



Report on the current state of the University of Louisiana at Monroe Harm Reduction Education and Referral for Opioid Overdose Reversal (ULM H.E.R.O.) Program and its Progress

The following is a summary on the progress of the ULM H.E.R.O. program as it currently stands during the second quarter of the third year of activity (January - March 2025). This information is intended for the members of the program's Community Advisory Board (CAB) to refer to and to disseminate to others they believe may have an interest in the activity of this program. We greatly appreciate each members' participation on the board and their engagement with us to help reach our goals and to serve our community.

Goal 1: Traditional First Responders (i.e. Firefighters, EMS, Police, Healthcare professionals etc.)

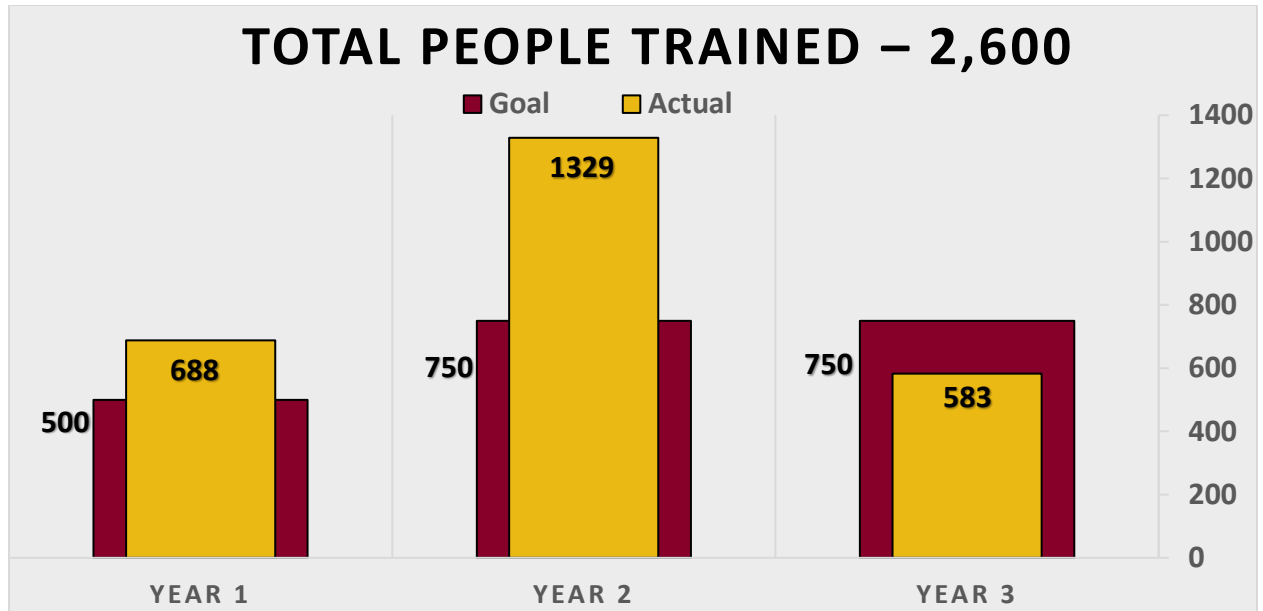
Goal 2: Community Members (attendees of community events)

Goal 3: First Responders in training (i.e. Medical and Healthcare students)

Overall Totals

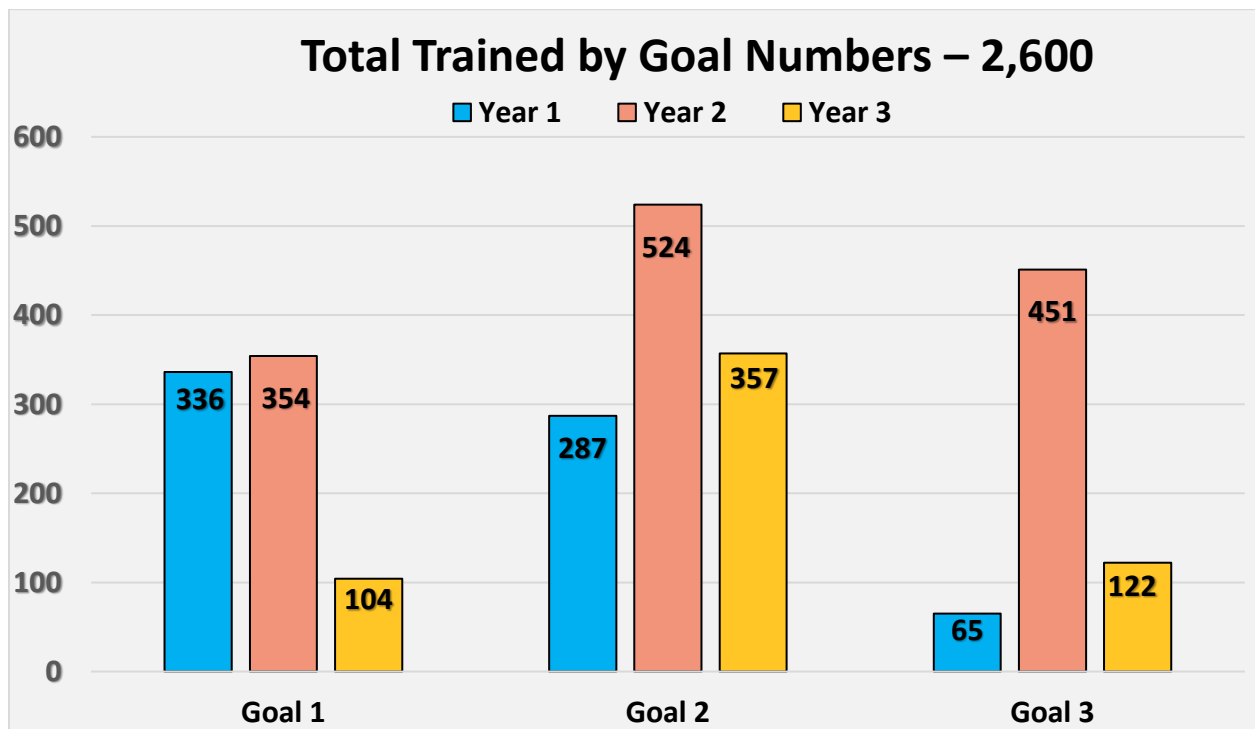
In the second quarter of our third year, the program has nearly reached our yearly total goal of 750 total individuals, and are on track to surpass this goal once again as we have for the past two years now. We have also been successful in making connections with organizations in our catchment such as the Louisiana State Police, Monroe and New Orleans Police Departments and Jefferson and Ouachita Parish Sheriff Offices, as well as Universities such as Grambling, Xavier, and Tulane. We have also attended more community events and distributed kits in areas where they are much needed, and have even successfully organized our first event ourselves with the help of community partner organizations. We have followed up on the previous year's groundwork with more training sessions and have made great progress towards our goals. As the figure below shows, we have currently trained 2,600 individuals as of our most recent event.

As a reminder, the parishes in our catchment include the greater Orleans area (which includes Orleans, Jefferson, Plaquemines, St. Bernard, St. Tammany, St. Charles, and St. John the Baptist parishes); the greater Ouachita area (which includes Ouachita parish, the cities of Monroe, West Monroe, the areas of Bawcomville, Brownsville, Calhoun, Claiborne, Lakeshore, and Swartz); and the expanded catchment, which includes the remaining parishes of Union, Morehouse, Richland, Caldwell, Jackson, Lincoln, Livingston, Ascension, and Lafourche.

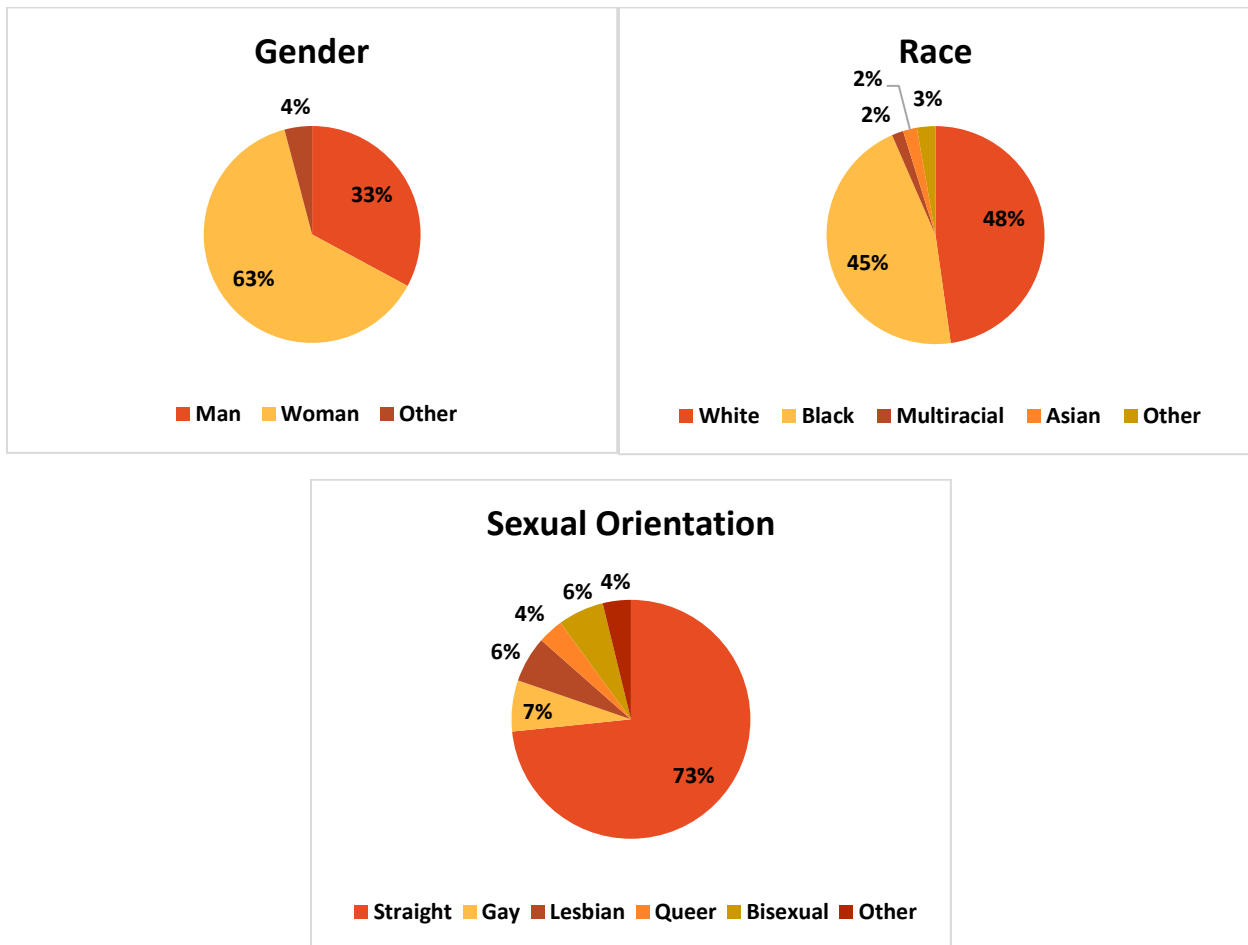


Breakdown by Goals

Breaking down our progress so far by our three main goals, we see the specific areas in which we have improved, and the areas in which we will be focusing on for the remainder of the year. This quarter, we saw a solid increase in growth in our goal 1 totals, as well as for our Goal 2 total. Our overall total for goal 2 now stands at 1,168 individuals trained, and goal 1 is now at 794, a significant improvement compared to last quarter.



We have continued our outreach efforts in the communities in our catchment, and have already trained over 300 individuals at community events this year alone, a continuation of the consistent results we have seen for this goal. This quarter, we attended 2 community events: Crescent Care's Black Health Summit, and our very own ULM HERO iCare Fest in Monroe. The iCare Fest was the first event that has been organized by ULM HERO and was intended to go to where people need resources the most to offer various medical services and information for those in need. In partnership with other local organizations, this event was a great success and offers a look into how we can recreate this success in the future. In total, we were able to distribute 106 kits across these two events. The demographic breakdown of attendees at our booth from community events this year so far is presented below.

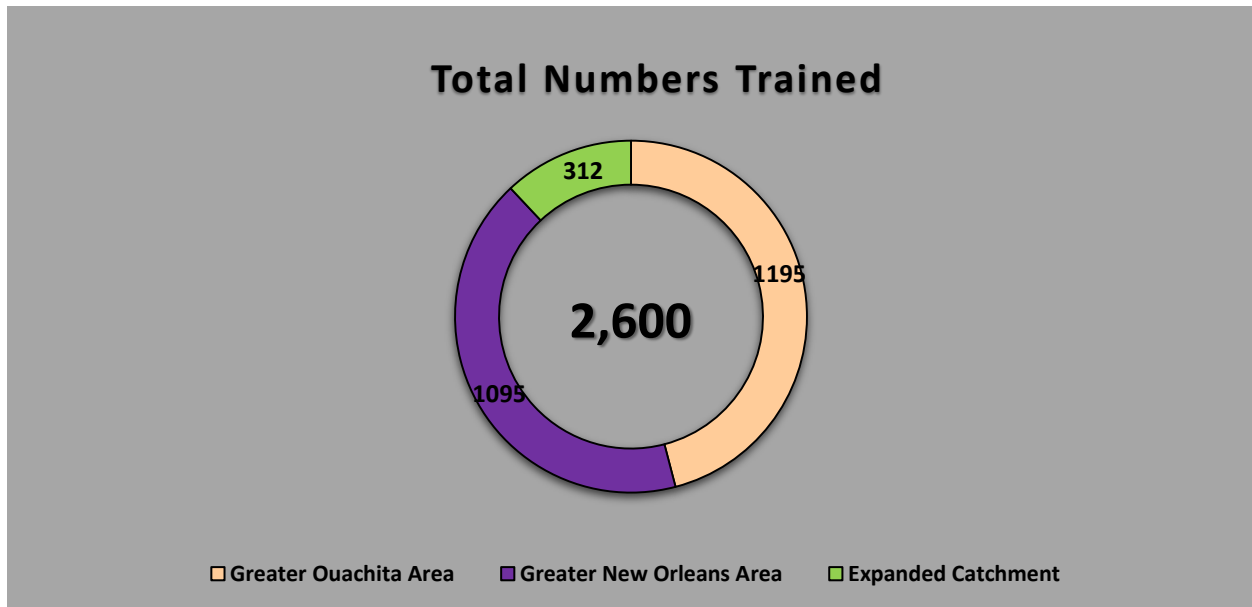


As for Goal 1, we have re-focused both our outreach and training efforts to primarily reach traditional first responders in our catchment. As a result of this, we have mainly held goal 1 sessions in the last 3 months. Among these have been police and fire departments, some of which we have been attempting to contact for years, and others have been new departments to us, which are in our expanded catchment. Wherever they are, our whole team has been directly involved in these sessions helping with the distributing of kits and collection of data, and we have seen great success in this goal.

This past quarter, we have not held any Goal 3 sessions. We have been focusing our efforts on our first goal in an attempt to continue to bolster our outreach to traditional first responders. However, we have been continuing our networking and outreach with other medical schools so that we can schedule training sessions with these schools when we are able to focus on this goal. As an example, we have recently contacted Xavier and Tulane schools of pharmacy, health and medicine and are working towards a larger session with each of these later this year.

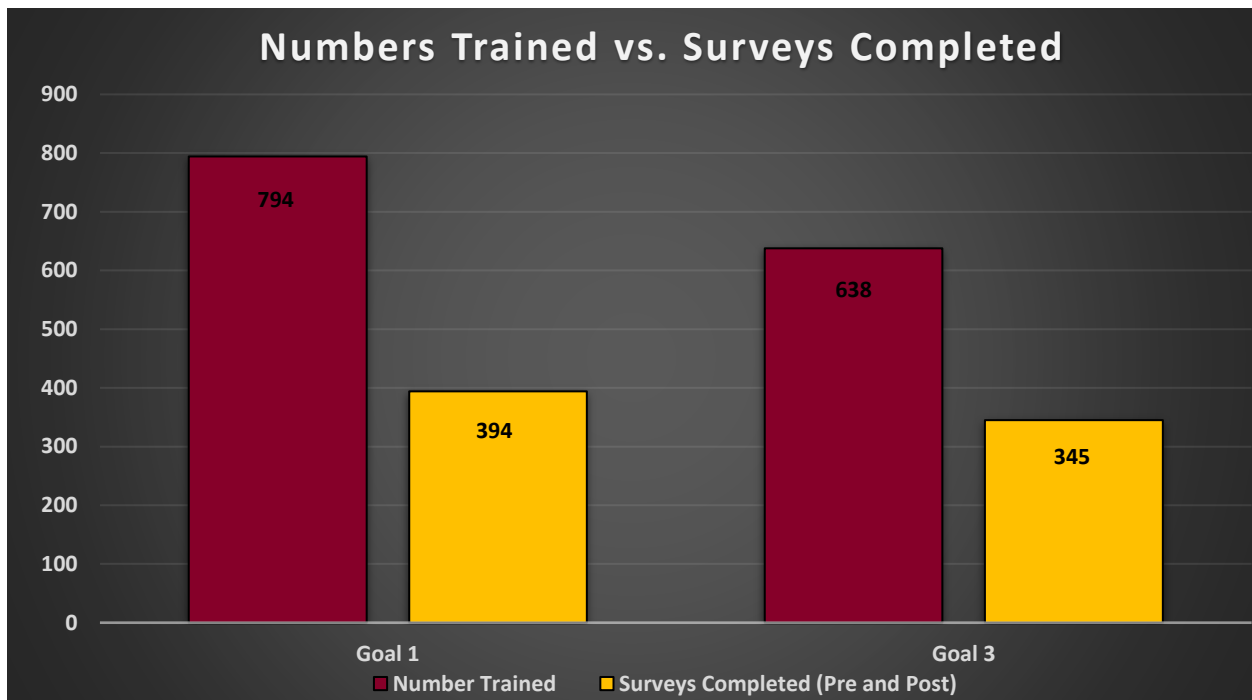
Breakdown by Location

We have continued our outreach efforts in the parishes of our original catchment, as well as the parishes in our recently expanded catchment. In the greater New Orleans area we have seen continued successes in both Goals 1 and 2, and in the Ouachita parish area surrounding Monroe we have seen the same. For our expanded catchment, we held sessions in for the first time in Lincoln parish, in two cities Ruston and Grambling where we trained fire and police professionals, as the figure below shows, this brings our total trained in our rural catchment parishes to over 300.



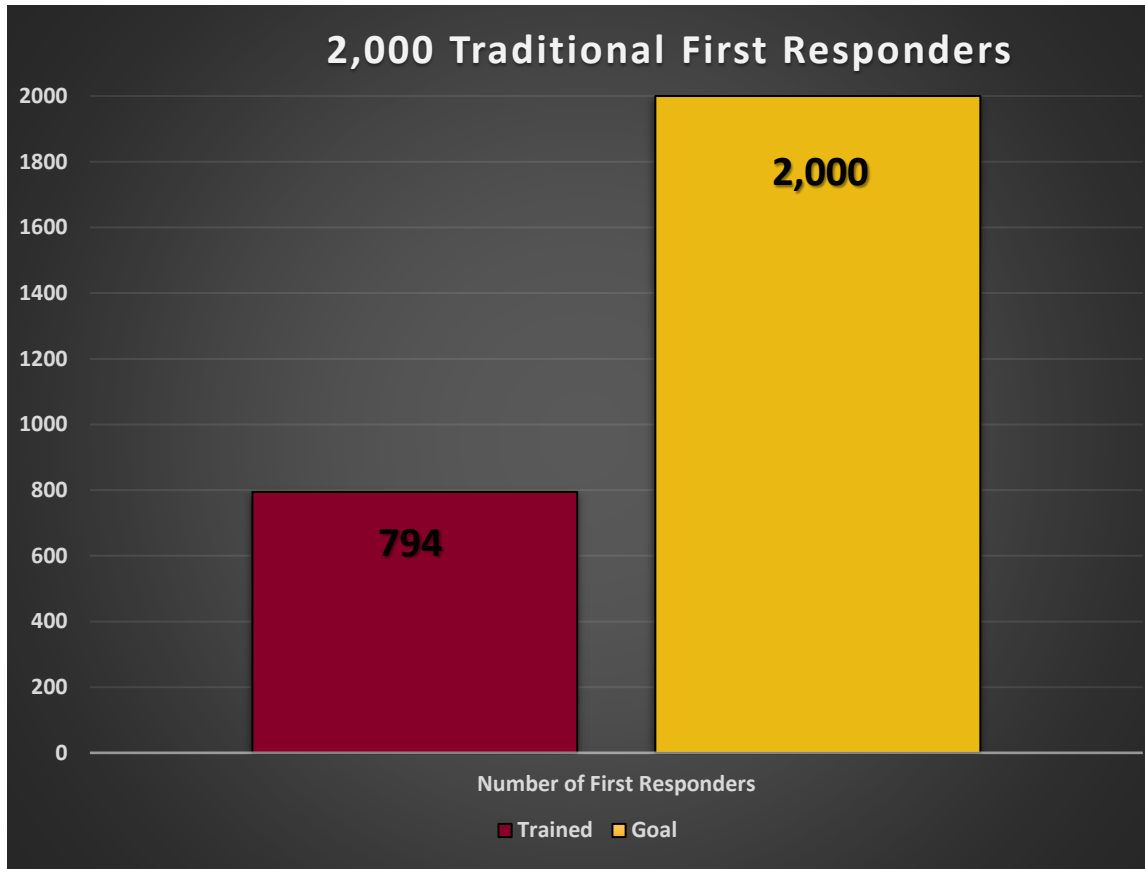
Survey Responses and Discrepancies

An important part of our program continues to be receiving completed responses from both pre- and post- training surveys, which we distribute to everyone present at our goal 1 and goal 3 sessions. We use this information to conduct statistical analyses for empirical research and to get feedback from our attendees on ways we can improve our approach. In order to get the most use out of these surveys, we try to get the total completion rate for each session as high as possible. This past quarter, we have had improved success with increasing the completion rate for goal #1 (as the figure below shows). As of now, the overall completion rate for surveys is nearly 50% for Goal 1 and 54% for Goal 3.



Goal #1: Traditional First Responders

As mentioned, our primary focus going forward continues to be to increase our outreach to traditional first responder organizations. From the beginning of the grant, our target has been to reach 2,000 first responders for the entirety of the grant. As of this quarter, we have surpassed the one-quarter mark and approaching the half-way point with nearly 40% of the overall goal achieved.



We have trained 794 individuals in total, with 104 in this quarter alone. We have continued to gather vital attitude and knowledge data from attendees using our pre- and post-training surveys. Because of this, we have some results to share from our recent training sessions from this quarter:

Knowledge of Opioid Overdoses

With a total sample of 186 attendees who completed the Opioid Overdose Knowledge Scale portions on both the pre- and post- training surveys, we found that the overall knowledge of attendees showed a statistically significant increase after the sessions.

As a reminder, the Modified OOKS (MOOKS) consists of 8 multiple choice questions, with a maximum possible score of 15. Responses were coded (0/1 where 1 point was given for each correct response) with “Don’t Know” responses excluded from the final analysis. Results from a paired samples t-test showed that there was a statistically significant increase in attendees’ knowledge about opioid overdose response as measured on the MOOKS, by an average increase of 1.35 points (a mean score of 10.96 on the pre-training; a mean score of 12.31 on the post-training; $p \leq .001$).

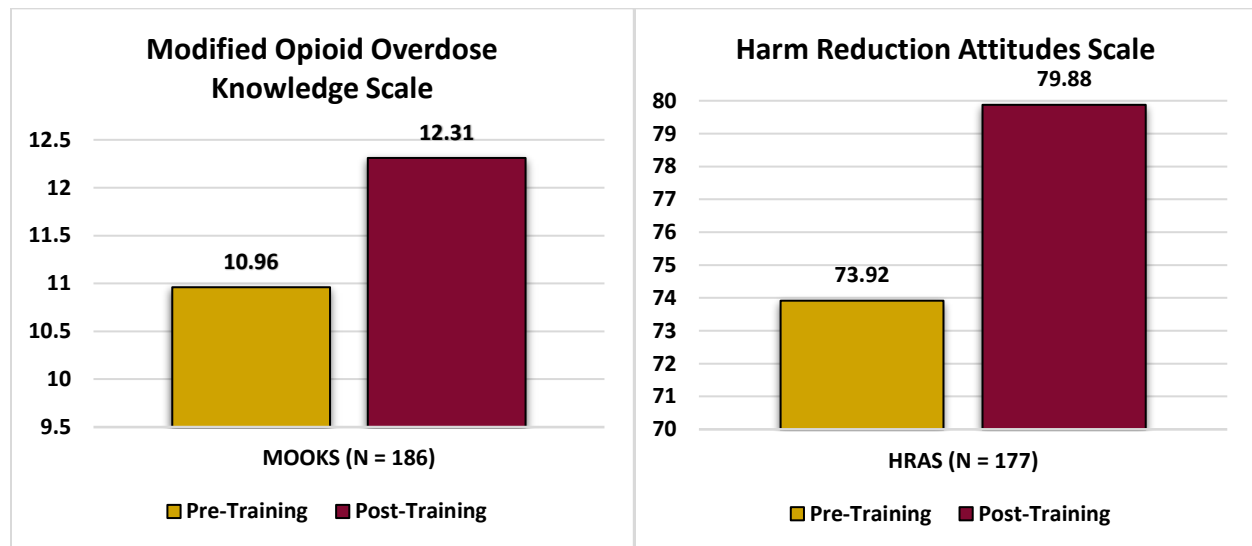
Attitudes towards Harm Reduction strategies

From a sample of 177 attendees who completed the Harm Reduction Attitudes Scale (HRAS) portions on both the pre- and post- training surveys, we found that the overall attitudes towards harm reduction strategies showed a statistically significant increase after the sessions.

Once again, the HRAS consists of 22 questions in total with ordinal responses measured on a Likert scale, with a maximum positive attitude score of 110. These responses were coded as a range from 1(Completely Disagree) to 5 (Completely Agree). Results from a paired samples t-test showed that there was a statistically significant increase in attendees' attitudes towards harm reduction as measured on the HRAS, by an average increase of 5.96 points (a mean score of 73.92 on the pre-training; a mean score of 79.88 on the post-training; $p \leq .001$).

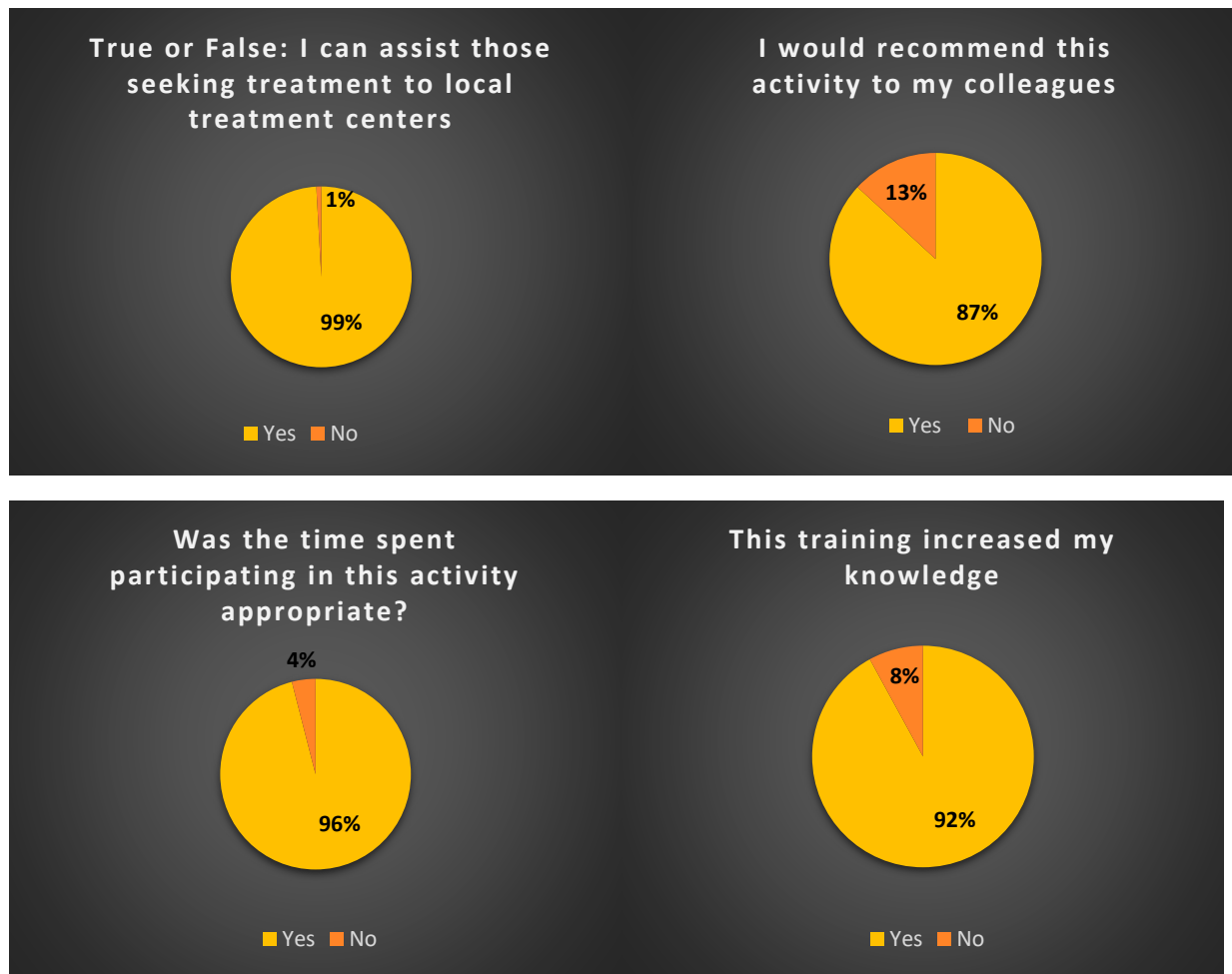
Summary of Analyses

In summary, we have found that the attendees who completed the scale portions of the surveys continue to show a measurable improvement based on the metrics we use to gauge increase. Both knowledge of opioids and responses to overdoses, as well as attitudes towards harm reduction more generally, improved significantly after the training sessions.

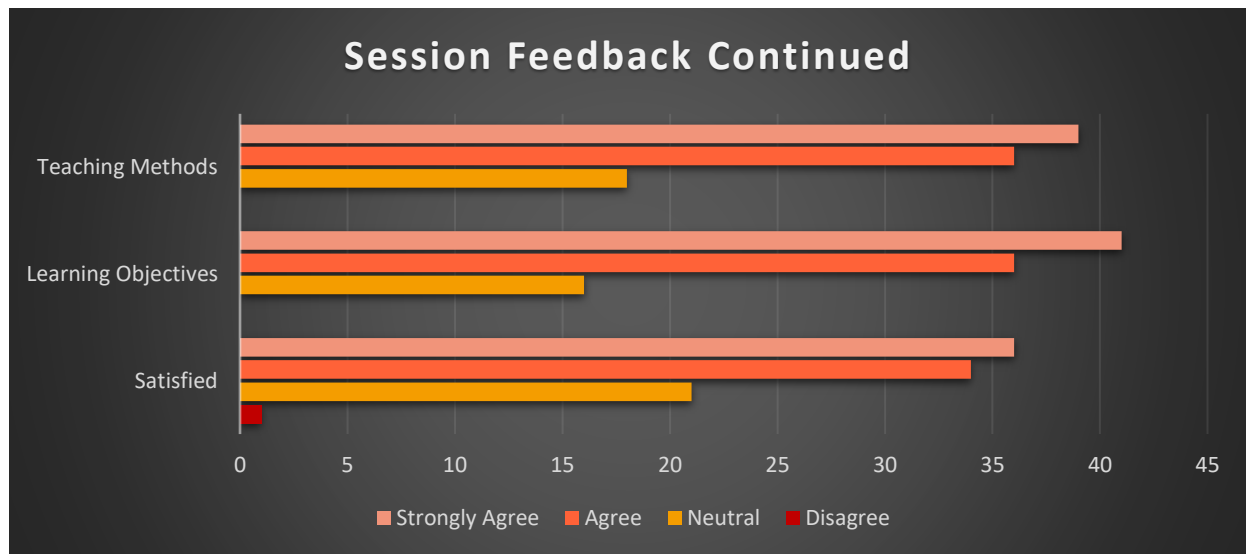


Training Session Feedback Results

The proceeding descriptive figures show how Goal 1 attendees responded to several broad yes/no questions regarding the quality of the training session they attended.



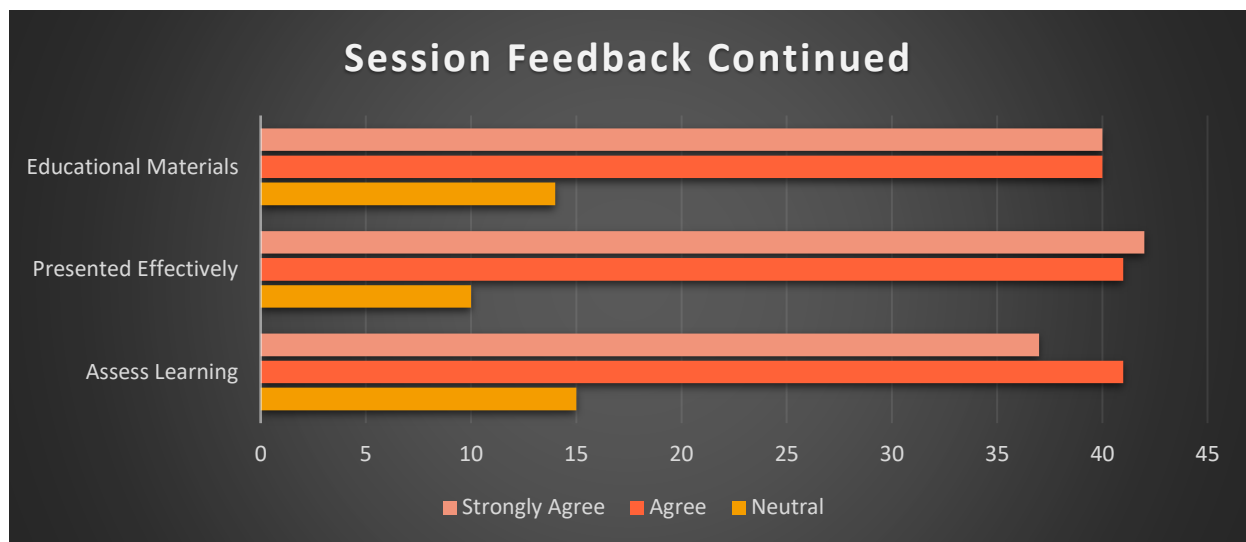
Below are summary figures showing Goal 1 attendees' attitudes towards specific aspects of the training sessions they attended; possible responses ranged from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree (no responses recorded for Strongly Disagree, and this category was therefore omitted from the figure).



1. Teaching methods were effective

2. Activity met the stated learning objectives

3. I am satisfied with the educational content of this activity

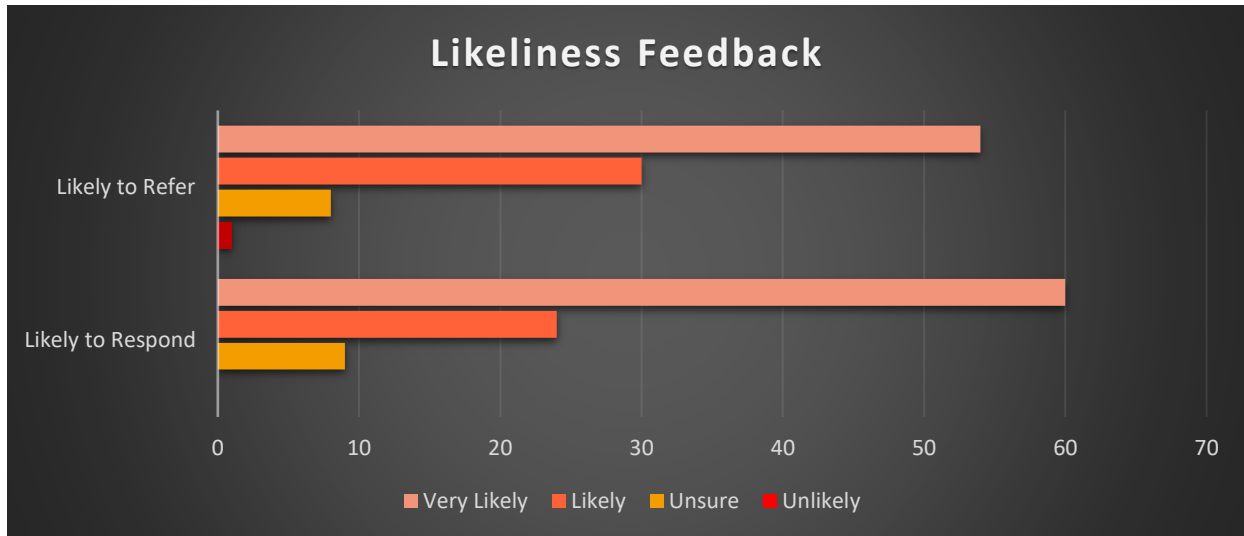


4. Educational materials were useful and of high quality

5. The faculty presented effectively

6. I was able to assess my learning during the activity

Finally, the two questions below gauge Goal 1 respondent's likeliness to respond to an overdose situation and to refer or link someone to a treatment center; possible responses ranged from Very Likely to Very Unlikely (no responses recorded for Very Unlikely, and this category was therefore omitted from the figure).



Summary of Activities for Year 3, Quarter 2

This past quarter has seen great improvements towards reaching our goals, with a renewed focus on our first goal. We have seen further connections made with first responders and reached into communities we have not yet been. We have managed to build upon last year's efforts through the work of both of our outreach coordinators, who have taken extended outreach trips in their respective geographic areas to meet with people where they are, which has led to scheduling large-scale sessions with departments we have attempted to contact for years. We believe that through these efforts, we will continue to see great improvements in the next quarter, as many of these larger sessions will be conducted in the coming months. We believe that with the incentives we have offered and the departments we have already worked with, we will see interest in our program grow.

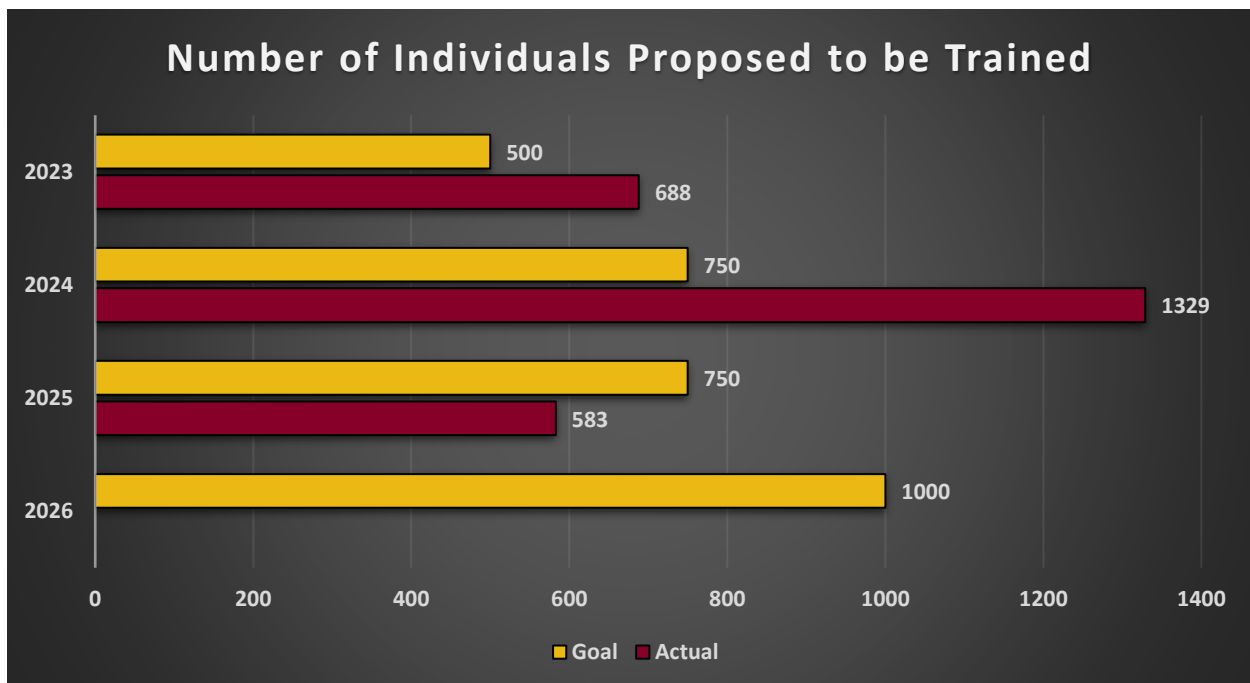
Ongoing Challenges

This year, starting in earnest this past quarter, we have truly begun to see the payoff of our outreach efforts, thanks to the work of both of our outreach coordinators. Organizations such as Monroe Police Department, New Orleans Police Department, Jefferson Parish Sheriff's Office and Ouachita Parish Sheriff's Office, all of which we have been attempting to schedule sessions with since the start of the program, have finally begun to reach out to us and collaborate with us in order to train their officers. We have also begun to see further improvements in outreach to our expanded catchment parishes for Goal 1 as well. Despite these great successes, we do not want to remain idle, and aim to continue to emphasize outreach to traditional first responders, and to overcome our primary challenge which is getting more attention on our program. We believe that as we continue to create partnerships with large first responder organizations such as those previously mentioned, that it will provide further future opportunities as we continue to have positive feedback to show for.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this quarter saw improvements towards reaching our primary goal, as well as further success in reaching the general public, including the organization of our first very own community event – iCare Fest – which we hope to re-create in future events. We have also continued to gather important data on our goal 1 sessions which have yielded promising results pointing to our success in informing first responders on opioid overdose management, and improving overall attitudes towards harm reduction approaches to dealing with opioid use disorder and reducing the stigma of substance use disorders.

Our outreach efforts are beginning to pay off and have led to further opportunities that we will continue to pursue in the following months. We are on track to surpass our yearly goal and will continue to increase our outreach across all three goals for the remainder of this year.



We would like to thank you again for your continued interest in the success of our program and any and all feedback which you may provide.