



ANNUAL REPORT

EVALUATION HIGHLIGHTS
FROM YEARS 2 & 3

September 2024

CARE²

**collaborative for Advancing
Rural Excellence + Equity**



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SPECIAL THANK YOU

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BACKGROUND

The **Collaborative for Advancing Rural Excellence and Equity (CARE2)** program was developed to respond to the impact of COVID-19 on the behavioral health of rural communities in Northern New England and New York, particularly as it pertains to **social isolation** and lack of access to behavioral health treatment for **residents with substance use disorder (SUD)** and **older adults across the long-term care continuum**. To accomplish this, CARE2 facilitates evidence-based trainings through **Project ECHO®** programs, and provides collaborative training resources through an open-access **e-Learning** portal.



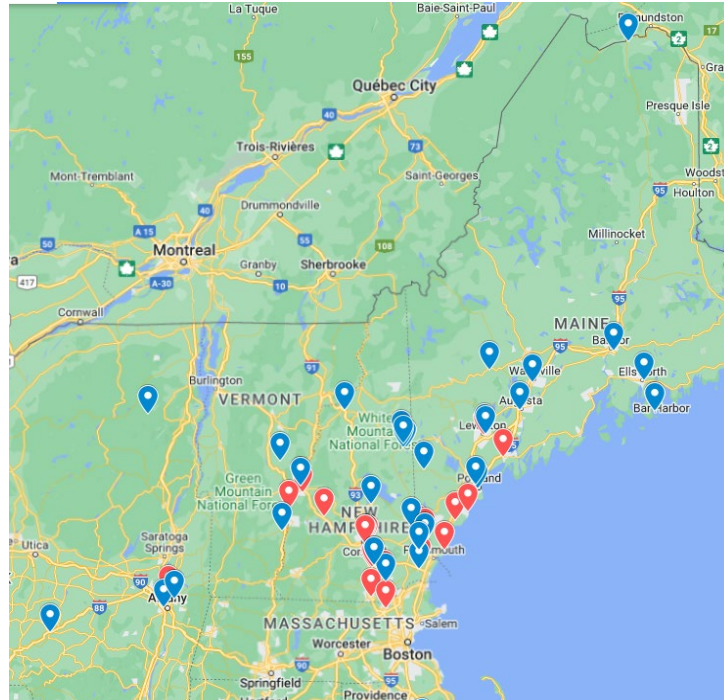
The region served by CARE2 includes the three northern New England states of **Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont, as well as northern New York**. Collectively, this includes 77 rural counties across three primarily rural states, and New York's North Country. This region has substantial medically underserved populations that are challenged to obtain quality health care due to poor health insurance coverage, the burden of transportation from rural communities to more urban medical centers, and the restricted availability of specialty care providers and support services. This region also includes some of the nation's oldest communities, as well as populations experiencing high rates of SUD and behavioral health issues. These challenges are further exacerbated by the **COVID-19 pandemic** and have led to heightened social isolation for older adults and record rates of overdose and SUD-related deaths. This creates an urgent need for both **acute and sustainable solutions**, especially in the face of a continually dwindling healthcare workforce.

OUR GOALS

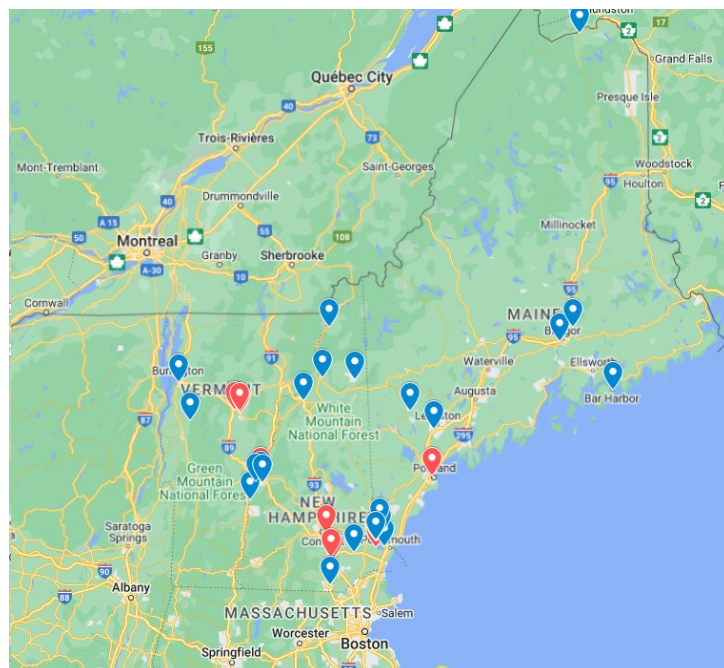
1. Developing a **person-centered learning community** that promotes interprofessional care and emphasizes collaborative partnerships
2. Delivering **Project ECHO** programs to rural primary care and long-term care “spoke sites” across the region to facilitate the dissemination of best practices, with a focus on addressing gaps in services for adults with **behavioral health concerns and/or substance use disorder**
3. Developing accessible tools to support program planning and implementation
4. **Engaging students** to facilitate early adoption of best practices and reduce stigma and bias in an **all-teach, all-learn** approach

ORGANIZATIONS

Project ECHO®: Aging, Community & Equity (PEACE)



Substance Use Disorder (SUD) ECHO®



-  Cohort 2
-  Cohort 3

PARTICIPANTS

Project ECHO®: Aging, Community & Equity (PEACE)



124

TOTAL ATTENDANCE Cohort 2 & 3

Substance Use Disorder (SUD) ECHO®



171

TOTAL ATTENDANCE Cohort 2 & 3

	SUD		PEACE	
	Cohort 2	Cohort 3	Cohort 2	Cohort 3
Number of unique participants registered per cohort	109	103	103	73
Number of spoke sites participating per cohort	34	48	41	24
Number of student participants	32	15	0	14
Average Attendance/Session	32.5	23.38	27.09	24.88
First time participating in ECHO	25	11	17	--
Percentage of Rural Organizations	38.14%	36.84%	50.68%	50.98%

PARTICIPANT ROLE TYPES

The CARE2 Project ECHO programs foster an **interdisciplinary community** where both participants and subject matter experts represent multidisciplinary teams that include community health workers, community-based organizations, geriatricians, medical librarians, nurses, occupational therapists, peer recovery and support professionals, pharmacists, practice administrators, mental health professionals, social workers, students, and more.

	SUD		PEACE		Total
	Cohort 2	Cohort 3	Cohort 2	Cohort 3	
Community Health Worker/Community Health Representative			1		1
Provider (DO/MD, Nurse Practitioner, Physician Assistant)	8	12	3	2	25
Mental/Behavioral Health Professional	5	7		1	13
Nurse	9	9	2	3	23
Patient Navigator/Care Coordinator		1	4	5	10
Peer Support Worker/Peer Education		2			2
Pharmacist		2			2
Practice administrator or leader	7		12	13	32
Social Worker/Case Manager	7	4	3	8	22
Teacher/Clinical Faculty			1	2	3
Other allied health professional		1			1
Other non-clinical professional				2	2
Student (RN, Pharmacy, Public Health, Social Work, PMHNP)	22	22		13	57
Chose not to reply	37	15	47	2	101
Total	95	75	73	51	294

PARTICIPANT RESPONSE

Have you made changes to the care you provide based off strategies learned in the ECHO?

"Yes - I have found the recommendations to be helpful and they have challenged me to think more critically about challenging patient issues" - SUD ECHO Participant

"Reminding others of the need to remember goals should be client-centered."
- PEACE Participant

Has attending the ECHO changed your clinical decision treatment protocols?

"Yes, increased discussion among providers." - SUD ECHO Participant

"Thinking more about long COVID." - PEACE Participant

Has attending the ECHO resulted in the implementation of person-centered goals with your patients?

"Focusing more on all areas of care." - PEACE Participant

"Revised assessment tools." - PEACE Participant

"I know more about community referrals." - PEACE Participant

"I have had the privilege of participating in both the SUD and PEACE ECHO CARE2 programs, both as a participant and a case dilemma presenter. I live in extreme northern Maine where geographic distance is a barrier to my participation in teaching and learning experiences. Both the SUD and PEACE ECHO programs are presented via Zoom, which facilitates my attendance, learning, and contribution. ECHO's all teach, all learn model is something which resonates deeply with me as a college educator and as a lifelong learner. This model also enhances my clinical counseling work with clients because I often bring the knowledge that I have gleaned from the ECHO programs into my sessions with them."

Lisa Lavoie, PhD, MAIS, LCPC, CADC, CRC, Asst. Professor of Behavioral Science, University of Maine at Fort Kent



IMPACT

Asynchronous eLearning

The CARE2 program developed a 3-part asynchronous course in Project Year 2.

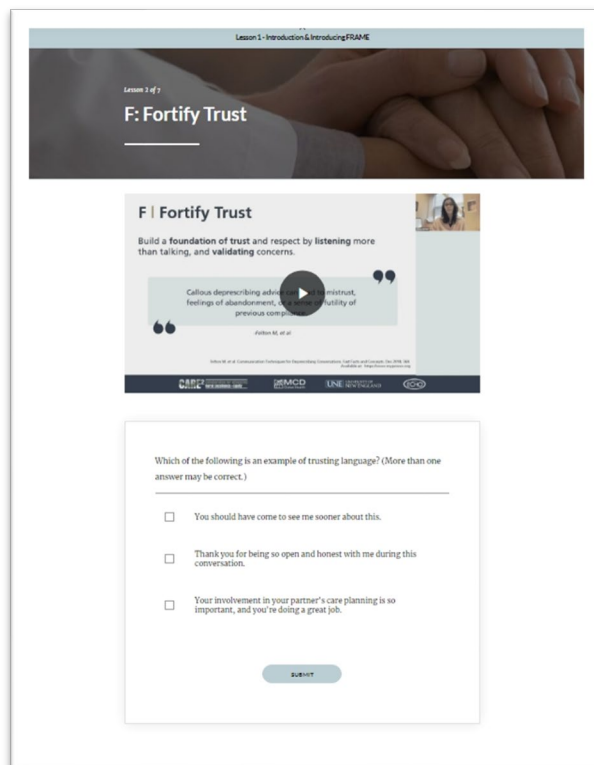
[Register for free](#) to find these no-cost modules on

www.telehealthclassroom.org

1. Deprescribing: A Multipart Series |

Join Dr. Sydney Springer from the University of New England as she teaches learners on various topics in deprescribing including having the patient conversation, deprescribing for dementia, and more.

- Module 1: Introduction to Deprescribing
- Module 2: Deprescribing for Dementia
- Module 3: Deprescribing: Having the Patient Conversation



Needs Assessment Report

During the 2022-2023 project year, the University of Maine provided CARE2 with a multistate needs assessment to inform ECHO curricula for behavioral health, substance use, and social connection needs for adults and older adults. [Read the full report](#) at ruralcare2.org

Project ECHO® Programs Participants are asked to complete a pre and post survey, that includes assessment of their knowledge and confidence around each topic area being covered. We internally calculate percentage change in knowledge and confidence after having attended the sessions.

	Substance Use Disorder ECHO® (SUD)		Project ECHO®: Aging Community and Equity	
	Knowledge	Confidence	Knowledge	Confidence
Year 2/Cohort 2 (2022)	82%	94%	58%	67%
Year 3/Cohort 3 (2023)	100%	100%	91%	82%

FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

Project Year 2 of CARE2 underscored the importance of employing an interdisciplinary approach to aid individuals with memory impairment and embracing a whole-person methodology for treating substance use disorder.

Project Year 3 aimed to take a specific focus area with the curriculum development of our Project ECHO programming.

With two more years in the funding period, we will aim to expand our network of ECHO participants and continue to develop curriculum that evolves with current best practices around behavioral health, aging equity, substance use, and the impacts of COVID-19. We will continue to integrate program evaluations and survey responses to gain a comprehensive understanding of the needs of the rural communities we serve.



visit us at ruralcare2.org

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