

Tobacco Treatment Specialist Training during a Pandemic: Successfully Moving to a Virtual Format



Caroline Cranos, MPH, NCTTP;
Karen Costas, MPH;
Christine Frisard, MS; Lori Pbert, PhD

University of Massachusetts Chan Medical School, Worcester, MA

INTRODUCTION

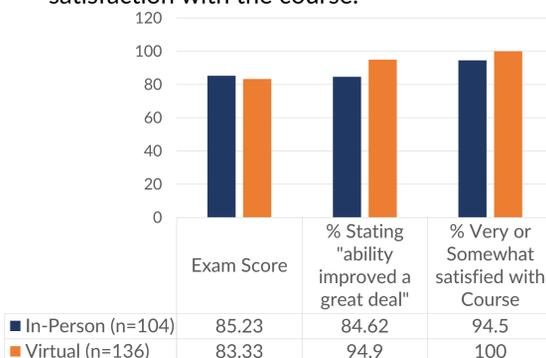
- UMass Center for Tobacco Treatment Research and Training (CTTRT) has hosted Tobacco Treatment Specialist (TTS) trainings at our Worcester, MA campus since 1999.
- Shortly before our April 2020 TTS training, UMass put restrictions on in-person meetings/trainings due to COVID.
- We used our Zoom account to conduct the in-person, 3-day portion of TTS training virtually—This was the first CTTRT-accredited program to move an in-person training to a virtual setting due to COVID.

METHODS

Trainee evaluations and grades from in-person UMass-based trainings in 2018 & 2019 (n= 6 trainings) compared with virtual trainings in 2020 & 2021 (n= 6 trainings). Fisher's Exact tests were used to analyze contingency tables for Likert scale responses and determine significant differences between virtual and in-person groups.

RESULTS

- No significant differences in average grade between the groups
- Significant differences (virtual was higher) in "course increased my ability to implement tobacco use disorder treatment"
- Significant difference (virtual was higher) in satisfaction with the course.



Compared to participants attending in-person TTS training, virtual TTS trainees had similar exam scores, and higher ratings of overall course satisfaction and self-efficacy in delivering treatment.

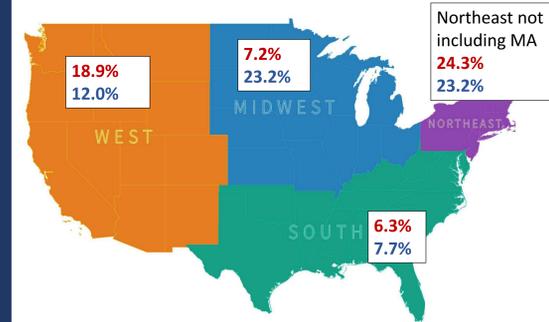


MORE RESULTS

In-person trainings had a higher percentage of participants from Massachusetts, compared to virtual trainings.

Training Type:
In-person % Virtual %

Massachusetts participants:
43.2%
33.8%



LESSONS LEARNED

- The availability of skilled support and an appropriate platform are key for the hosting of trainings. Utilize institutional support when available.
- Use of the chat feature, small group discussions, and polling questions stimulated exchange of ideas among trainees and trainers to replicate as much as possible the in-person training experience.
- Virtual trainings allowed us to capitalize on the expertise of out-of-state colleagues by having them present during trainings.
- We deliberately kept registration numbers lower than our in-person limit to encourage participation during presentations and activities.
- Virtual training can expand the reach of TTS training.

NEXT STEPS

- Look at individual trainee factors that may indicate likely success in virtual training versus in-person.
- Continue to incorporate new and innovative virtual training techniques to increase participant engagement.