



**Future  
Skills**  
Centre

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# **Be EPIC: Dementia Training for Mid- Career Workers**

**The  
project**

Be  
EPIC  
is  
an  
innovative  
program  
that  
trains  
personal  
support  
workers  
(PSWs)  
caring  
for  
persons  
living  
with  
dementia.  
Many  
PSWs  
are  
at  
mid-  
career  
having  
transitioned  
from  
other  
sectors,  
and  
few  
have  
received  
adequate  
dementia  
skills  
development  
training.

## Partners

Western University   Motive.io

Sam Katz Community Health and  
Aging Research Unit

Community Training and  
Development Centre in  
Northumberland County

McCormick Dementia Services

**Participants** personal support  
workers

**\$1.44 million**

## Locations

Ontario

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## Topics

Sectors

Tech and Automation

Canada's population of people living with dementia is increasing rapidly, and communicating about their care needs can be difficult. Care that is not person-centered is task-focused, and can result in expressions of distress by persons living with dementia, sometimes leading to elder abuse. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the need to invest in PSWs as key members of health care teams and providers of meaningful

social  
interaction  
for  
persons  
living  
with  
dementia.

The  
Future  
Skills  
Centre  
is  
investing  
\$1.02  
million  
in  
the  
expansion  
of  
this  
project,  
following  
an  
initial  
investment  
of  
\$418,717  
in  
the  
first  
phase.

**Evaluation  
Report:  
Dementia  
Training  
for  
Mid-  
Career  
Workers**

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**Skills  
training  
provided**

Be  
EPIC  
is  
a  
two-  
day  
program  
that  
teaches  
PSWs  
in  
the  
dementia  
care  
field  
to  
use  
person-  
centered  
communication.  
The  
added  
phase  
of  
the  
project  
involves  
using  
highly  
interactive  
virtual  
reality  
(VR)  
simulations  
to  
teach  
person-  
centered  
communication  
skills.  
It  
incorporates  
the  
social  
history  
of  
clients  
into  
care  
routines  
and  
takes  
into  
account  
the  
environment  
when  
caring  
for  
people  
living  
with  
dementia.

By leveraging VR technology, the program allows PSWs who are culturally and linguistically diverse to gain the skills necessary to relate to people living with dementia and provide quality care. This in turn can build confidence and decrease stress among PSWs.

## **Early results**

The first phase of the program tested and evaluated the training through the engagement of 48 participants in an urban setting (London, Ontario). The PSW participants reported more confidence and demonstrated using more person-centered communication as part of their interactions with simulated persons living with dementia.

**Next  
phase**



The next phase of the project aims to transform the training experience for frontline health providers by scaling the use of virtual reality to test its effectiveness and identify factors influencing its implementation.

The  
Be  
EPIC  
project  
is  
part  
of  
a  
larger  
program  
of  
research  
that  
will  
include  
managers  
in  
the  
program  
to  
allow  
them  
to  
better  
understand  
the  
benefits  
of  
the  
VR  
training,  
letting  
them  
encourage  
their  
PSW  
teams  
to  
follow  
the  
program  
and  
setting  
the  
appropriate  
workplace  
conditions  
for  
PSWs  
to  
use  
person-  
centered  
communication.

## Evaluation Strategy

This project will be evaluated using tools and approaches aligned with its goals, context, and stage of development. The evaluation will focus on generating the right evidence at the right moment to move the intervention forward. [Read more about our evaluation strategy.](#)



The Future Skills Centre acknowledges that the Anishinaabe, Mississaugas and Haudenosaunee share a special relationship to the 'Dish With One Spoon Territory,' where our office is located, bound to share and protect the land. As a pan-Canadian initiative, FSC operates on the traditional territory of many Indigenous nations across Turtle Island, the name given to the North American continent by some Indigenous peoples. We are grateful for the opportunity to work in this territory and commit ourselves to learning about our shared history and doing our part towards reconciliation.

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