

## EXCITE team brings poverty competency workshops to public health partners

### AT A GLANCE

UI Extension's EXCITE team takes an upstream approach to an adult immunization education campaign project, building confidence in public health professionals who serve Idahoans in poverty.

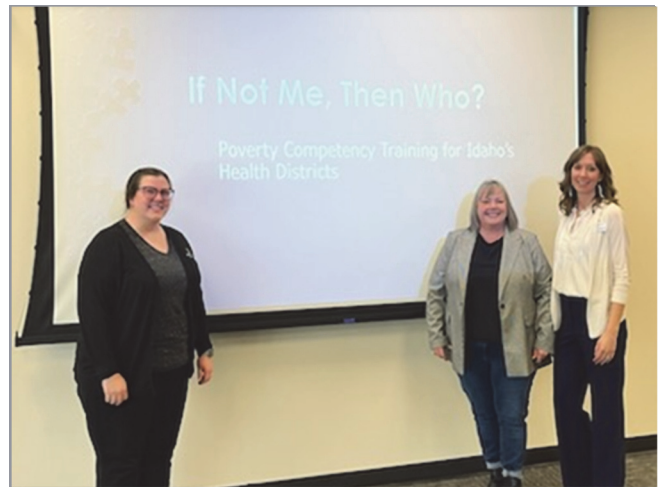
### The Situation

Eleven percent of Idaho's population live below the federal poverty level and 43% do not meet an income threshold for meeting basic survival needs. Healthcare providers and public health professionals often report feeling ineffective in their efforts to educate and engage families experiencing poverty. Evidence-based training opportunities for poverty-informed outreach strategies are limited, resulting in some policies and practices that are based on misperceptions or stereotypes rather than data.

In addition, preventive health behaviors can be challenging and out of reach when considered within the context of poverty. Families living in rural and medically underserved areas encounter a wide range of both external and internal barriers to services like regular wellness checks and immunizations.

### Our Response

As part of an 18-month adult immunization education campaign for the Extension Collaborative on Immunization Teaching and Engagement (EXCITE) program, team members completed four days of intensive training to earn certification as poverty coaches through



EXCITE team providing poverty competency training to public health staff.

Dr. Donna Beegle's organization Communication Across Barriers. The goal of the project is to focus upstream to improve outreach impacts by training public health districts in poverty-informed practices. From August 2023-March 2024, the EXCITE team provided 13 trainings to 132 employees of Southwest District Health and South Central Public Health District. Because a poverty-informed approach to immunizations and preventive health requires collaboration across sectors, participants were from various departments within the health districts. These included Women, Infants and Children (WIC), immunization and clinic services, Parents as Teachers, administration, public health preparedness and customer service.

## Program Outcomes

The EXCITE team partnered with the Idaho Office of Underserved and Rural Medical Research to create, distribute and interpret results from pre- and post-surveys offered to training participants. Surveys assessed respondents' perceptions of those who live in poverty, their confidence in working with this population and their experience with poverty itself. Respondents could also include what they were hoping to learn from the training.

Building a better understanding and effective communication, assessing resources to provide meaningful support, becoming a better advocate for those who live in poverty, and creating community and policy changes were among the top reasons for respondents' participation in the training.

Table 1. Changes in perceptions of poverty, one = strongly disagrees, six = strongly agree.

Item	Pre	Post	Change %
I believe people living in poverty have a different set of values than do other people	2.7	2.9	6.2
People living in poverty think they deserve to be supported	2.6	2.4	-6.5
People experience poverty due to circumstances beyond their control	4.1	4.2	3.2
Welfare makes people lazy	2.7	2.0	-25.5
There is a lot of fraud among welfare recipients	3.1	2.5	-18.9
I would support a program that resulted in higher taxes to support social programs for people living in poverty	3.3	3.8	13.7

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

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Results also indicated an increase in respondents' rating of their skills in serving clients experiencing poverty (Figure 1).

When considering the value and applicability of the training, 96% of respondents indicated that their organization could benefit from the training, including a 17% change in the confidence of their organization to be able to serve those who live in poverty.

Overall, 100% of respondents agreed that the training improved their confidence in serving clients who are experiencing poverty, and that participation was a valuable use of their time.

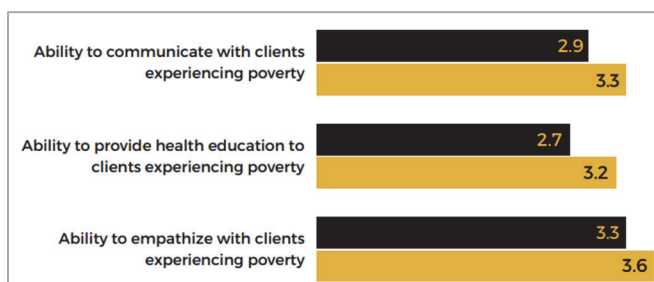


Figure 1. Skills in being able to serve clients experiencing poverty, one = no skills, five = extremely skilled.

## The Future

The EXCITE team will continue to coach partners at Southwest District Health and South Central Public Health District in the implementation of poverty-informed practices in their immunization education efforts. Communication strategies, trust building and resource diversification are of particular focus.

## Cooperators and Co-Sponsors

Extension Collaborative on Immunization Teaching and Engagement (EXCITE) is funded through an Interagency Agreement with the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.