Final Report

Getting Older in New Jersey (GO-NJ) ECHO

June 2025 - February 2026



Rutgers Project ECHO

NEW JERSEY HUMAN SERVICES
DoAS
Division of Aging Services

APS
ADULT PROTECTIVE SERVICES



Getting Older in New Jersey (GO-NJ) ECHO Program Goals

This report details the activities and outcomes of the Getting Older in New Jersey (GO-NJ) ECHO program, covering the period from June 1st, 2025 through March 31st, 2026. The program was supported by the New Jersey Department of Human Services, Division of Aging Services and Adult Protective Services (APS).

The GO-NJ ECHO program is dedicated to addressing gaps in knowledge about adult protective services (APS) processes, and mandatory reporting requirements while increasing collaboration with healthcare providers and APS to protect vulnerable adults effectively. By facilitating virtual connections between providers and APS specialists, the program aims to improve the understanding of APS services. This ongoing initiative fosters vital collaboration among clinicians and ensures access to specialist knowledge, with a key focus on understanding resources available in each county in New Jersey. Through the discussion of real-world cases and the sharing of best practices, participants gain valuable insights into APS processes and the ability to address challenges related to aging and navigating ethical dilemmas.

Series Highlights

Creating Better Understanding of What APS Does in NJ

Over the course of 10 sessions, the GO-NJ ECHO played a pivotal role in deepening statewide understanding of Adult Protective Services by bringing together professionals from multiple disciplines to learn directly about APS responsibilities and processes. Through case-based learning, expert presentations, and open discussion, participants gained a clearer picture of how APS investigates concerns, supports vulnerable adults, coordinates with partner agencies, and upholds safety and dignity across New Jersey. This shared learning environment helped foster an understanding of APS, strengthened cross-system collaboration, and will strengthen New Jersey's ability to protect vulnerable adults.

Partnerships from Series Leaders, Guests, and Case Presenters

The success of the GO-NJ ECHO was rooted in the remarkable collaboration among its series leaders and partners, bringing together expertise from APS, Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School, Rutgers School of Social Work, and New Jersey Advocates for Aging Well. This multidisciplinary foundation was further strengthened by guest speakers from the Division of Developmental Disabilities, The Arc of New Jersey, a Forensic Nurse, law enforcement, the Office of the Public Guardian and practicing physicians who presented real-world cases. Their combined contributions created a comprehensive learning experience that reflected the true complexity of protecting vulnerable adults in New Jersey. By combining clinical insight, social work knowledge, legal perspectives, and frontline APS practice, the series offered a richer, more holistic understanding of how systems must work together to ensure safety, dignity, and quality care for vulnerable adults across the state.

Sustained High Attendance

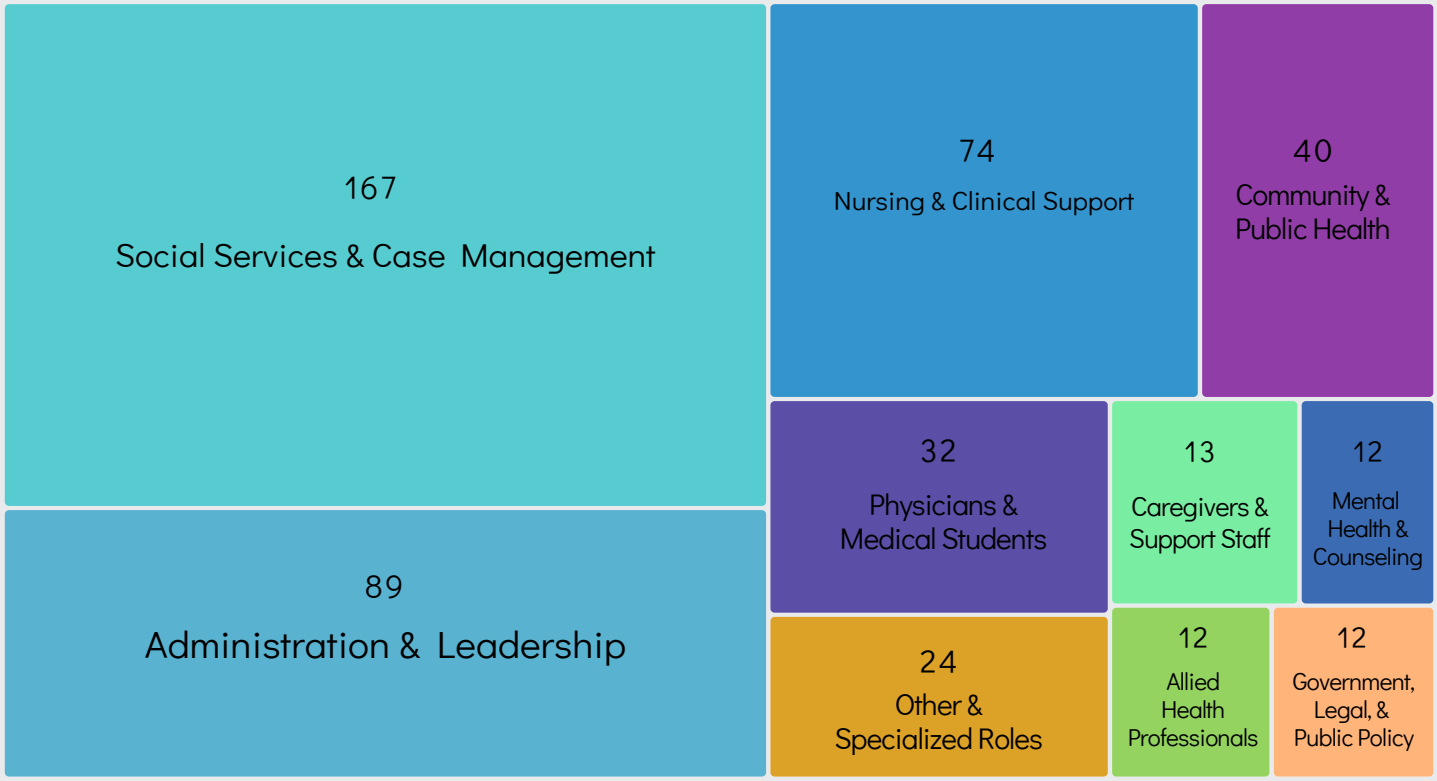
The GO-NJ ECHO series showed exceptional engagement, averaging 143 participants across 10 sessions, demonstrating a strong statewide commitment to learning about Adult Protective Services as well as improving the protection and well being of vulnerable adults in New Jersey. This high level of consistent attendance reflects broad interdisciplinary dedication to enhancing skills, sharing experiences, and building a unified learning community focused on safety, advocacy, and best practices. Participation like this not only elevates the awareness of APS interventions but also reinforces the importance and impact of continued collaborative, accessible training initiatives like GO-NJ ECHO.



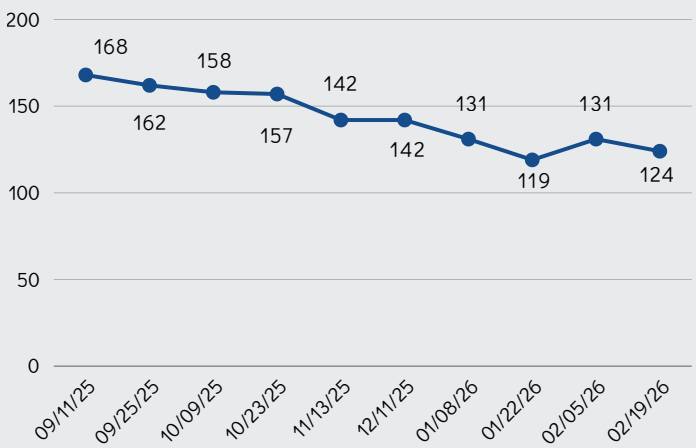
Registration & Attendance Data

With over 475 registrants as of the final session, participants of the GO-NJ ECHO come from a wide range of professional roles, fostering a collaborative and diverse learning environment.

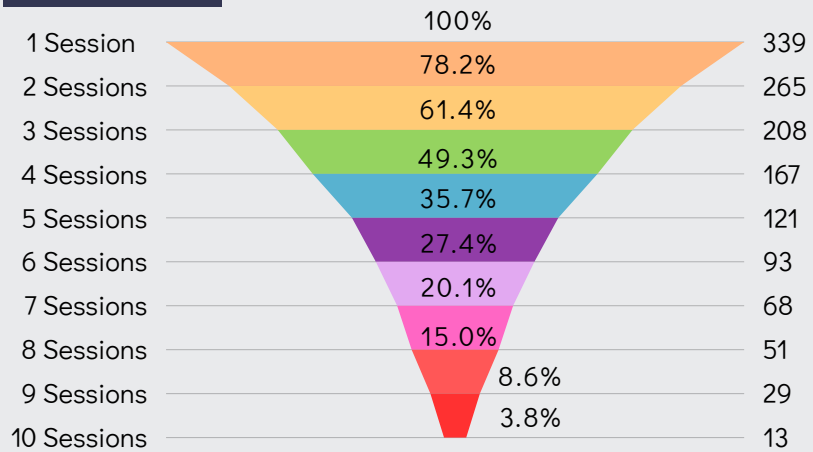
Professional Role Breakdown



Attendance



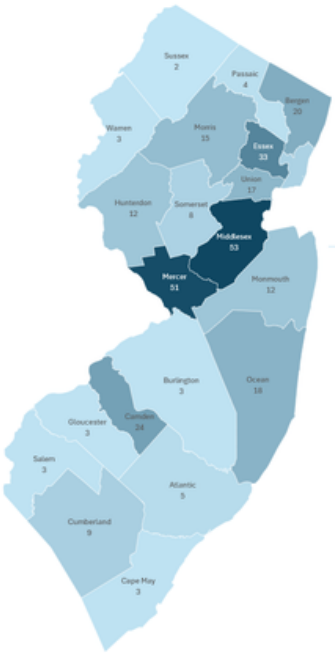
Retention



Total Sessions	10
Average Zoom Attendance	143
Total Unique Attendees	339

ECHO Reach

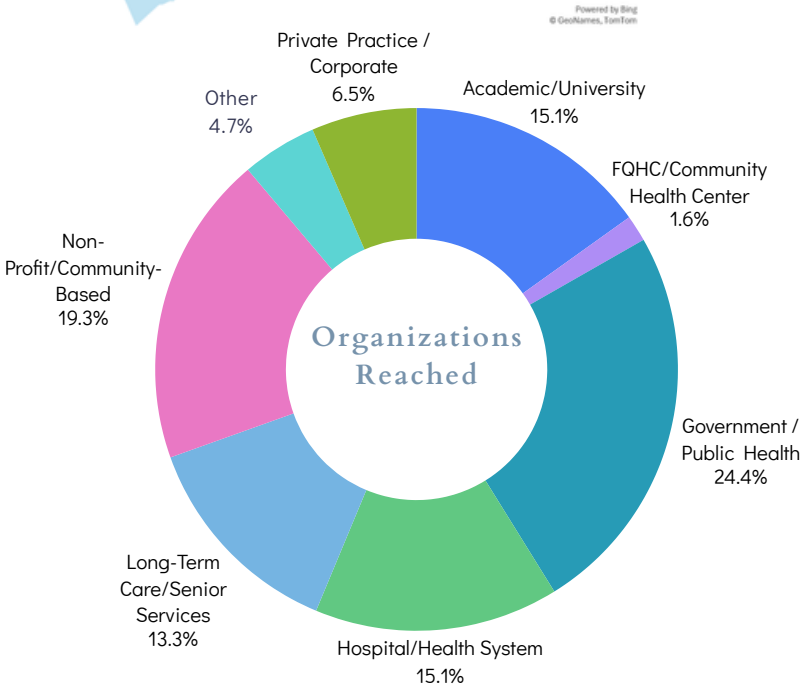
- Registrants in the GO-NJ ECHO represented various locations across New Jersey, reflecting the program's extensive reach and impact throughout the state.



Central	154	50.3%
North	102	33.3%
South	50	16.3%

- The ECHO also achieved national reach, with participants registering from 8 U.S. states and Washington, D.C. demonstrating a larger interest in caring for vulnerable adults beyond New Jersey.





- The GO-NJ ECHO engaged a diverse range of professional settings, including hospitals, community-based organizations, schools, state/government agencies, and medical practices such as Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs). This variety of settings underscores the program's broad interprofessional impact.

Program Evaluation

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Throughout the GO-NJ ECHO, participants are surveyed to assess their satisfaction, knowledge gains, self-efficacy, and intent to implement evidence-based guidelines in their practice.

Pre-Series	150 Responses
Post-Session	525 Responses
Post-Series	111 Responses

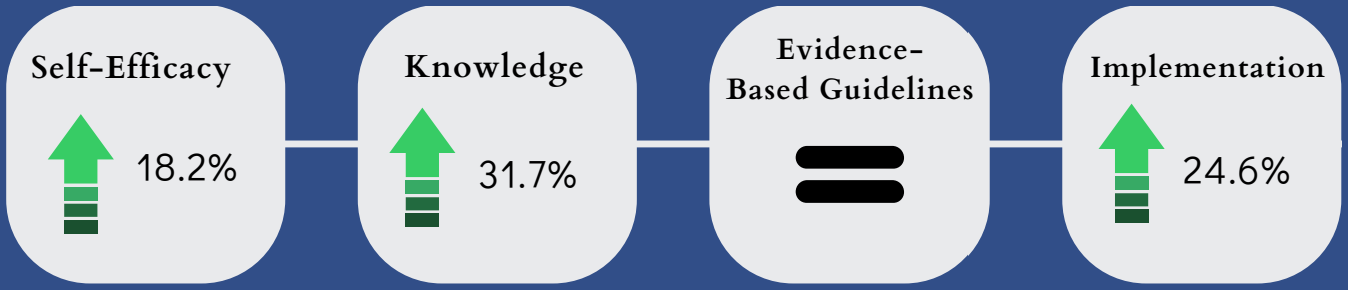
Participant Satisfaction and Feedback

- Post Session surveys showed that across the ten sessions:
  - 93% of respondents agreed that the didactic presenter(s) was effective
  - 93% agreed that the series leaders worked well as a team
  - 94% agreed that all series leaders were using person-centered and strengths-based language during our sessions
  - 23% planned to implement a change in their workplace based on the presentation and/or seek additional information about the topics presented
  - 86% agreed the session addressed the needs of people of various identity groups
  - 86% believed the sessions addressed root causes of health disparities and how to mitigate or improve outcomes
  - 88% agreed that sessions were evidence and scientifically based
  - 91% felt sessions were free of bias or commercial influence
  - 90% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that each session met ALL of the learning objectives stated
  - 95% of attendees would recommend or strongly recommend this training

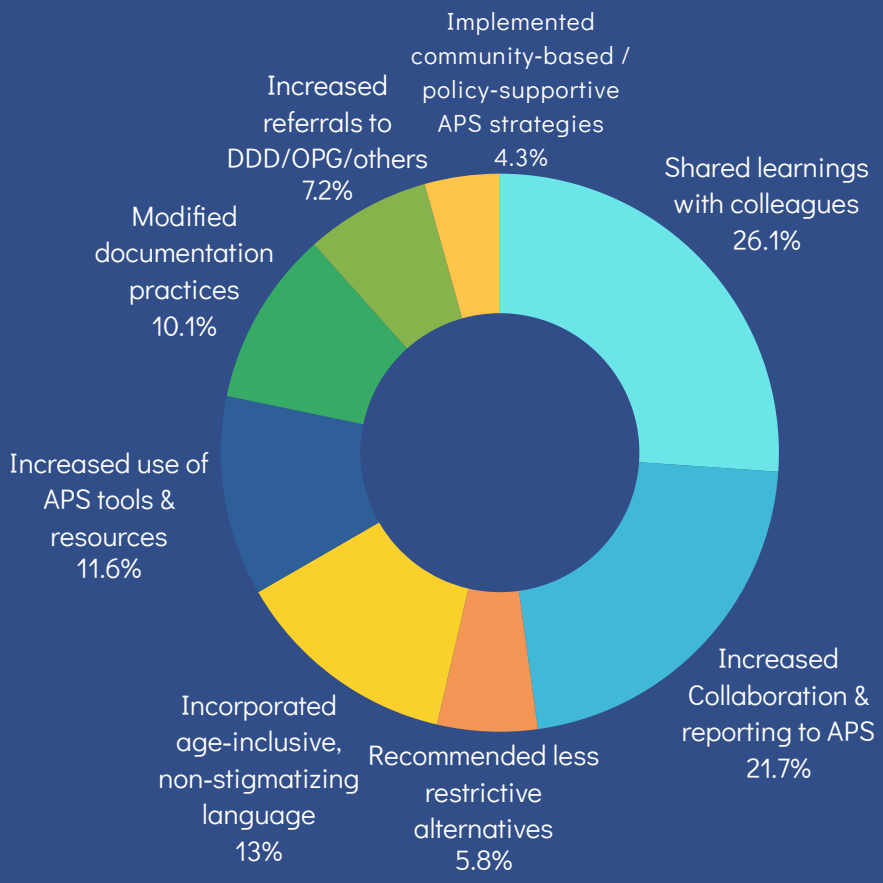
Impact on Knowledge, Confidence & Implementation

- Post-Series Assessment Insights
  - 96% of respondents felt the series met or exceeded their expectations.
  - The 18.2% increase in self-efficacy indicates that participants feel more capable of creating change within their own settings.
  - The knowledge gains of 31.7% reflect an improved understanding of what APS is and how it protects vulnerable adults in New Jersey.
  - The 24.6% increase in implementation shows a substantial improvement in participants' ability to apply what they learned and make changes in their workplace.
  - There was no significant change in understanding of evidence-based guidelines, suggesting a strong baseline knowledge of participants and provides an opportunity to strengthen this component in a future series.

Analysis of 82 matched pre- and post-assessment responses showed significant gains:



Participant Practice Changes



- Participants reported after the GO-NJ ECHO which options they intend to certainly or probably implement in their practice

Increased Collaboration & Reporting to APS

- Participants plan to:
  - Follow up on all suspected cases
  - Consult APS even when risk is uncertain
  - Educate staff on APS processes
  - Improve screening for APS involvement
  - Make more consistent referrals to APS

Updated or Created APS-Related Workflows

- Includes:
  - Revising existing documents
  - Updating forms
  - Adding preferred name/gender fields
  - Creating standardized APS referral procedures

Modified Documentation Practices

- Examples include:
  - Documenting who is interviewed and involved in care
  - Adding language-assist technology usage
  - Including APS-related screening fields (safety, finances, socialization)
  - Ensuring immediate documentation and reporting of suspected abuse

Alternatives to Guardianship

- Commitments included:
  - Options counseling
  - Participant choice documentation
  - Supporting individuals in self-advocacy

Increased Referrals to Other Organizations

- Participants shared:
  - Greater referrals to DDD and the Office of the Public Guardian
  - Referrals to nursing homes with behavioral health beds
  - Referral pathways for IDD/developmental disabilities

Other Practice Changes Reported

- Continuing education on aging in NJ
- Improved screening for older adults at admission
- Discussions about decision-making capacity
- Educating medical staff

Participant Testimonials Post-Series

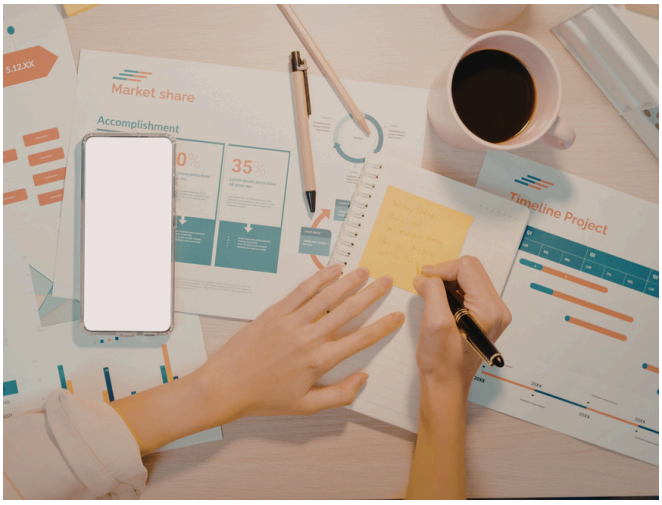
"So much information was shared by many experts across a variety of professions which really helped show the importance of the topics put forth."	"[I] obtained a better understanding of the resources available through APS and how to collaborate among community partners and stakeholders."
"There were a lot of real-life examples and guest speakers from agencies that provided direct insight."	"I appreciated the knowledge shared by the speakers of this session and the engagement promoted within participants."
"I came into the series thinking I had an understanding of APS... but I gained knowledge and further understood processes."	"Reframing language for and with the aging population allows for greater engagement and positive outcomes. Words matter."
"I got all the information I have been trying to know from the meetings"	"I liked the the openness to ask questions and ability to review everything that was discussed throughout the series."
"This series created a venue for great networking, which helps to improve outcomes for those we serve."	"As someone who is getting older and living in NJ, there were so many opportunities I did not know about."
"I thought this experience was going to be good, and it truly was."	"So well organized and executed; knowledgeable and engaging speakers, great input from a large audience."

Accessible Lasting Resources

Session Recordings and Materials

Participants who registered for the series will continue to have access to our extensive resource library until February 2027. They can watch past recordings of sessions, pull up presentation slides, view session resource documents, and revisit cases along with the recommendations compiled by our series leaders.





Curated Resources

Housed in the resource library is a folder full of resources that have been hand selected from series leaders. These include handouts, information guides, and even a link to an evolving toolkit an APS or related field worker can use in their practice. All materials can be distributed to individuals in various settings looking to learn more about APS and protecting vulnerable adults.

Highlight Reels

ECHO brings together a unique team of series leaders who are experts in their field. While our sessions are jam-packed with useful information, certain moments stood out. We crafted 5-minute highlight reels to spotlight moments that everyone should see. These can be used to quickly refresh on certain topics or to give an opportunity to preview the series to interested colleagues looking for professional development.

All of the above can be found in our Resource Library. Click here to access them.



Future Directions for APS and ECHO

Feedback from participants highlights a strong desire to continue the GO-NJ ECHO series with APS, emphasizing the value of deeper learning, case-based discussion, and practical guidance on complex issues encountered in the field. Topics suggested by our participants point to a desire to learn more about palliative care and Medicaid-related services, legal options relevant to APS interventions, worker protection, and navigating resources, especially in long term care settings.

What topics would you like to see covered in a future series?

Palliative care discussions	mental and capacity determination
Medicaid Palliative Care	Everything was appopriately explained and understood.
More about legal options	Mental health and Cognitive Issues, over lap and how to distinguish between the two.
Grants	Intimate Partner Violence/Sexual Violence Children with Disabilities who have Complex/Long-Term Medical Needs Trauma Informed Care for Helping Professionals
n/a	
Protection of APS Workers	Long term care resources
Access and barriers to healthcare for older New Jersey residents Housing affordability and aging in place policies Transportation challenges for older adults	more case studies
	Mental Illness, and Domestic Violence topics.



Respondents also identified a need for expanded training on mental health concerns, particularly distinguishing cognitive decline, as well as trauma-informed care, intimate partner and sexual violence, and the unique needs of adults with disabilities who require long-term medical support. Broader systemic issues such as healthcare access, housing affordability, and transportation barriers for older New Jersey residents were also noted as areas of interest for deeper learning. Participants expressed interest in applied learning through more case studies, reinforcing that future sessions should remain practical, interdisciplinary, and responsive to real-world challenges. Together, these insights underscore the continued importance of the GO-NJ ECHO series as a platform for skill-building, collaboration, and strengthening APS practice across the state.

OUR SUPER TEAM



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Thank you!

Thank you for such a successful ECHO series. Together, we built a strong, engaged learning community, an achievement that reflects the deep commitment across New Jersey to protecting vulnerable adults and desire to work with Adult Protective Services. Through ten sessions of shared learning, collaborative discussion, and expertise from APS leaders, academic partners, advocates, physicians, and state agencies, we enhanced statewide understanding of what APS can do for vulnerable adults and reinforced the power of cross-system collaboration. We appreciate your dedication, participation, and willingness to embody the spirit of the All Teach, All Learn ECHO model. Thank you for making this series impactful, meaningful, and truly community driven. We hope that this is the first in many successful collaborations between APS and Rutgers Project ECHO!

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https://projectecho.rutgers.edu/