

# Activating Trusted Messengers through Community Programs to Increase Vaccine Confidence and Access Across the Life Span

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## Background

A decline in routine immunization rates and an increase in school vaccine exemption rates have led to outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases, such as measles, flu, and pertussis. In addition, the U.S. continues to struggle with uptake of COVID-19 vaccines and vaccine fatigue in general. While reasons for these disparities may vary, many people cite a lack of trust in vaccines and/or concerns over access as reasons for not vaccinating themselves or their families.

Research has shown that people are more likely to believe information from trusted sources within their community. We describe these sources as “trusted messengers” who are particularly well-positioned to build vaccine confidence in their communities and reduce barriers to access. Two important groups of trusted messengers include Promotores/Community Health Workers (P/CHWs) and patient advocates (PAs).

## Intervention

Vaccinate Your Family utilized two community programs to educate, empower, mobilize, and support trusted messengers:

- The **Vaccination Community Navigator (VCN) program** consists of an online, bilingual (English-Spanish) curriculum aimed at increasing P/CHW knowledge and confidence to engage their communities in vaccine conversations and navigate people of all ages to vaccination services.
- Vaccinate Your Family's **SQUAD™ (SQuaring Up Against Disease) program** empowers advocates to support vaccines and science, providing a scalable and sustainable platform for those personally impacted by a vaccine-preventable disease through loss or survivorship.

## Population

The VCN program is aimed at P/CHWs who serve under-resourced communities experiencing disparities in vaccine uptake.

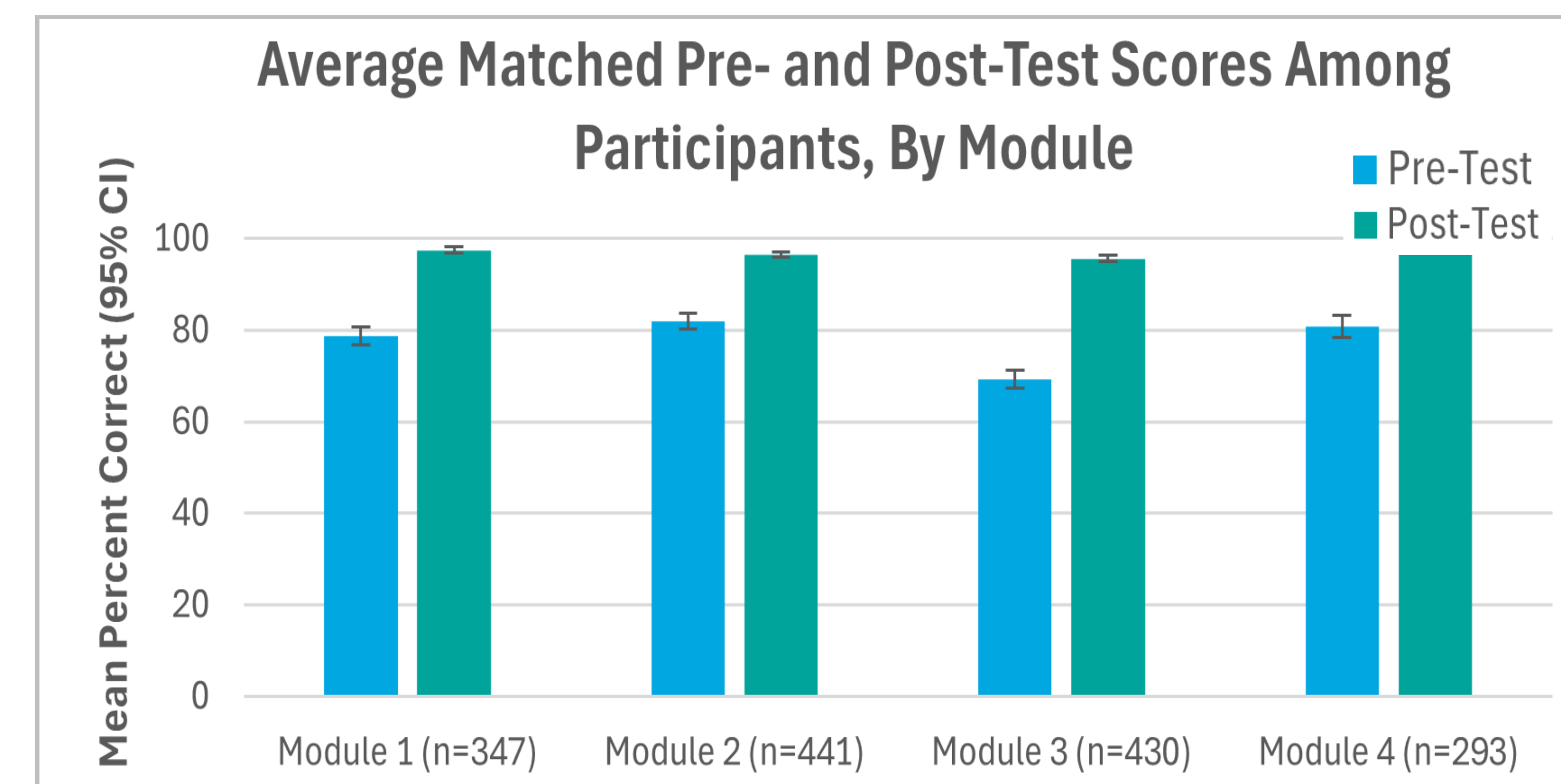
SQUAD™ is aimed at individuals and families who have been impacted by a vaccine-preventable disease.

## VCN Methods & Results

Quantitative and qualitative data on knowledge and self-reported confidence were collected from participants from Jan. 2023 to Jun. 2024 using surveys and pre- and post-tests.

Data analyses indicated a significant increase in knowledge and confidence for program participants (e.g., knowledge scores increased by an average of 14.61 to 26.43 percentage points; 92-96% of post-course survey respondents reported increased confidence).

### Knowledge Assessment



### Confidence Assessment

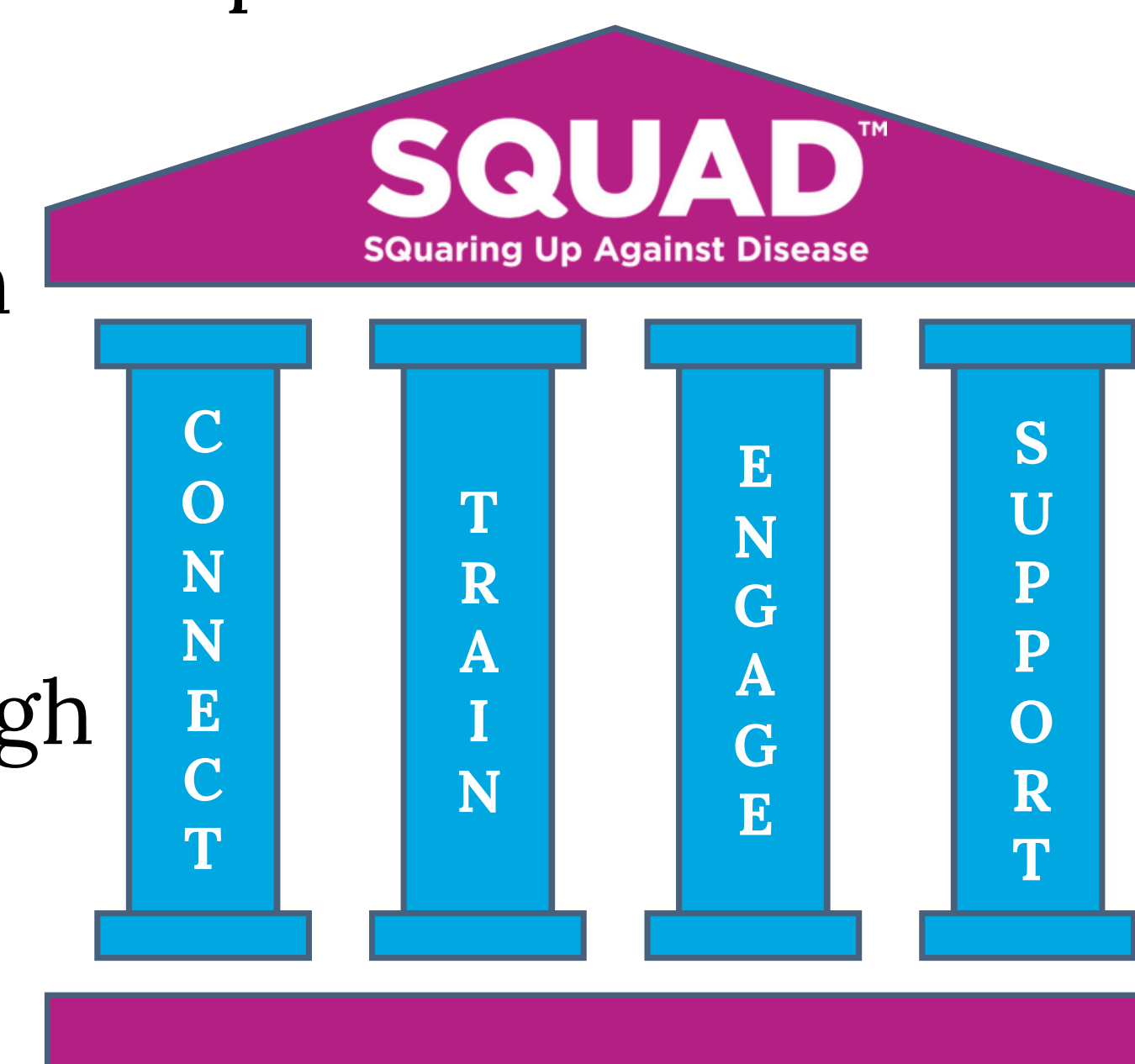
A follow-up survey conducted three months after participants completed the VCN courses (n=152) revealed that:

- The majority of respondents reported using the training to boost vaccine confidence in their communities (86.6%) and guide individuals to vaccine services (69.6%).
- An overwhelming percentage indicated the trainings enhanced their ability to engage more people in vaccine discussions (89.9%), have stronger and more productive conversations about vaccines (89.2%), and connect more individuals to vaccine services (70.3%).

## SQUAD™ Methods & Results

This program consists of four pillars that contribute to advocate empowerment:

- **Connect** – Identify & engage impacted individuals through outreach and community-building
- **Train** – Provide necessary training to empower advocates for future advocacy efforts & activities
- **Engage** – Mobilize advocates on behalf of VYF and partners through storytelling and community-level advocacy opportunities
- **Support** – Invest in sustainable relationships with advocates through periodic touchpoints and tracking mechanisms



## Community Activations

Results from four community activations in 2024:

- Ian's Rainbow Flu Foundation's 18th Annual Walking to Fight the Flu & Vaccination Clinic amassed over 200 participants and led to the vaccination of 70 people in Kansas City, MO.
- A school-located flu vaccination clinic in Coos Bay, OR led to the administration of 142 flu vaccinations.
- JJ's JAB-oree vaccine clinic at the University of Minnesota resulted in 153 COVID-19 & flu vaccinations for students and staff.
- Callie Cares created care bags for the guests of children's hospitals and the Ronald McDonald House, providing parents with information about the importance of Tdap vaccination. In total, 30,000 bags have been distributed to 17 states.

## Conclusion

Our findings support the feasibility and effectiveness of vaccine training and activation programs for P/CHWs and PAs. Recognizing and integrating these trusted messengers into the vaccine ecosystem at the community-level is crucial for improving vaccine uptake across the life span in communities across the U.S.