is little is known about the level of future planning knowledge that professionals who work with individuals I/DD and their families possess. This project investigated whether The Arc intervention trainings resulted in a change in knowledge, confidence and likelihood to take action among professionals. Subsequent future planning outreach efforts were also evaluated.

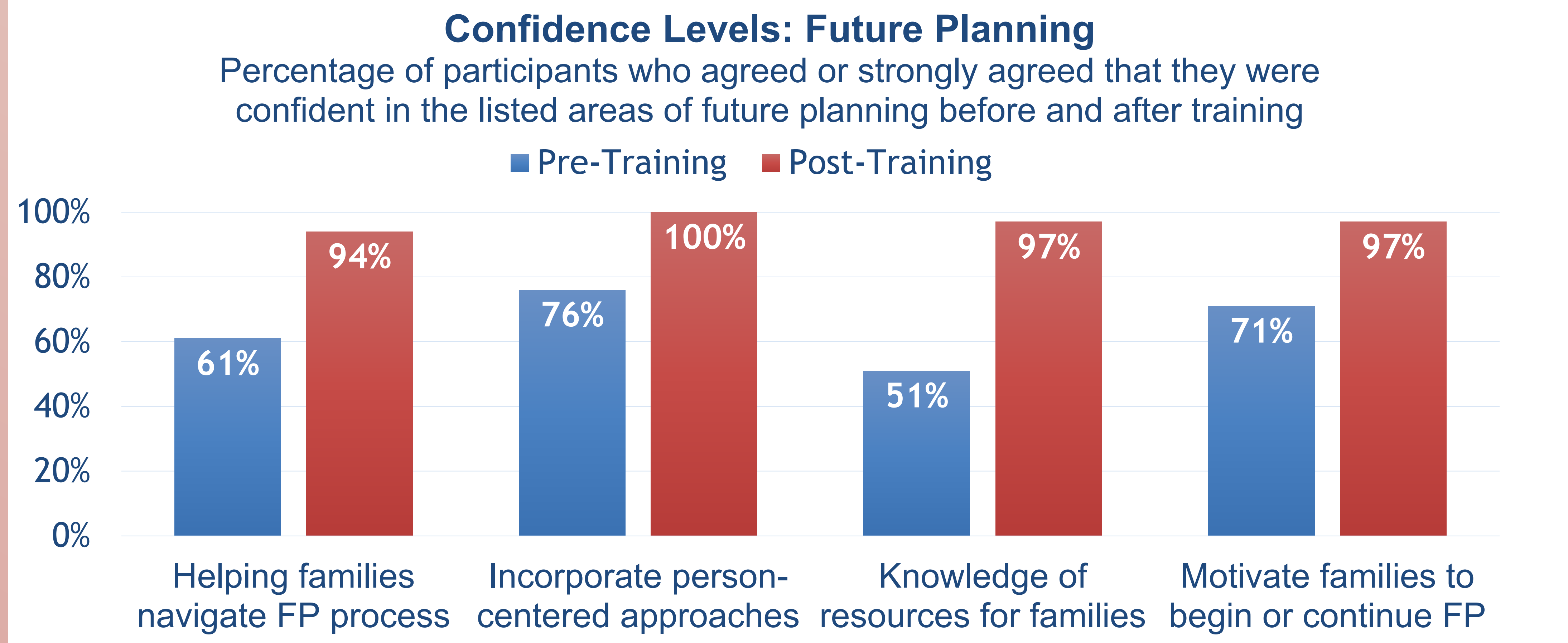
Methods / Participants

The Arc established The Center for Future Planning and implemented training interventions for professionals in **North Carolina** and **Tennessee** (Phase 1) as well as **Wisconsin**, **Illinois**, and **Arizona** (Phase 2). A total of **173** professionals were trained across these states, and **139** of these participants were asked to complete pre and post training surveys. Both surveys contained items evaluating the professional's confidence levels in their knowledge of future planning, their skills in supporting families, their comfort in providing assistance, as well as their ability to incorporate person-centered approaches. The post survey also included items regarding participants' likelihood to take future action. This study reports on survey data from Phase 2.

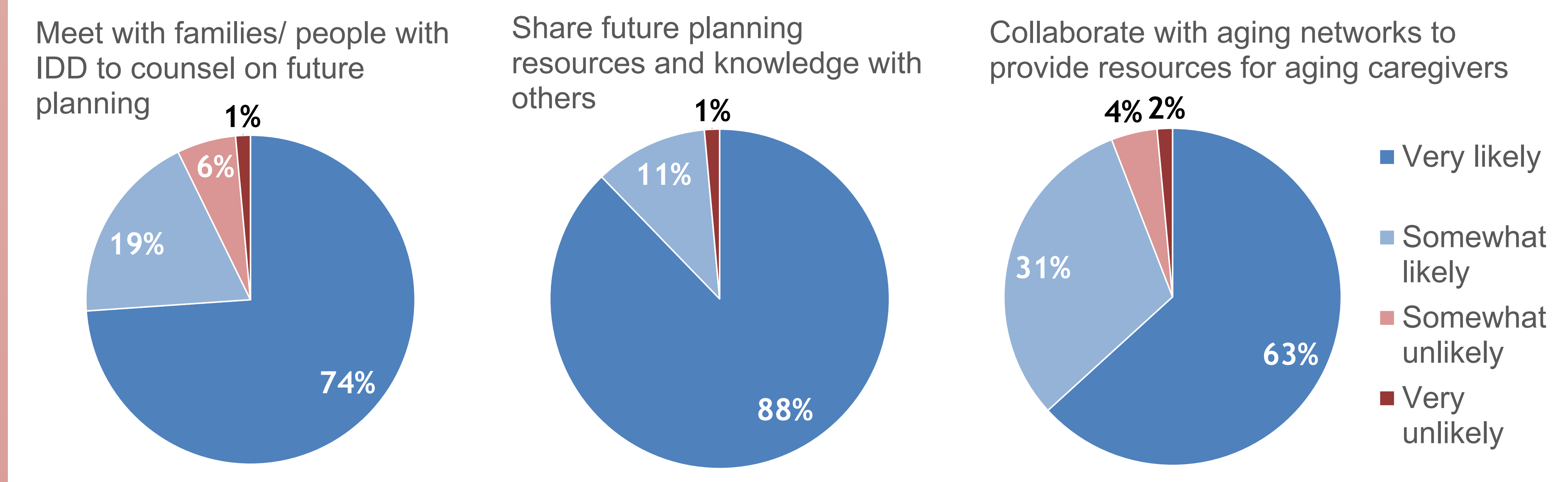
Data provided by state directors were also collected and examined to estimate the subsequent outreach efforts. Outreach results from both Phase 1 and Phase 2 are discussed.

Results: Phase 2

Across the Phase 2 states (Wisconsin, Arizona, and Illinois) the reported levels of confidence among professionals increased dramatically after participation in the trainings.



Increases in confidence levels corresponded with participants' reports of being likely to take action in a number of areas. Between **95** and **97%** of participants reported being somewhat or very likely to advocate for the voice of individuals with IDD in the future planning process and to advocate for future planning initiatives within their organizations. Other reported action steps are illustrated below:



Conclusions

This study suggests that The Arc's Future Planning training program is effective in increasing the confidence of professionals and their reported likelihood to take action in areas related to future planning service provision.

This is particularly significant because prior to training, approximately **94%** of participants reported experiencing challenges and barriers to being able to help families with future planning. Increased confidence levels may suggest that participants feel better equipped to address and overcome those barriers.

Over **30%** of the 485 outreach cases were provided to caregivers over the age of 60. This highlights a need among the aging population and echoes the call for future planning support provision to aging caregivers specifically.

The capacity of future planning training programs that focus on families directly may be limited. It is plausible that the provision of training to professionals can multiply the amount of families and individuals who are receiving needed information on future planning.

More Information

For more information about this presentation, please contact Kaitlin Stober at kstober@uic.edu or Liz Mahar at Mahar@TheArc.org.

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Results: Phase 1 and 2

Preliminary findings suggest that professionals who participated in the training did initiate a significant amount of outreach to individuals with disabilities and their families. All together, training participants reported conducting **485** cases of outreach to support future planning training among families.

Over **60%** of outreach was provided to parents of individuals with I/DD. Outreach efforts also reached siblings and other relatives, guardians, self-advocates, other service providers, or groups at conferences. The average age of the caregivers who received service varied between states: **62.0** (NC/ TN), **50.85** (WI), **56.56** (AZ) and **60.23** (IL). While not all outreach cases recorded client/consumer age, there were at least **146** caregivers over the age of 60 who received service from the professionals who participated in The Arc's future planning trainings.

