

REAL LIFE Evaluation: Final Report

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CENTER FOR CRIME, EQUITY AND
JUSTICE RESEARCH AND POLICY

C H R I S T O P H E R N E W P O R T U N I V E R S I T Y

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

REAL LIFE was founded in 2016 to help men and women leaving incarceration in Richmond, Virginia. The organization has grown considerably and now has a broader mission of creating pathways for individuals that desire change so that they can attain and sustain a thriving life. The organization provides an array of services to individuals that are battling addiction, facing housing insecurity, navigating community reentry post-incarceration, and/or dealing with other challenges. In an effort to evaluate their work and impact, REAL LIFE leaders first entered into a contract with Christopher Newport University's Center for Crime, Equity, and Justice Research and Policy (CCEJ) for an initial mixed-method evaluation of their programming. The results of this evaluation were detailed in a final report delivered in June 2024. REAL LIFE then entered into a second contract with (CCEJ) to continue evaluating their programming, as well as their fatherhood sessions. Following the executive summary, the full report details the results of this second evaluation.

I. Methodology

A mixed-methods research design was used for the second evaluation of REAL LIFE's programming and services. The quantitative portion of the evaluation involved a series of survey questions that participants completed throughout the program and then continued to complete post-program completion. Specifically, participants completed a survey before beginning the REAL LIFE programming. They then completed surveys after the completion of modules 1-6, 7-12, 13-18, and 19-23. Participants will continue to complete surveys 3 months, 6 months, 9 months, and 12 months post-program completion. The qualitative portion of the evaluation involved open ended questions that participants answered within each survey. The quantitative results were analyzed using a series of basic descriptive statistical analysis techniques. The qualitative results were analyzed using a directed thematic content analysis technique.

II. Participant Demographics and Experiences Prior to REAL LIFE

A plurality of participants were 31-40 years old, with the next most common age group being 51-60 years old. The majority of the participants identified as a male/man and White or Caucasian. A slight majority of participants were not in a relationship at the time of the first survey, and the majority had children. A majority of participants also had a high school diploma, GED, and/or had completed some college. Prior to beginning the program, a slight majority of participants had been in jail or prison prior to the program, with the next most common status being unhoused. Nearly all of the participants were employed full-time, and the majority of those individuals credited REAL LIFE with helping them find their employment.

III. Perceptions Prior to the Program

Prior to engaging in program, participants answered questions about their knowledge of various topics that would be later covered in the modules. Participants were most confident in their knowledge on the importance of sobriety, the importance of meaningful work, how to recognize triggers in their life and respond to those triggers, the importance of a functioning family, and how to successfully keep a job. Participants were least confident in their knowledge about how to avoid negative lifestyle decisions, how to change negative self-talk to positive self-talk, how to properly deal with their emotions or feelings, knowing about how their motivation can change over time, and how to avoid negative lifestyle decisions.

IV. Results Post-Completion of Modules 1-6

The next survey was conducted after completion of the sixth. In this survey, the vast majority of participants expressed confidence in applying the lessons, and skills, learned. For example, they were confident to be motivated to make positive choices in the future, recognize how things impact their motivation, maintain sobriety, use positive affirmations about themselves, change negative thinking, recognize triggers in their life and respond to those triggers in a positive way.

V. Results Post-Completion of Modules 7-12

The surveys completed after modules 7-12 continued to yield high confidence rates of participants' ability to implement the knowledge and skills learned. Participants expressed high rates of confidence in getting treatment for their addiction, seeking out help if they relapsed, recognizing unhealthy relationships in the future, and preparing for a job interview. Participants were also confident in their ability to execute key tenants of getting a job, ranging from searching for the job to applying and interviewing for it.

VI. Results Post-Completion of Modules 13-18

The next point of survey completion occurred after finishing modules 13-18. Participants exhibited high levels of confidence being professional in an interview, recognizing how their habits and routines impact their behavior, changing habits

related to addiction, making good decisions in the future, and exhibiting the correct direction in life for their children.

VII. Results Post-Completion of Modules 19-23

The final survey was completed after module 23. In the first part of the survey, participants responded directly to the information covered in the modules. They continued to be confident in their ability to implement the lessons learned. Participants were particularly confident turning to faith when they need it, staying strong when things get difficult, and handling stress better and making changes when needed.

I. Fatherhood Sessions

A series of questions were asked to measure the impact of participant perceptions of the fatherhood sessions offered in this curriculum. Of the participants that attended fatherhood sessions, they described learning a number of new things that helped motivate them and teach them how to be a better father. They also commonly described their relationship with their children as being in a good place now and it had changed for the better.

II. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

REAL LIFE is focused upon creating pathways for individuals to attain and sustain a thriving life. They offer an array of services to help individuals post-incarceration, as well as those that have faced challenges like addiction. The work of REAL LIFE began in the Richmond City Jail but now includes community-based recovery housing, extensive services for any adults that want change in their life, and gun violence interruption. This expansion of services has coincided with an increase in the number of individuals served by the organization and their programming.

REAL LIFE wants to continue to evaluate their programming to assure it is helping impact participants in the ways intended. This is the second full evaluation of REAL LIFE programming. The first evaluation found that participants were consistently highly satisfied with the learning modules and confident in their ability to implement what they learned successfully in their life moving forward. This second evaluation continues to measure the modules impact in a similar manner. Evaluations of this nature help program leaders better understand the impact of their services. It also helps them identify what successful services can be expanded, as well as what services need improvement. This provides extensive benefits internally. It also helps other organizations learn how to replicate REAL LIFE's most impactful programs and services.

This report details the results from REAL LIFE's second full evaluation. It includes a continued evaluation of REAL LIFE modules, with an additional focus on fatherhood sessions offered to participants. Researchers at Christopher Newport University's Center for Crime, Equity, and Justice (CCEJ) worked with REAL LIFE to design a set of performance measures. The measures gauge participant perceptions of how much they learned in each module, their confidence implementing the skills and knowledge acquired, as well as their overall satisfaction with the program.

III. METHODOLOGY

A mixed-methods research design was implemented for the REAL LIFE program evaluation. A convergent parallel design was used in which participants completed the quantitative and qualitative portions of the survey at the same time. The surveys primarily consisted of questions that produced responses that were analyzed quantitatively. They also included various open-ended questions that were analyzed qualitatively to provide needed context. The quantitative analysis consisted of various descriptive statistical analysis techniques, while the qualitative analysis was executed doing a directed content analysis.

The surveys were completed by participations once they finished modules 1-6, 7-12, 13-18, and 19-23. Prior to beginning the first module, participants completed a survey that asked

questions pertaining to demographic variables, how they were referred to the program, details of their previous and current living experiences, and questions pertaining to their family. The surveys administered immediately after each group of modules asked participants questions about how much they learned about the topics covered in each module, their confidence level implementing the lessons learned going forward, and their overall satisfaction with the modules. In the final survey completed, there were questions about the fatherhood program offered by REAL LIFE. These questions gauged participants' engagement with these sessions, the most important lessons learned in the sessions, and how the sessions impacted the relationships with their children. It is important to note that in various parts of the report, the total rates within each set of results do not always add up to 100%. It was not uncommon for participants to skip a question and/or had the option to select multiple answers.

IV. RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

As of February 2026, 58 individuals had completed the pre-program survey. 30 individuals had completed the survey following modules 1-6, 28 individuals had completed the survey following modules 7-12, 18 individuals had completed the survey following modules 13-18, and 16 individuals had completed the survey following modules 19-23.

Approximately 42% of participants were 31-40 years old, 34% were 51-60 years old, 22% were 41-50 years old, and 1% were 26-30 years old. In regard to gender identity, approximately 65% of participants identified as male/man, 32% identified as female/woman, and less than 1% identified as non-binary and/or other. In terms of race/ethnicity, approximately 66% of participants were White or Caucasian, 26% were Black or African American, 3% were Asian or Asian American, and 5% identified multiracial. In regard to relationship status, approximately 53% of participants were not with someone, 26% were dating someone or engaged, 12% were married, and the remaining participants preferred to not answer. Figure 1-4 details these results.

Figure 1: Age of Participants

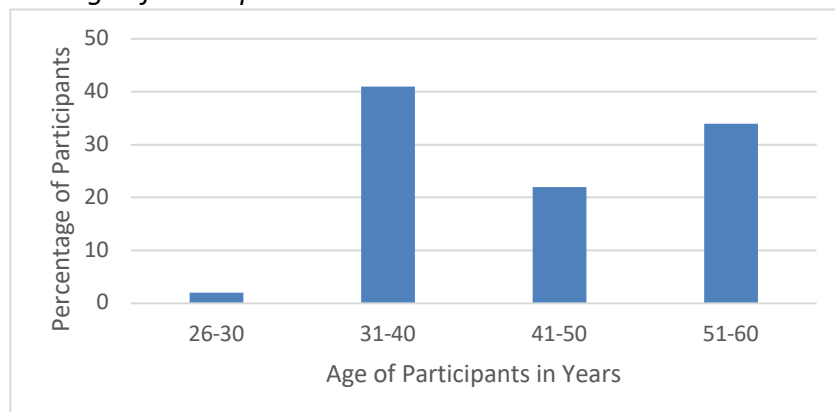


Figure 2: Race/Ethnicity of Participants

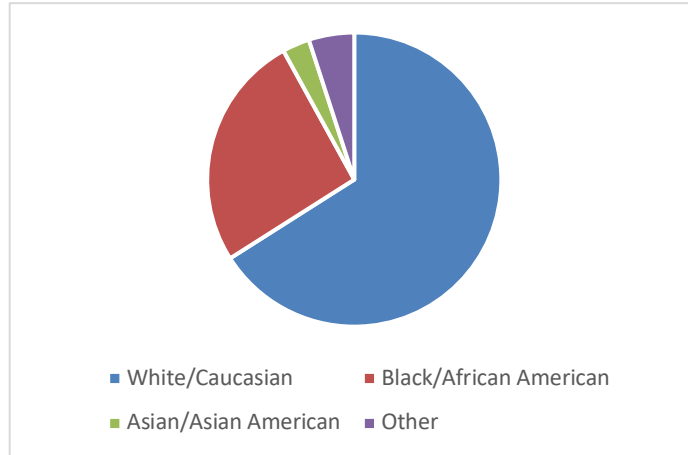


Figure 3: Relationship Status of Participants

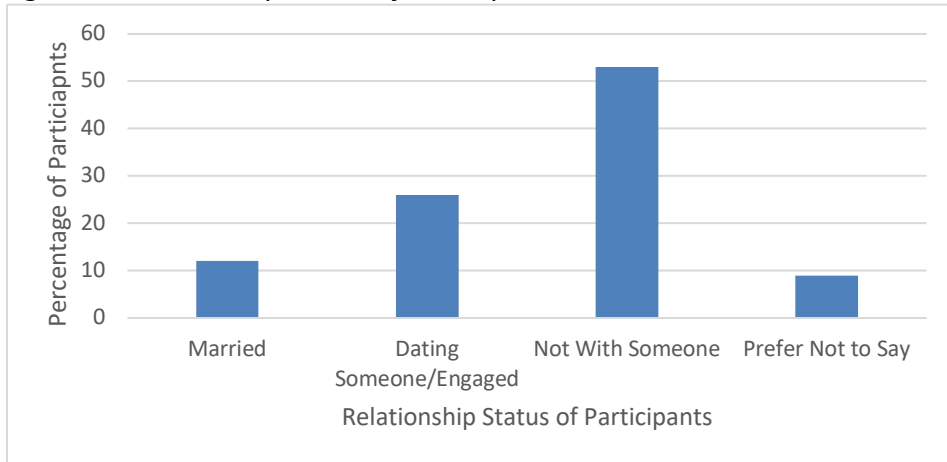
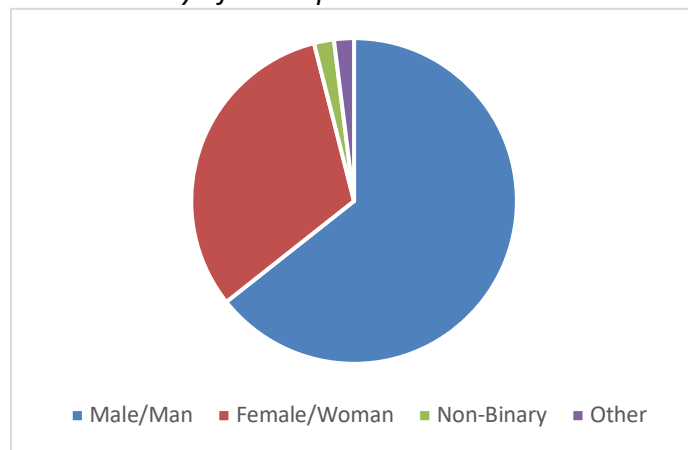


Figure 4: Gender Identity of Participants



At the beginning of the program, approximately 38% of participants had a high school diploma or GED, 38% of participants had also completed some college, 17% did not graduate high

school or complete a GED, and 5% had a college degree, with 1% having a graduate degree. In terms of children, approximately 33% had one child, 28% had one child, 18% had no children, 17% had four-five children, 2% had more than five children, and others preferred not to respond. Participants also answered questions regarding where they lived and employment status prior to beginning the programming. Approximately 52% of participants indicated they had been in jail or prison prior to the program, 21% were unhoused, 14% rented a place to live, 3% owned a home, and the others responded with 'other'. Almost all participants (93%) were employed full-time, with the other participants indicating they were employed part-time, looking for a job, and not employed and not looking for a job. Of those participants that were employed full-time, 73% indicated that REAL LIFE helped them find their current employment. In an open-ended question about how REAL LIFE helped them find their employment, the most common responses credited REAL LIFE with helping them write and edit their resume, navigate Indeed, and giving them the skills necessary to apply for jobs correctly and effectively. Figures 5-8 detail these results.

Figure 5: Education of Participants

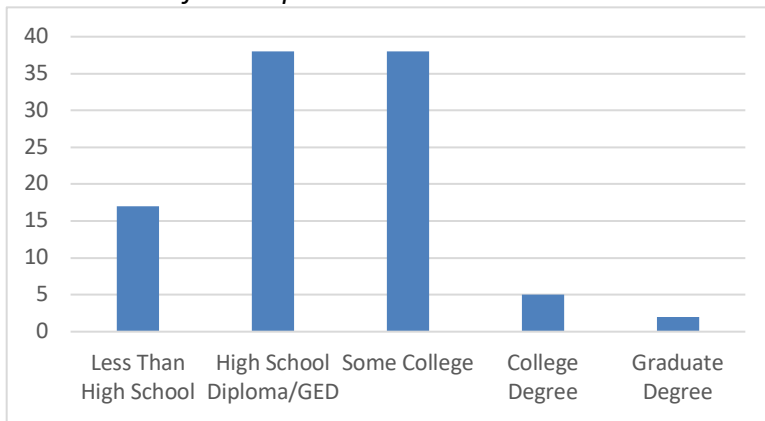


Figure 6: Number of Children Per Participant

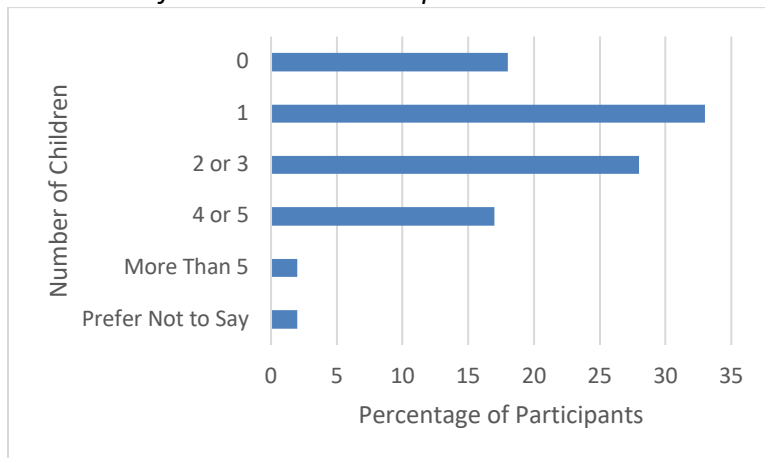


Figure 7: Living Status Pre-REAL LIFE Participation

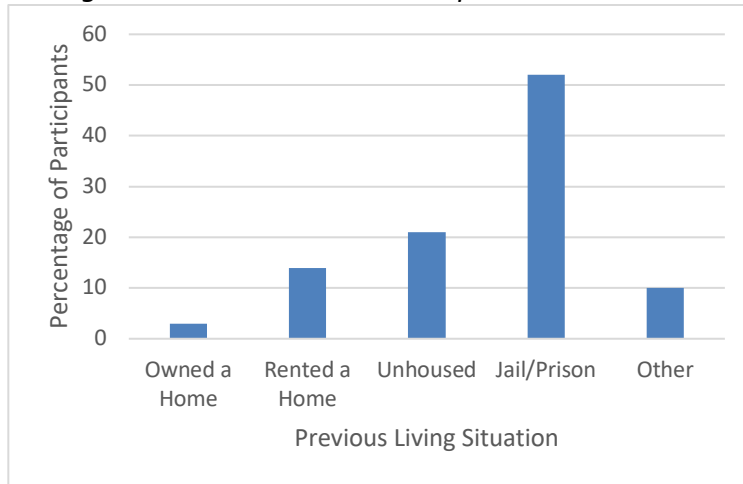
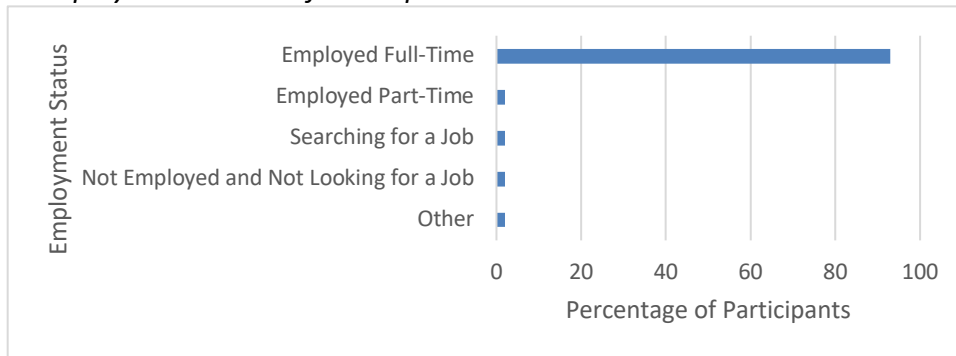


Figure 8: Employment Status of Participants



V. EVALUATION RESULTS

A. Experiences Prior to REAL LIFE

Individuals were referred to this program through several places. Approximately 38% of participants were referred by the court, 34% were referred by the jail, 9% were referred by probation or parole officers, and 2% were referred by another community program. It is important to note that another 30% indicated they were referred by another source, with the most common explanations being a lawyer or recommendation by someone in their personal life. Participants described personal challenges they faced prior to the programming, and they were given the ability to select multiple challenges since they are not mutually exclusive. Approximately 95% of participants indicated they had struggled with addiction, 77% were formerly incarcerated, 57% had been unhoused at some point, and 16% had been victimized. Figures 9 and 10 detail these results.

Figure 9: How Participants Were Referred to REAL LIFE

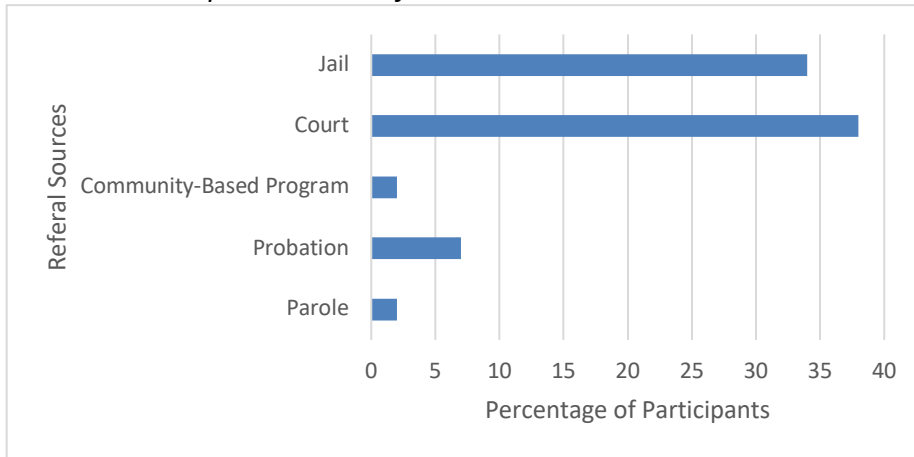
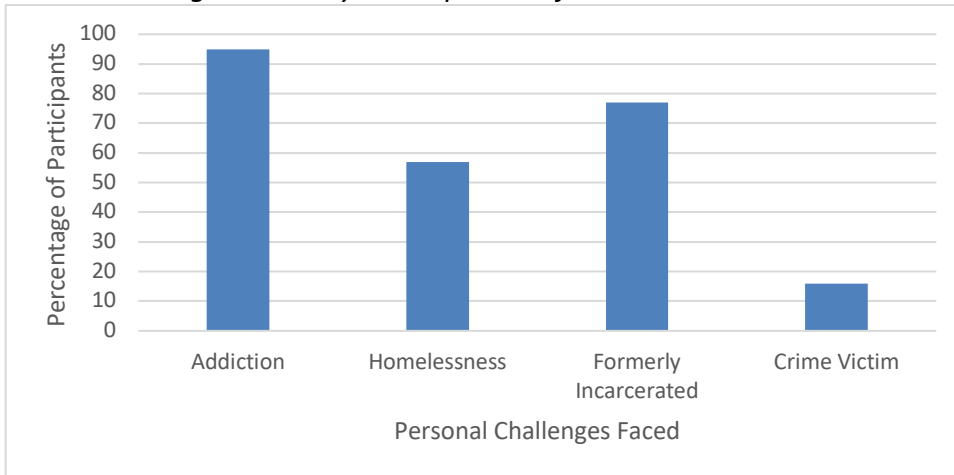


Figure 10: Challenges Faced by Participants Before REAL LIFE



Participants answered a series of open-ended questions related to their goals, as well as what they were excited and nervous about in the REAL LIFE curriculum. Participants commonly described being excited about continuing to work on changing their behaviors, continuing to learn about recovery, helping others fight addiction, and moving further along in their personal journey. In terms of being nervous, participants most commonly described anxiety surrounding starting something new, staying on the correct course, and the emotions that come out when confronting past experiences. It is important to note that many participants indicated they were not nervous about the new curriculum. When asked about goals, some cited tangible goals like buying a home or car and getting their license back, while others wanted to be the best person they could be for their family and friends.

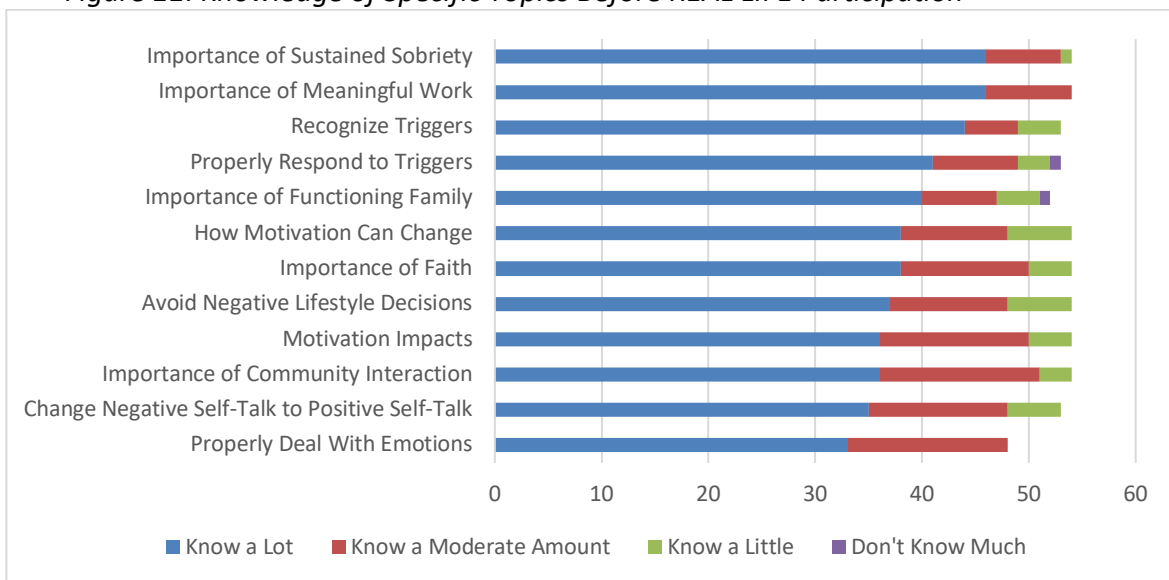
Various other questions gauged participants' status at the beginning of the graduate curriculum. In response to these questions, approximately 61% of respondents indicated that they did not have a driver's license at the time of the survey but 76% of respondents said they did have a driver's license prior to beginning with REAL LIFE. Also, approximately 76% of respondents indicated they did not have a car at the time of the survey but 62% of respondents

did have a car prior to beginning the program. Approximately 44% of respondents indicated they owed child support at the time of the survey with 96% reporting they were paying child support. Only half of the respondents indicated they were paying child support prior to beginning REAL LIFE. Only 14% of respondents said they were estranged from, or had no contact with, their children.

B. Perceptions Before Beginning REAL LIFE

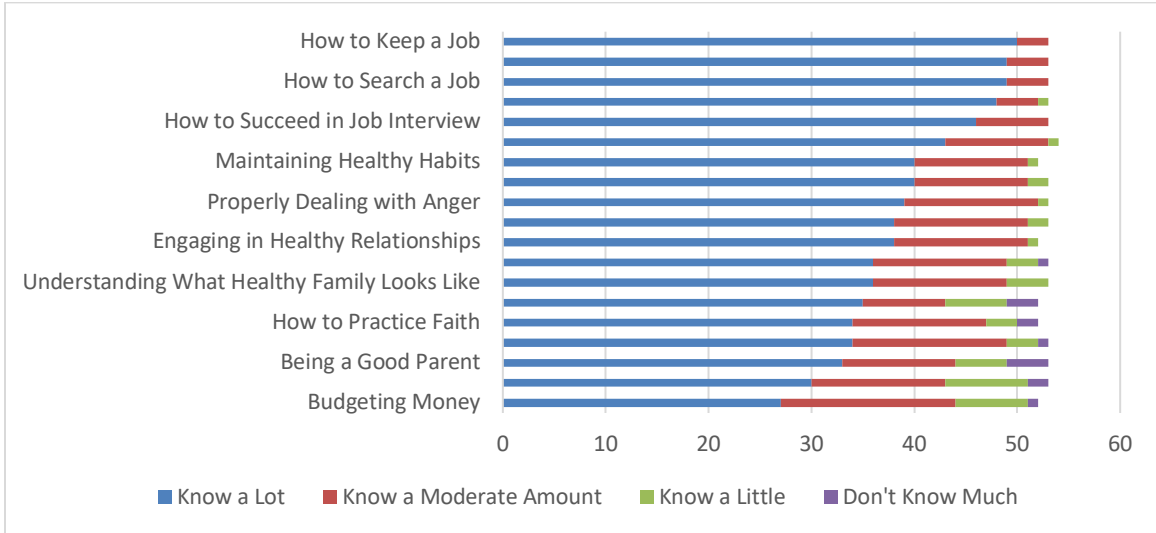
The REAL LIFE graduate curriculum modules cover various topics in depth. Before beginning the program, participants answered questions that gauged the depth of their knowledge on various topics. Participants were most confident in their knowledge on the importance of sobriety, the importance of meaningful work, how to recognize triggers in their life, and how to respond to those triggers. Participants were least confident in their knowledge about how to avoid negative lifestyle decisions, how to change negative self-talk to positive self-talk, and how to properly deal with their emotions or feelings. Figure 11 displays participants’ perceptions of their knowledge on each of these topics before beginning the graduate curriculum.

Figure 11: Knowledge of Specific Topics Before REAL LIFE Participation



Participants answered one more set of questions gauging their knowledge about important topics covered by REAL LIFE. Participants indicated they were most confident in knowing how to successfully keep a job, understanding that addiction is a disease, and knowing how to search for jobs. Participants were least confident in knowing how to budget their money correctly, knowing how to shop for a healthy diet, and understanding the importance of their role as a parent. Figure 12 displays participants’ confidence in addressing these challenges.

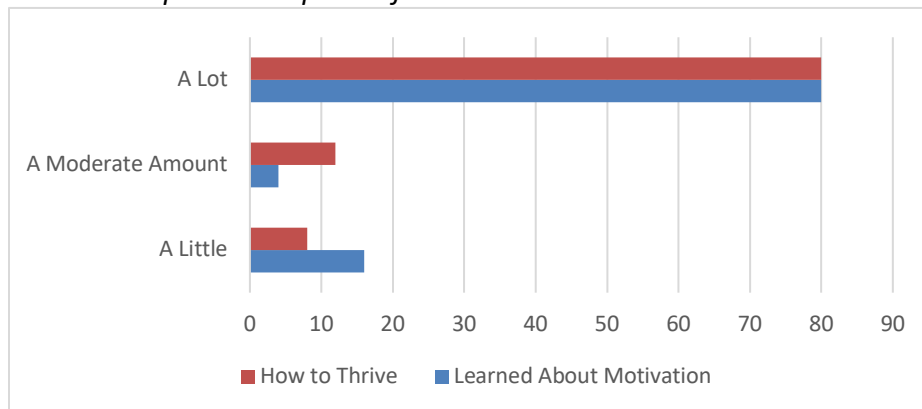
Figure 12: Confidence in Addressing Personal Challenges Before REAL LIFE Participation



C. Modules 1-6 Results

After completing the first 6 modules of REAL LIFE’s graduate curriculum, participants responded to survey questions tailored to the material covered to that point. The responses were analyzed to determine the impact of each module on the confidence level of participants to address the challenges covered in the modules, as well as participant perceptions of how much they were learning throughout the process. The first two modules covered ‘motivation to change’ and ‘motivation to thrive’. Approximately 96% of participants responded that the modules helped them learned a ‘lot’ or ‘moderate amount’ about ‘reaching a thriving life’. 88% of respondents indicated they learned a ‘lot’ or ‘moderate amount’ about ‘how to thrive’. Figure 13 displays these results.

Figure 13: Participant Perception of Amount Learned in Modules 1-2



Participants then expressed their confidence in addressing various issues covered in the modules. Over 88% of respondents were ‘very’ or ‘somewhat’ confident to be motivated to

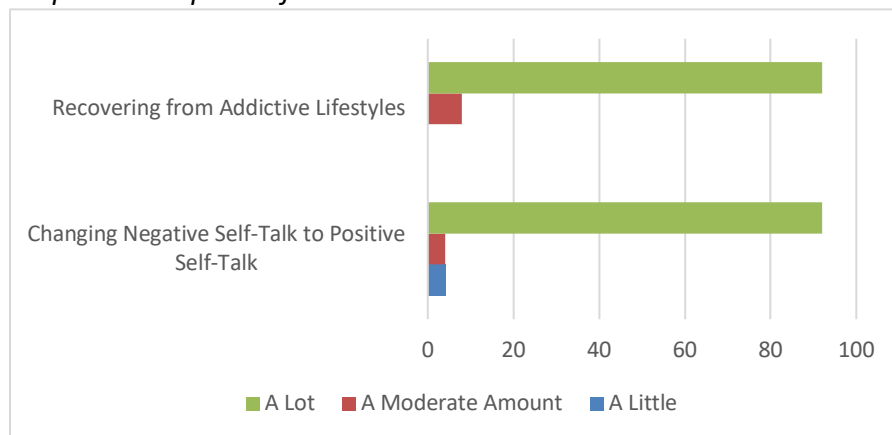
make positive choices in the future, recognizing how things impact their motivation, maintaining sustained sobriety, recognizing the importance of a functioning family, finding and keeping meaningful work, maintaining healthy relationships in their community, practicing faith, and achieving the goals set in the modules. When asked about the most important thing learned during the module, participants frequently cited staying motivated and focused, the importance of time management, and being accountable. Figure 14 displays the results for these confidence-related questions.

Figure 14: Participant Confidence in Addressing Challenges Related to Modules 1-2



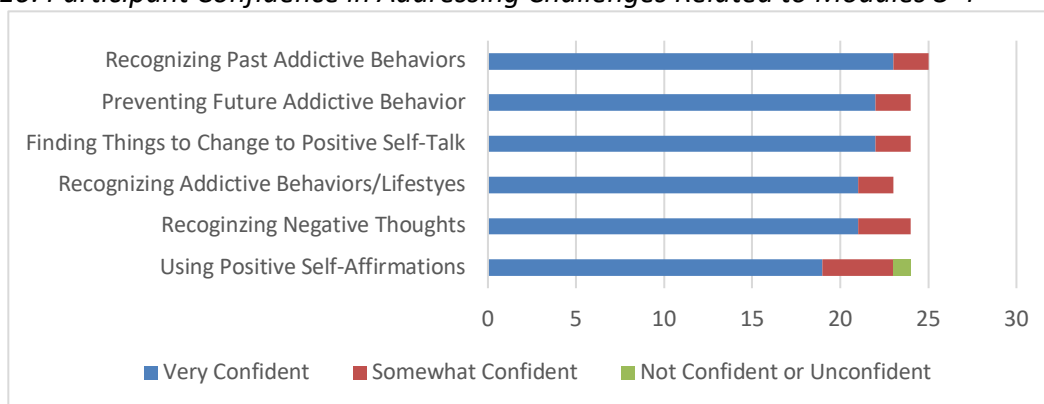
Participants responded to similar questions after every two subsequent modules completed. Upon completion of modules 3 and 4, approximately 96% of participants indicated that they learned a 'lot' or 'moderate amount' about changing negative self-talk to positive self-talk. All of the participants indicated that they learned a 'lot' or 'moderate amount' about recovering from everyday addictive lifestyles. Figure 15 displays these results.

Figure 15: Participant Perception of Amount Learned in Modules 3-4



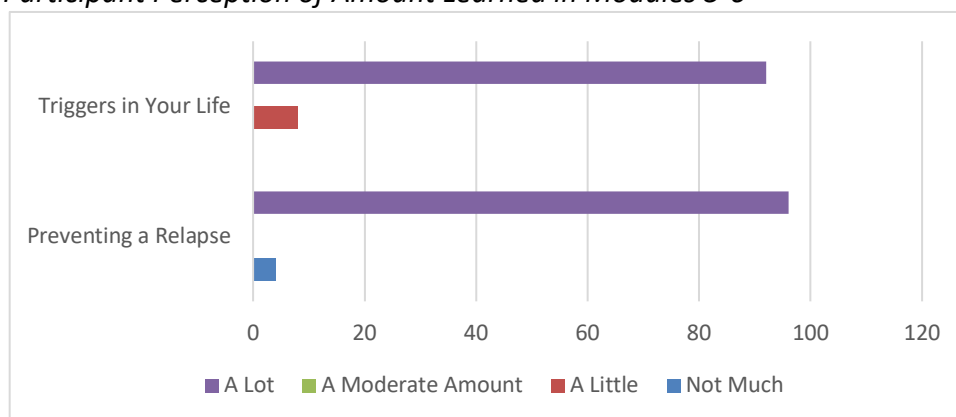
Participants responded to a series of questions measuring their confidence in addressing challenges related to the material covered in the third and fourth modules. Over 92% of participants indicated they felt ‘very’ or ‘somewhat’ confident using positive affirmations about themselves, changing negative thinking to positive thinking, recognizing addictive behaviors and lifestyles, recognizing how addictive behaviors have impacted them in their past, and not participating in addictive behavior in the future. Participants commonly cited the most important things they learned in those modules as things related to negative and positive self-talk and practicing it in their life. Figure 16 displays the results for these confidence-related questions.

Figure 16: Participant Confidence in Addressing Challenges Related to Modules 3-4



Participants then responded to questions about modules 5 and 6. Approximately 96% of respondents indicated they learned a ‘lot’ about preventing a relapse. Approximately 92% of participants indicated they learned a lot about triggers in their life. Figure 17 displays these results.

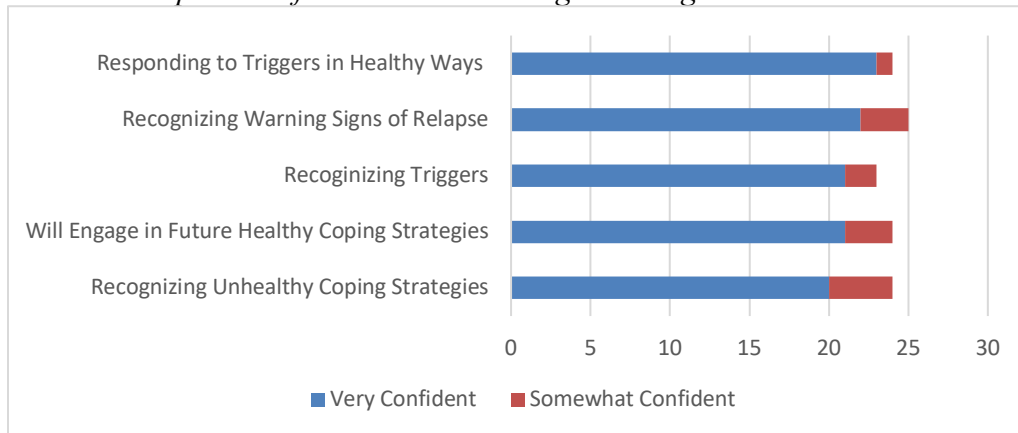
Figure 17: Participant Perception of Amount Learned in Modules 5-6



Participants answered questions measuring their confidence in addressing challenges related

to the material covered in modules 5 and 6. Over 92% of participants indicated they felt ‘very’ or ‘somewhat’ confident recognizing warning signs of a potential relapse, recognizing unhealthy coping strategies, engaging in healthy coping strategies, recognizing triggers in their life, and responding to triggers in a healthy way. Participants commonly described the most important things they learned as how to deal with their triggers, knowing how to avoid a relapse, and being willing to ask for help. Figure 18 displays the results for these confidence-related questions.

Figure 18: Participant Confidence in Addressing Challenges Related to Modules 5-6

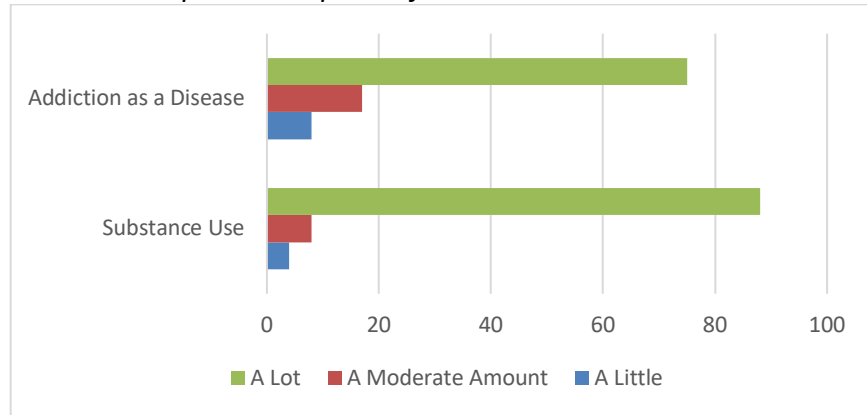


In the final set of questions participants were asked about their satisfaction with all six modules. The vast majority of participants were satisfied with the modules. Over 83% over respondents indicated they ‘strongly agreed’ the modules were helpful and well organized. Approximately 79% and 75% of respondents indicated they ‘strongly agreed’ the modules had clear learning outcomes, and the modules were easy to access respectively. Approximately 71% of participants said they ‘strongly agreed’ that the modules were effectively designed and easy to understand. When asked about any thoughts or comments they had on the modules, respondents described they were learning to be a better person, it was a wakeup call, and they appreciated the information they learned.

D. Modules 7-12 Results

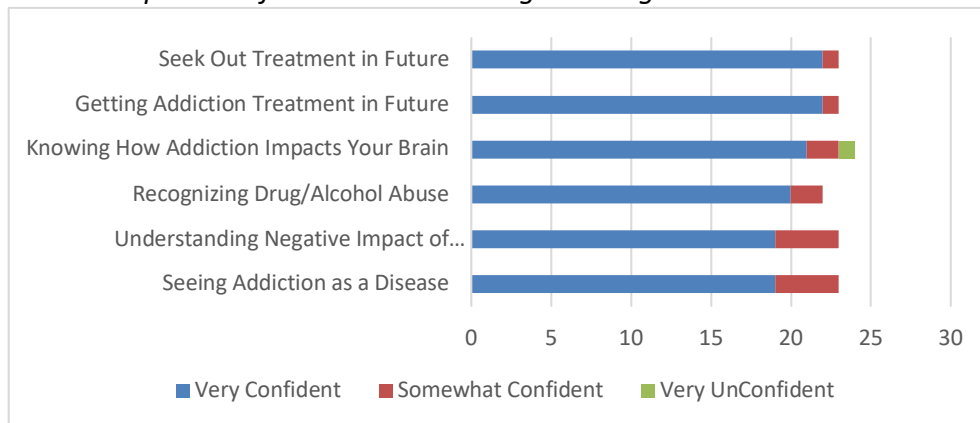
Participants completed another survey after modules 7-12. When asked about how much they learned in modules 7 and 8, approximately 96% and 92% of respondents indicated they learned a ‘lot’ or ‘moderate amount’ about substance use and addiction as a disease respectively. Figure 19 displays these results.

Figure 19: Participant Perception of Amount Learned in Modules 7-8



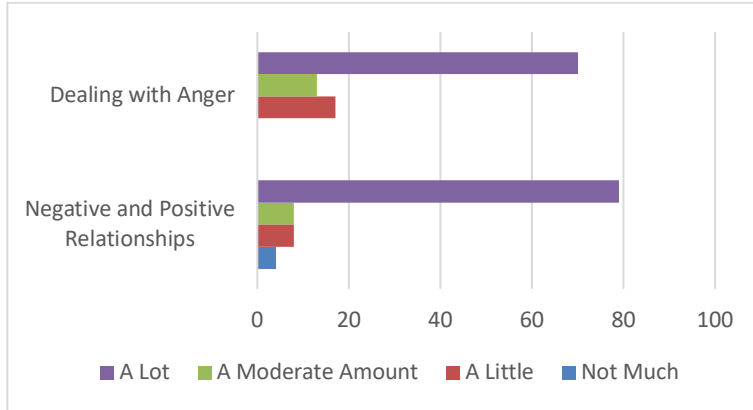
Participants responded with high confidence rates for implementing the lessons learned in the modules. Approximately 92% of participants indicated they were ‘very confident’ getting treatment for addiction in the future and specifically seeking out treatment to prevent a relapse. Over 82% of respondents indicated they were ‘very confident’ understanding the negative impact of drug and alcohol abuse, recognizing signs of drug and alcohol abuse, knowing how addiction impacts their brain, and continuing to identify addiction as a disease instead of a choice. Participants described the most important things learned from these modules as recognizing signs disease and addiction. Figure 20 displays the results for these confidence-related questions.

Figure 20: Participant Confidence in Addressing Challenges Related to Modules 7-8



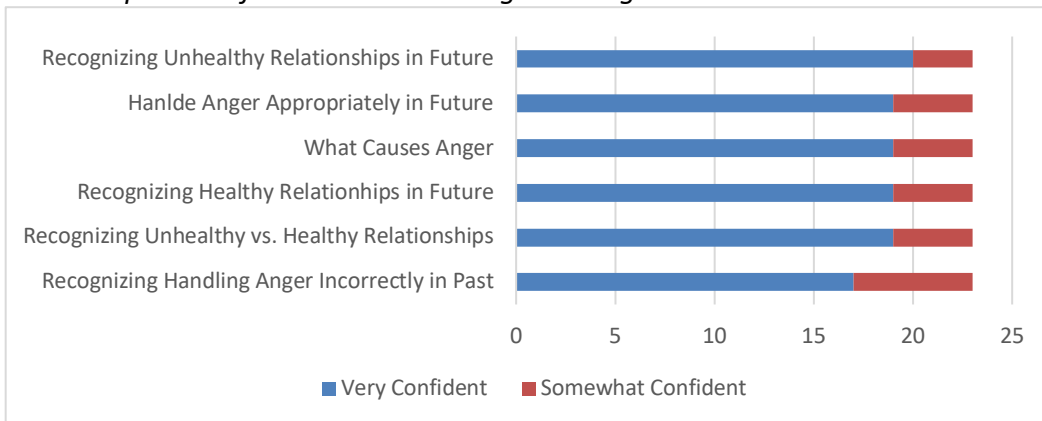
After completing modules 9 and 10, approximately 87% and 83% of participants responded that they learned a ‘lot’ or ‘moderate amount’ about negative and positive relationships and how to deal with anger respectively. Figure 21 displays these results.

Figure 21: Participant Perception of Amount Learned in Modules 9-10



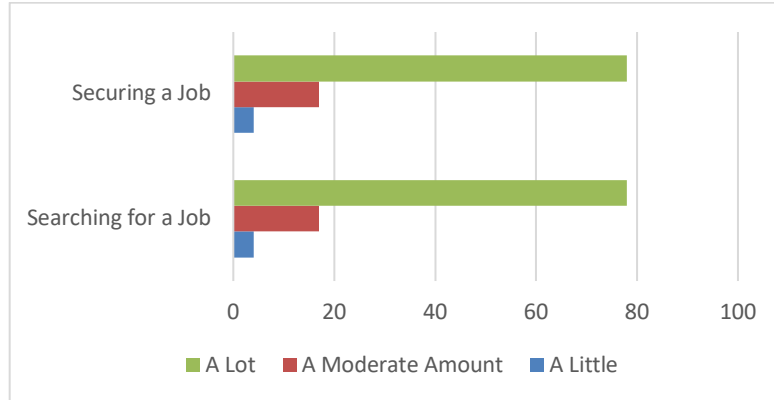
In terms of confidence in implementing the and skills and lessons learned, participants continued to respond with high levels of confidence. Approximately 87% of participants responded they were ‘very confident’ recognizing unhealthy relationships in the future. Also, approximately 83% of participants responded they were ‘very confident’ recognizing the differences between past unhealthy relationships and healthy relationships, recognizing healthy relationships in the future, being likely to engage in healthy relationships in the future, knowing what causes them anger, and being able to handle anger approximately. Participants described the most important things learned in these modules as learning the dynamics of anger and how to control it properly. Figure 22 displays these results.

Figure 22: Participant Confidence in Addressing Challenges Related to Modules 9-10



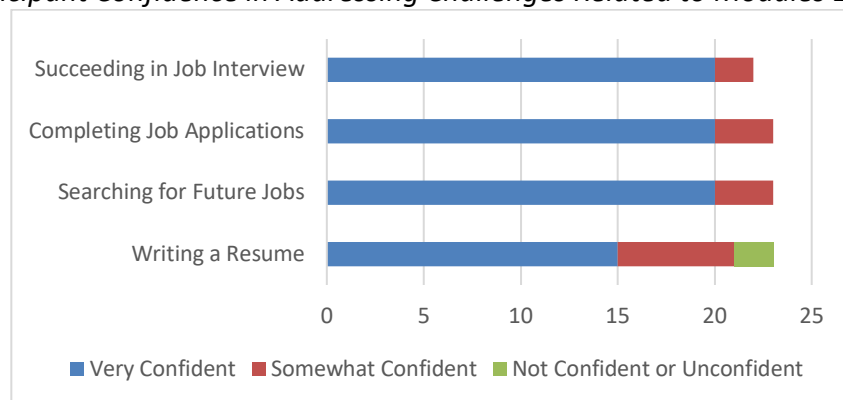
The final set of questions for this survey focused upon modules 11 and 12. Approximately 95% of participants indicated they learned a ‘lot’ or ‘moderate amount’ about searching for a job and securing a job respectively. Figure 23 displays these results.

Figure 23: Participant Perception of Amount Learned in Modules 11-12



Participants continued to express high confidence rate implementing the lessons learned from these modules. Approximately 91% of participants indicated they felt ‘very confident’ preparing for a job interview. Also, approximately 87% of participants indicated they felt ‘very confident’ searching for jobs in the future, completing a job application, and succeeding in a job interview. Participants described the most important things learned in these modules as learning how to remain calm in an interview, get a job, and keep a job. Figure 24 displays the results for these confidence-related questions.

Figure 24: Participant Confidence in Addressing Challenges Related to Modules 11-12

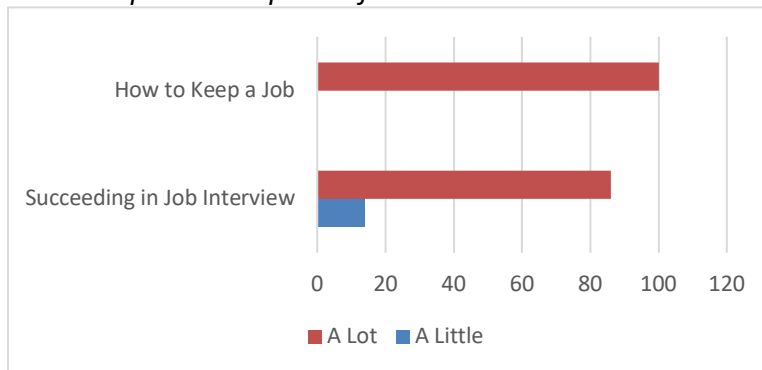


Participants continued to express high level of satisfaction with these modules. All of the participants responded that they ‘strongly agreed’ or ‘agreed’ that the modules were effectively designed, had clear learning outcomes, were well organized, were helpful, and were easy to access.

E. Modules 13-17 Results

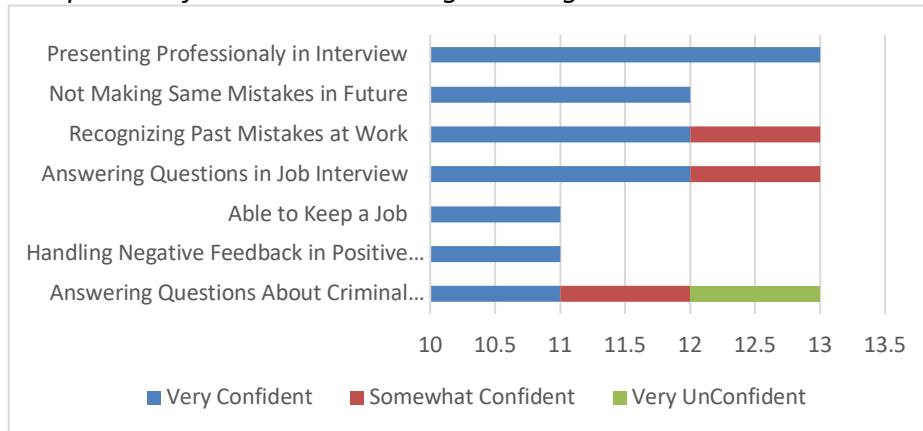
The next survey was implemented after participants completed modules 13-18. After modules 13 and 14, approximately 86% of respondents indicated they learned a ‘lot’ about succeeding in a job interview and all participants felt they learned a ‘lot’ about how to keep their job. Figure 25 displays these results.

Figure 25: Participant Perception of Amount Learned in Modules 13-14



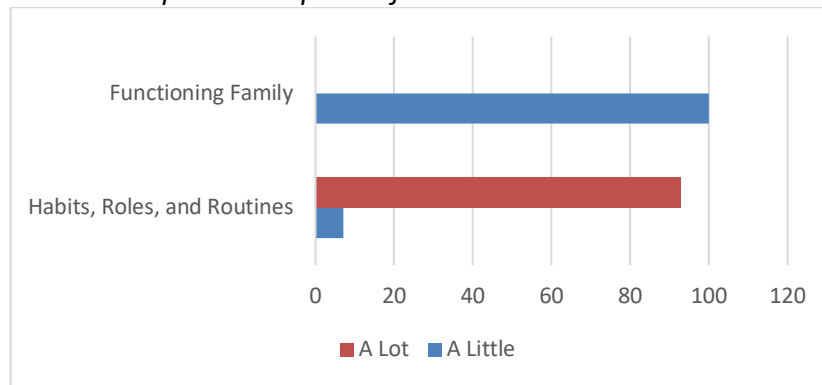
Participants continued to exhibit high levels of confidence implementing the lessons learned. All of the participants indicated they felt ‘very confident’ presenting themselves in a professional manner during an interview. Also, approximately 92% of participants felt ‘very confident’ answering questions in a job interview, recognizing the past mistakes they made at work, and not making those mistakes again in the future. Lastly, 85% of participants indicated they felt ‘very confident’ answering questions about their criminal record, handling negative feedback at work in a positive manner, and being able to keep their job. Participants described the most important things they learned in these modules as being prepared to answer questions about their criminal background and how to be better prepared for the interview and succeeding at the job. Figure 26 displays the results for these confidence-related questions.

Figure 26: Participant Confidence in Addressing Challenges Related to Modules 13-14



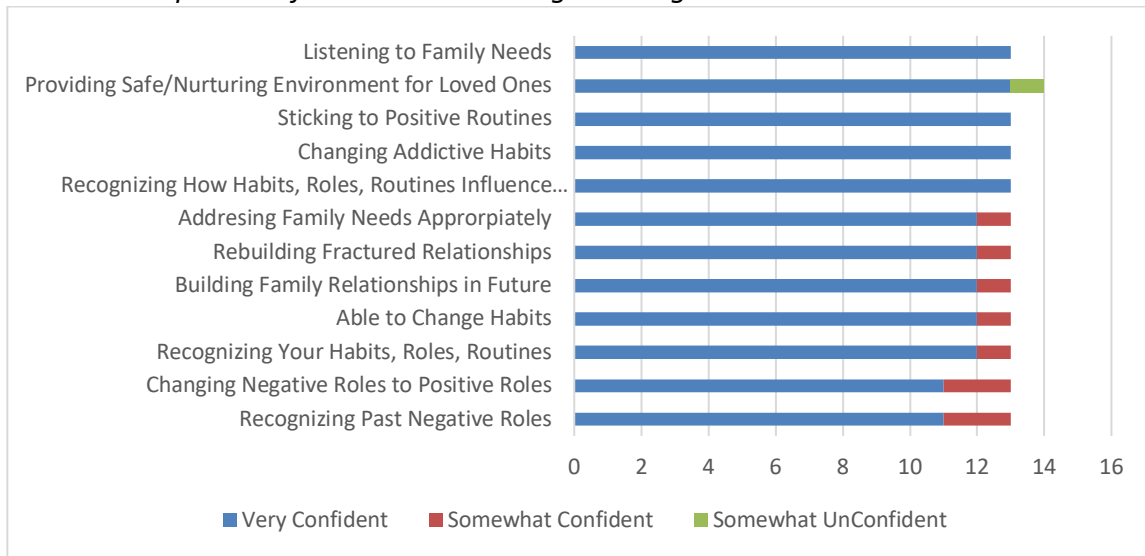
After completing modules 15 and 16, all of the participants indicated they learned a 'lot' about a functioning family and 93% learned a 'lot' about habits, roles, and routines. Figure 27 displays these results.

Figure 27: Participant Perception of Amount Learned in Modules 15-16



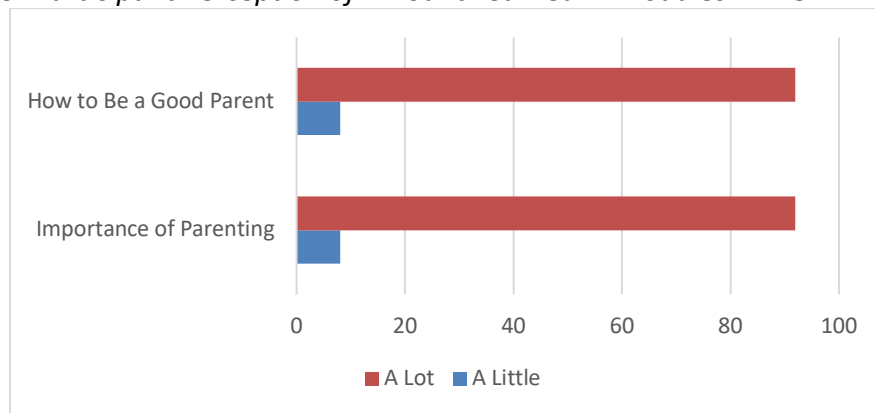
Participants were very confident about applying the information they learned in these modules. Approximately 93% of participants felt 'very' confident recognizing how their habits, roles, and routines influence their behaviors, changing their habits related to addiction, sticking to a routine in the future, providing a safe and nurturing environment for their loved ones, and listening to their family needs. Approximately 86% of participants felt 'very' confident recognizing their own habits, roles, and routines, being able to change their habits, building family relationships in the future, rebuilding fractured family relationships, and addressing their family's needs appropriately. Participants indicated that the most impactful things they learned were making good habits and recognizing unhealthy habits. Figure 28 displays these results.

Figure 28: Participant Confidence in Addressing Challenges Related to Modules 15-16



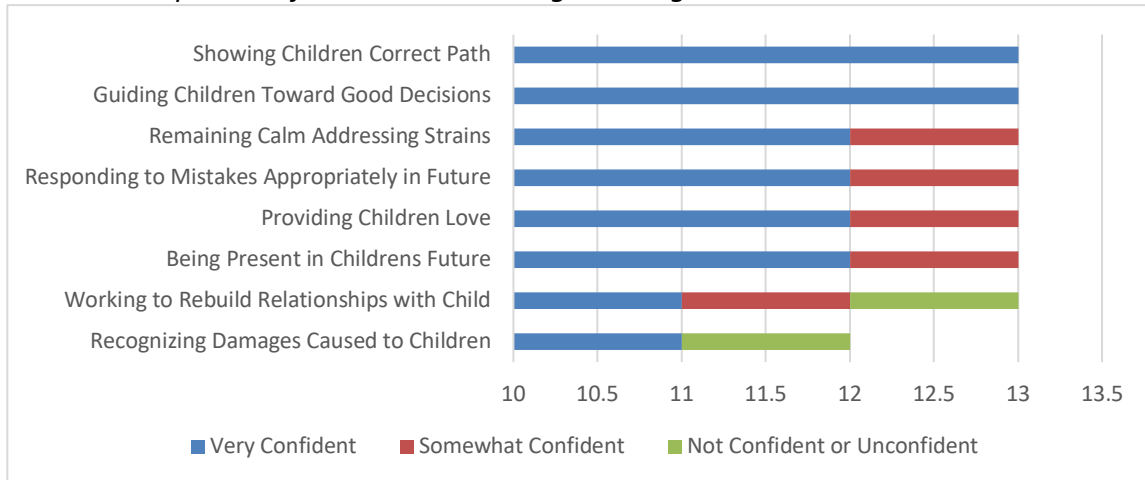
After completing modules 17 and 18, approximately 92% of participants indicated they learned a 'lot' about the importance of parenting and being a good parent for their children. Figure 29 displays these results.

Figure 29: Participant Perception of Amount Learned in Modules 17-18



Participants continued to express confidence implementing these lessons. All of the respondents indicated they were 'very' confident making good decisions in the future and showing their children the correct direction in life. Also, approximately 92% of participants indicated they were 'very' confident being present for their children in the future, providing their children love in the future, responding appropriately to mistakes in the future, and remaining calm when addressing family strains. Participants described the most important things they learned in these modules as the importance of being present for their child and being a good parent in general. Figure 30 displays the results for these confidence-related questions.

Figure 30: Participant Confidence in Addressing Challenges Related to Modules 17-18

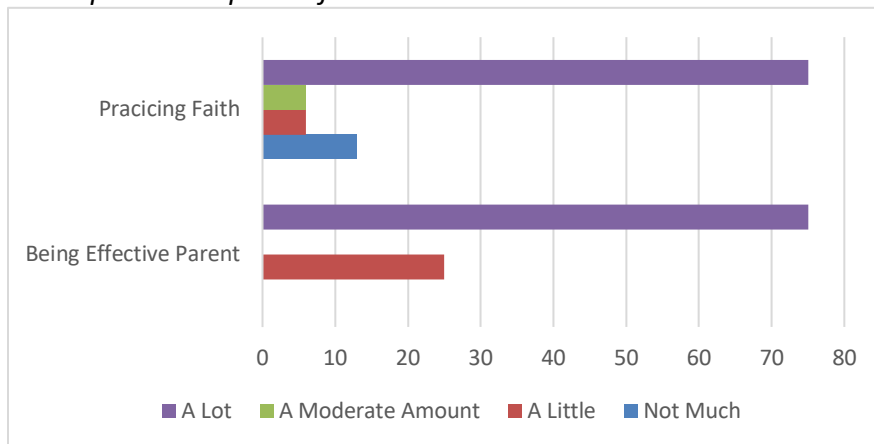


Participants expressed high level of satisfaction with these modules. All of the participants responded that they ‘strongly agreed’ or ‘agreed’ that the modules were effectively designed, had clear learning outcomes, were well organized, were helpful, learned new information about the topics, and were easy to understand.

F. Modules 19-23 Results

Participants indicated they learned a great deal from these modules. Approximately 75% of participants indicated that they learned a ‘lot’ about being an effective parent and practicing faith. Figure 31 displays these results.

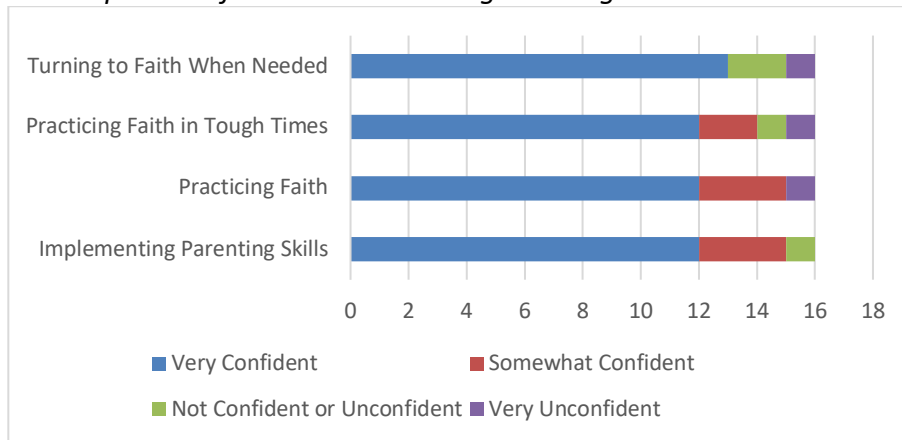
Figure 31: Participant Perception of Amount Learned in Modules 19-20



Participant were highly confident implementing the lessons learned from these modules as well. Approximately 81% of participants indicated they were ‘very’ confident turning to faith when they need it. Also, 75% of participants indicated they were ‘very’ confident implementing the parenting skills they learned, practicing faith instead of other temptations, and practicing

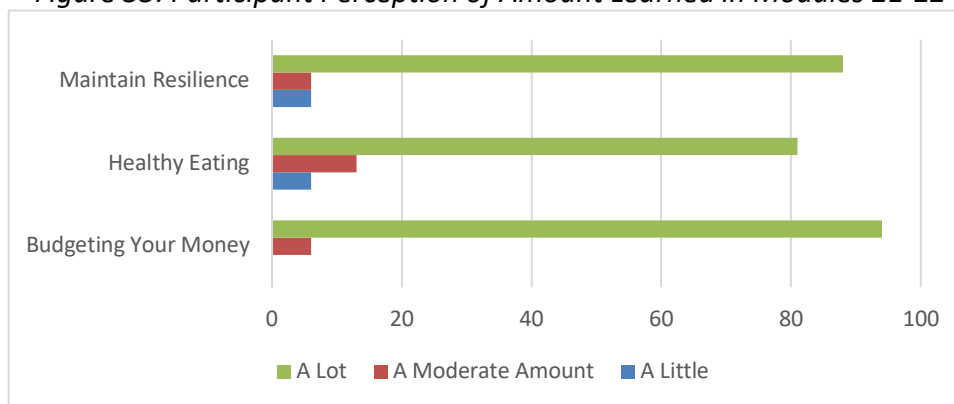
faith in difficult times. Respondents described the most important things learned during these modules as how to be a better parent and the value of effective parenting. Figure 32 displays the results for these confidence-related questions.

Figure 32: Participant Confidence in Addressing Challenges Related to Modules 19-20



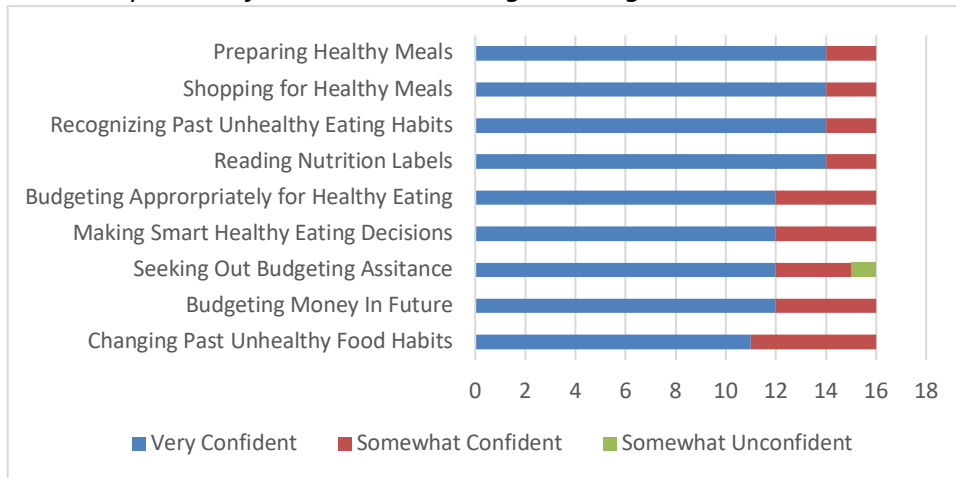
Participants responded to a final set of questions about modules 21, 22, and 23. Approximately 94% of participants indicated they learned a ‘lot’ about budgeting their money, 88% of participants indicated they learned a ‘lot’ about resilience, and 81% of participants indicated they learned a ‘lot’ about healthy eating. Figure 33 displays these results.

Figure 33: Participant Perception of Amount Learned in Modules 21-22



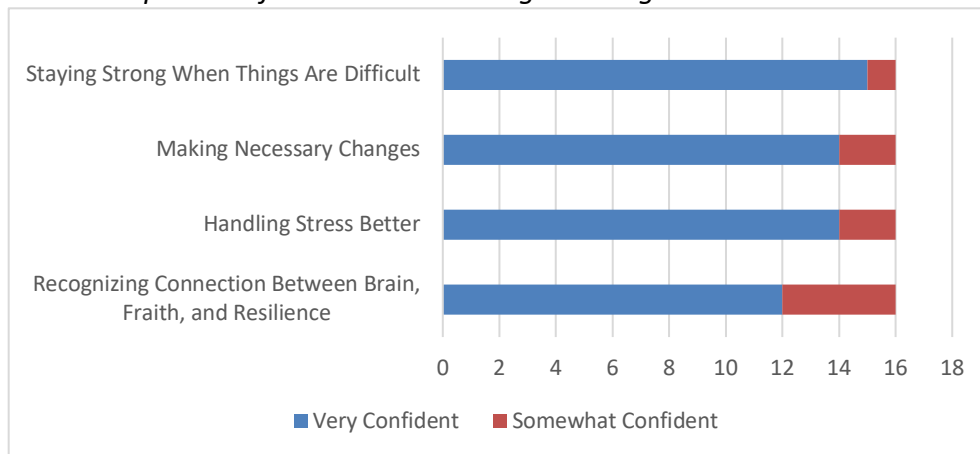
In these modules, participants continued to express high level of confidence implementing the lessons learned. Approximately 88% of participants indicated that they were ‘very’ confident reading nutrition labels, recognizing unhealthy food habits, shopping for healthy meals, and preparing healthy meals. Also, 75% of participants indicated they were ‘very’ confident budgeting their money in the future, seeking out budget assistance when needed, making smart decisions about eating healthy in the future, and budgeting appropriately in order to eat healthy. Participants described the most important things learned during these modules as having a better understanding about budgeting and learning good practices for budgeting and healthy eating. Figure 34 displays the results for these confidence-related questions.

Figure 34: Participant Confidence in Addressing Challenges Related to Modules 21-22



In the final module, approximately 94% of participants indicated they were ‘very’ confident staying strong when things are difficult. Also, approximately 88% of participants indicated they were ‘very’ confident handling stress better and making changes when needed. Lastly, 75% of participants indicated they were ‘very’ confident recognizing the connection between faith, their brain, and resilience. Figure 35 displays the results for these confidence-related questions.

Figure 35: Participant Confidence in Addressing Challenges Related to Module 23



Lastly, participants were asked to reflect upon their satisfaction with these final modules. All of the participants ‘strongly agreed’ or ‘agreed’ that the modules were effectively designed, had clean learning outcomes, were well organized, were helpful, and easy to access. All of the participants also ‘strongly agreed’ or ‘agreed’ that they learned new information about the topics covered.

G. Fatherhood Session Questions

Participants answered a series of questions after completion of the final modules related to the fatherhood session. Approximately 58% of respondents indicated they had attended a fatherhood session. Of those individuals that attended a fatherhood session, 67% attended 7 or more sessions, while another 11% attended 5-6 sessions. All of the participants indicated they learned something new during these sessions, citing specific things like about children's forgiveness and the importance of spending time with their children. All of the participants also indicated the sessions motivated them to be a better father and to be in their children's lives more, citing specific things like wanting to be a good role model for their children, getting back in touch with their children, and being accountable to their children. Some participants did note that they would like their kids to be at the session and to have more interactive exercises.

More questions were asked of participants regarding these parenting sessions. Approximately 44% of participants said they had a great relationship with their children now having gone through the class, with another 33% describing their relationship as good. Approximately 22% of the participants said they see their see or talk with their children daily, with 33% describing this as weekly, and 22% describing it as monthly. After taking the fatherhood courses, all of the participants agreed 'strongly' or 'moderately' that even when the baby is young, it is important for the father to set a good example, for father to meet their baby's psychological needs, for the father to spend time with the child to improve their well. They also recognized that fathers play a central role in the child's personality development and the most important thing a man can invest time and energy is his family. Approximately 89% of the participants indicated that the responsibilities of fatherhood never overshadow the joys, young babies are affected by adults' moods and feelings, and the way a father treats his baby in the first six months has important life-long impacts on the child.

After the sessions, approximately 78% of participants indicated they felt the relationships with their children had changed for the better. All of the participants said they had learned what they hoped to learn from the fatherhood course. As they prepared for graduation, participants noted they had a better line of communication and their children lived with them now in many cases. When asked about advice they would give to their children, they noted to make sure you create a safe space so they will be comfortable talking about anything, take the time to listen and be open minded, and be honest and there for the children.

VI. CONCLUSION

This is the second evaluation that CCEJ has conducted with REAL LIFE. The results of both evaluations have been overwhelmingly positive. The survey results show that participants are

clearly satisfied with the modules, feel strongly in that they are learning important core concepts, and are confident in implementing the skills and knowledge in their everyday lives. In the open-ended questions, participants provided valuable context regarding the elements of the modules they considered most impactful and important. There was also valuable context added from participants in the fatherhood sessions. For those individuals that participated in the fatherhood sessions, they indicated they learned a lot about being a better and more present father. There also a number of success stories regarding improved and rebuilt relationships between parents and their children.

This evaluation is clearly positive and supportive of REAL LIFE's work. However, evaluations of this nature always come with limitations. Both this current evaluation, and the previous one conducted by CCEJ, rely on participant perceptions. This can tell us about how participants view the programming and its impact on them; however, they do not measure the impact of the program on long-term outcomes. This time frame limitation is especially important to note because this only tells us about participants' experiences over the past two years. Continued evaluations will help staff members learn if these perceptions are consistent. Also, if new issues emerge, they can be identified in future reporting and addressed.

This second evaluation of REAL LIFE programming aligns with, and builds upon, the previous evaluation. Participants continue to be satisfied with the modules, confident in implementing the lessons going forward, and are noticing their own improvements along the way. The new context learned from this evaluation shows that these patterns appear to continue with the fatherhood sessions. It is important to continue conducted consistent and objective evaluation of existing and new REAL LIFE programming in the future. These early results are clearly positive and supportive of REAL LIFE's work and impact.

VII. ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Steven Keener, Ph.D. is the Director and co-founder of CCEJRP and an Assistant Professor of Criminology at Christopher Newport University. He holds a Ph.D. in Public Policy and Administration from Virginia Commonwealth University. His research expertise includes the ramifications of incarceration, the intersection of mental health and the criminal justice system, and criminal justice policy.

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