

## Person-Centered Care Opens New Doors

*By Nancy Hickey, ESCCI Staff Writer*

The philosophy of embracing professional development for staff members enhances and supports our work with elders and people with disabilities. Betty Gray, *Human Resources Director*, said, “We are committed to supporting staff development through both internal and external training opportunities. Investing in employee growth aligns with our philosophy of promoting from within whenever possible.”

One of the many learning opportunities available to staff members is the CADER (Center for Aging Disability Education Research) Person-Centered Case Management Certificate program through Boston University’s School of Social Work. This certificate program addresses a wide range of topics, including the ways in which an individual’s cultural, ethnic, or religious background, sexual orientation, or gender identity can influence the experiences of aging and living with a disability.

Mary Goodrich and Sofya Mann, who both serve in the role of *Geriatric Services Support Coordinator*, are two of the eight staff members who recently completed the Person-Centered Case Management Certificate program. Mary and Sofya each devoted more than five months to completing this intensive 24 hour, online and self-directed certificate program, which included quizzes and discussion groups, by finding free time to work on it when possible. They both believe that the program gave them valuable insight into how to best advocate for clients, while respecting each person’s right to control their own destiny and to feel included and heard.

Mary Goodrich, who holds a B.A. in Communication with a minor in Psychology from Bridgewater State University, who noted that she used to feel like, “it’s my job to fix everything,” said that she learned that “the person has the ability to make their own choices even if the person is not always making the best decisions – only with the exception of when they are in direct danger to themselves or others. It is their decision.” Mary also found the practical tips for effective communication with consumers and families presented in the program to be helpful. She added, “When meeting with family, always talk to the person who is receiving care. Sometimes the family acts as a conduit. Be aware of your own hidden biases and act without judgement.”

Sofya Mann, who is a native of Moscow and earned an M.B.A. in Human Resources Management from Fitchburg State University, noted that she learned a great deal about cognitive impairment, Medicaid/Medicare, planning the end-of-life journey and hospice care from the course. Sofya said that she has also begun to implement the person-centered approach with clients and added, “I appreciate this opportunity and would participate in other programs that would give me more practical knowledge.”