



EXTENSION IMPACT

Boosting Financial Skills for Social Workers

One in three Wisconsinites is struggling to afford necessities such as housing, food, clothing, and transportation.

Across our state close to 600,000 people live below the federal poverty level, and an additional 1.3 million Wisconsinites live in a household that struggles to cover basic household expenses. Many individuals and families turn to social service agencies for public assistance and other forms of support. This puts social workers, case managers, and other helping professionals on the frontlines of supporting Wisconsin's most vulnerable populations. When they meet with clients, they often have teachable moments during which they can add discussions on critical financial topics. However, these professionals don't typically receive training on financial coaching or education.

In response, Extension developed and delivered a variety of training programs for professionals who address poverty in their work. The recently created Encouraging Financial Conversations (EFC) program is a six-session course providing those in helping professions with tools and resources to coach their clients on financial problem solving, goal setting, spending plans, saving, building credit and managing debt, maximizing income, and protecting themselves from scams, fraud, and identity theft. EFC is Extension's newest and most comprehensive program that is designed specifically for social workers and other helping professionals.

Through the EFC course participants showed statistically significant improvements across several outcome areas. They felt more comfortable working with clients on financial matters;

they were more prepared to bring up a financial topic with their clients, and they understood the role they can take in working with clients on financial concerns. About one third of the participants reported that they spend more time working with clients on financial topics than they were before the course.

Extension supports community service providers in helping their clients set and achieve financial goals, build emergency funds, effectively manage credit, pay down debt, and maximize income.

Many EFC participants also took Extension's Rent Smart train-the-trainer courses. Rent Smart is a six-module course that helps those with blemished rental histories find and keep safe and affordable housing. Train-the-trainer curricula provided case managers with skills and resources to help their clients secure housing. Helping professionals who work with children and their parents also participated in Money as You Grow, another train-the-trainer course in which they learned how to use guides that accompany 29 money-themed children's books highlighting sound money management skills.

2021-2021



1,000+

training contacts with helping professionals



75+

training sessions



Financial Education is part of Extension's Human Development & Relationships Institute.

Learn more by visiting finances.extension.wisc.edu.



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