

*“He aprendido mucho sobre relacionarme con mi hija y me siento agradecida por la forma en que el personal de Tu y Yo nos recibió.”*

*“I have learned a lot about engaging with my daughter and feel grateful for how the Tu y Yo staff welcomed us.”*

*“No tengo familia aquí en los EE. UU., y Tu y Yo es un lugar seguro donde puedo relacionarme con mi hijo y hablar con otras familias sobre las preguntas que tengo sobre mi hijo. ¡Gracias!”*

*“I have no family here in the U.S, and Tu y Yo is a safe place where I can engage with my son and talk to other families about questions I have about my son. Thank you!”*

*“Debido a COVID, me sentí aislado y fue bueno que Tu y Yo nos diera un lugar virtual para relacionarnos con otros, jugar, cantar y simplemente divertirnos.”*

*“Due to COVID, I felt isolated, and it was nice that Tu y Yo gave us a virtual place to engage with others, play, sing and just have fun!”*



**San Mateo County Families Getting through  
COVID-19:  
How Community Leaders & Policymakers Can  
Drive the Change We Need**  
Family Story Project  
Michelle Blakely, Deputy Director

**February 28, 2022**  
**F5SMC Commission Meeting**

# CONVERSATIONS WITH FAMILIES



## San Mateo County Families Getting through COVID-19: How Community Leaders & Policymakers Can Drive the Change We Need



Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, families have weathered unforeseen impacts with strength. Forty families from 10 communities in San Mateo County shared their perspectives on the challenges they faced during the pandemic, the strengths that helped them overcome obstacles, and their hopes and dreams for their children. Even as families have learned to navigate this pandemic, they have been working within systems that leave gaps in support. Leaders in our community can help create alignment and transform how our county's services, supports, and systems work for young children and families in San Mateo County.

### Different Families Faced Different Challenges

As families told their stories of navigating the pandemic, four key themes emerged.

*"Managing four children at home (a child just entering middle school, a child just entering Kindergarten, a preschooler in Head Start and a baby). I have lost myself for a little bit because I am so stressed out. They have not done well with remote learning. It has been very intense and difficult on me."*

1 Parenting Challenges

2 Financial Insecurity

3 Language Barriers

4 Fear and Isolation

*"The pandemic didn't get us all the same, we are more exposed, we must be on the streets every day and others can just work from home and life continues as usual. We have to leave our children; we can't work and take care of them at the same time like it is for other families."*

### Our San Mateo County Families

The families who shared their stories were racially diverse and included families raising children with special needs, single mothers, monolingual Spanish families, undocumented and mixed status families (parents are undocumented, children were born in the USA), and at least three families who have recently experienced homelessness. These interviews were conducted by the Silicon Valley Community Foundation.

*"The children around us don't necessarily have to be as affected by our grownup problems if we get the proper support that we need as adults."*



- Demographic Scope
- Reflections for Change
- Recommendations
- Next Steps

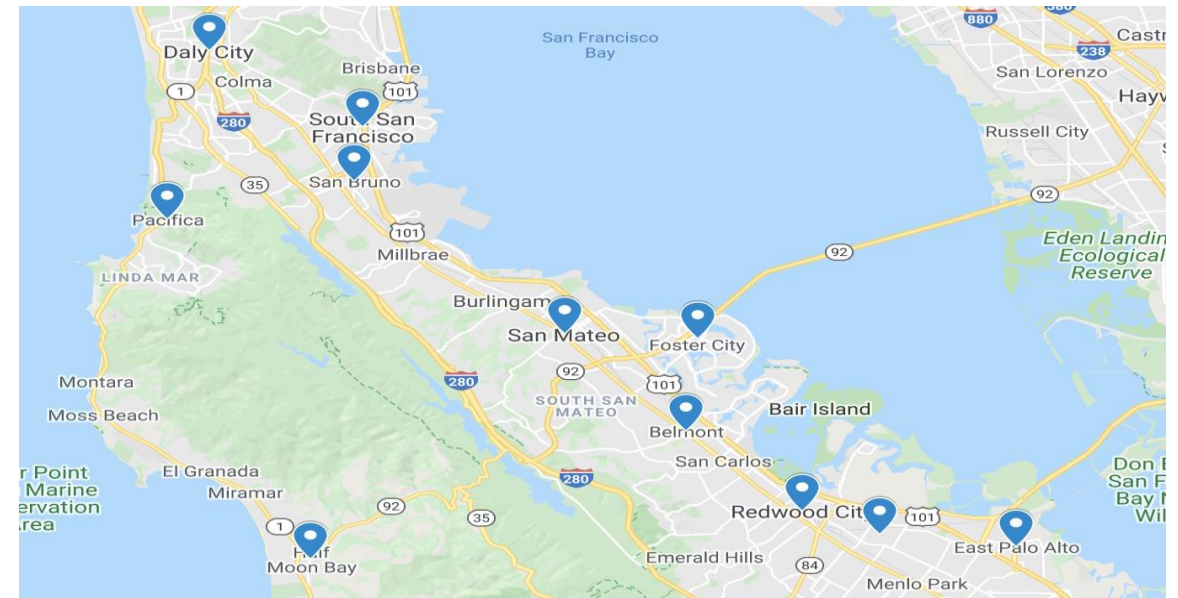
# How Community Leaders and Policy Makers Drive the Change We Need

## Guiding Questions:

- What would it take to create change on these issues and or uplift strengths?
- If success was guaranteed, what bold steps could we take?

# Geographic and Demographic Scope

Families were racially diverse and lived in: East Palo Alto, North Fair Oaks, Redwood City, Foster City, San Mateo, Daly City, Belmont, South San Francisco, Pacifica, San Bruno and Half Moon Bay. It included families raising children with special needs, single mothers, monolingual Spanish, undocumented, mixed status families (parents are undocumented, children were born in the USA), and at least three families recently experienced homelessness. (10 Conversations: Focus groups and Individuals-40 parents/families)



# HOPES AND DREAMS

“I want them to know who they are. I want them to respect and love themselves. I want them to be treated with respect”

“I want them to be safe and to grow healthy and study”.

“At the end of the day, I just want them to feel healthy, to feel happy, to feel loved, but most importantly, I want them to love themselves and respect themselves because that's one thing that I didn't do”

“I want her to be kind, I want her to be smart, confident, to have friends, to be smart and wise. “

- Parents



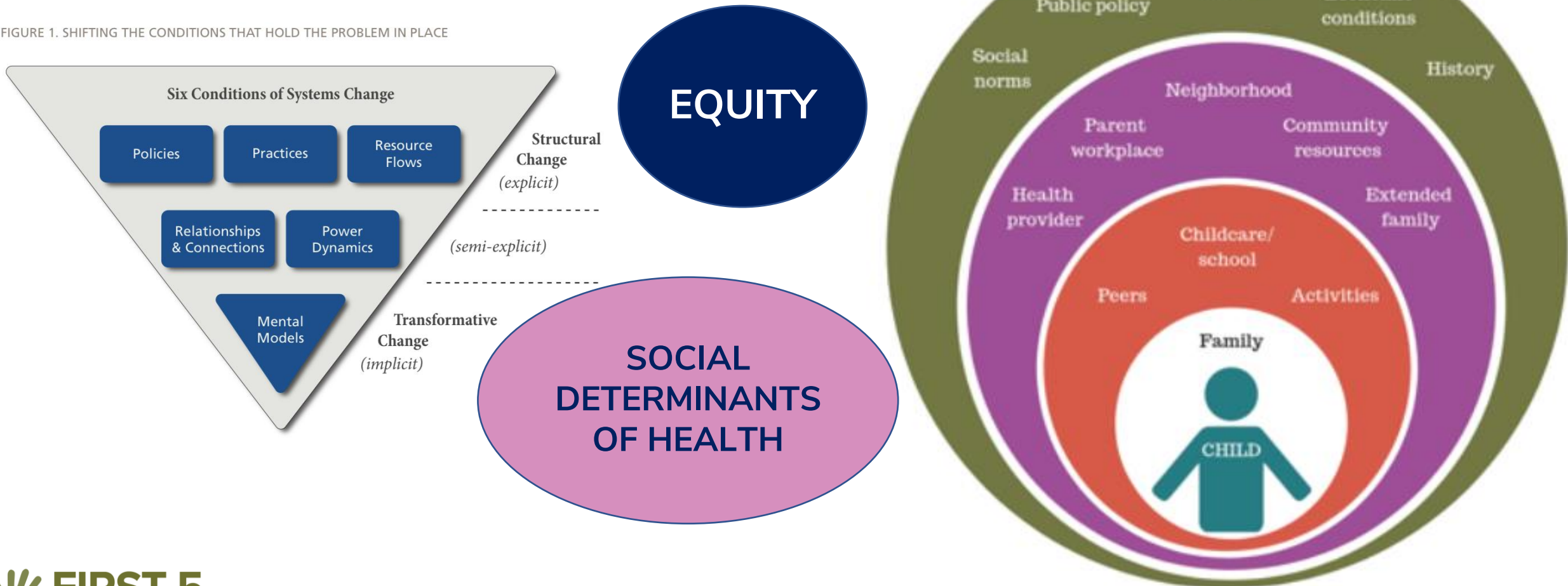
# “The System isn’t broken they were designed to be this way”

## Parent

## PREPARING CHILDREN FOR SUCCESS

Systems Change: Shifting Conditions That Keep Problems in Place (FSG 2018)

FIGURE 1. SHIFTING THE CONDITIONS THAT HOLD THE PROBLEM IN PLACE





# DIFFERENT FAMILIES FACED DIFFERENT CHALLENGES AND BARRIERS

PARENTING  
CHALLENGES

FINANCIAL  
INSECURITIES

HIGH LEVELS  
OF STRESS

LANGUAGE  
BARRIERS

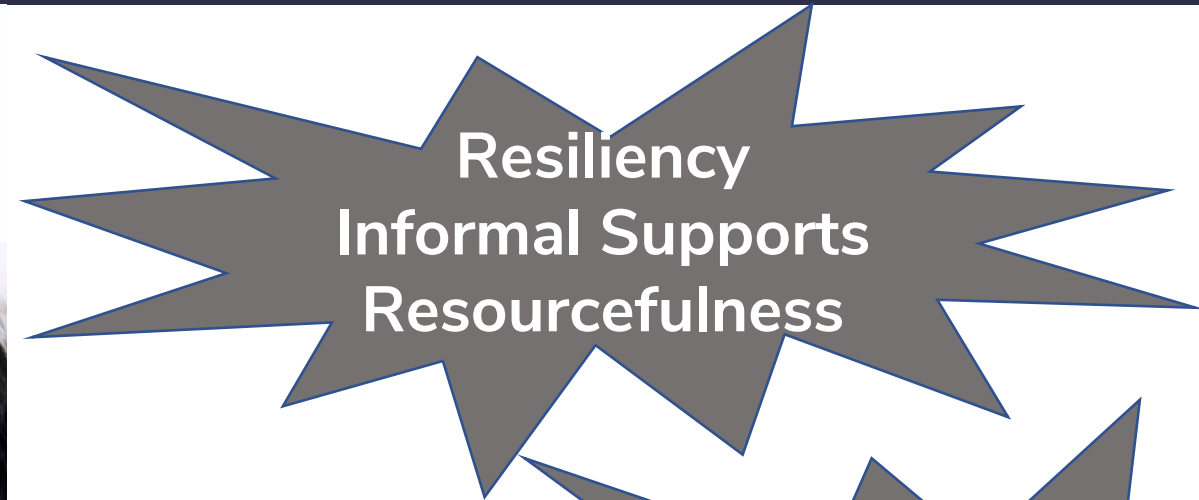
FEAR AND  
ISOLATION

# FAMILY AND COMMUNITY STRENGTHS

“ *The children around us don't necessarily have to be as affected by our grownup problems if we get the proper support that we need as adults.* ”



**Parents had ideas about helpful programs and indicated a desire for greater access.**



**Increase Level Of  
Investment To Align  
Available Support Systems  
Locally**

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

***Those Closest To The Problems  
Are Closest To the Solution***

**Advocate For  
Disenfranchised  
Families At All Levels**

# Increase Level of Investment To Align Available Support Systems Locally

1

Invest in community navigator staff housed in community-based organizations in low-income zip codes of county.

2

Make grants for multi-year, full cost grants to support the operation of small nonprofit organizations in low-income zip codes, who are providing family centered solutions.

3

Capture family voices on an ongoing basis to inform policy decisions & investments communities need.

4

Fund afterschool & summer programs with enrichment activities for young children.

# Advocate For Disenfranchised Families At All Levels

1

Support organizations working with undocumented families and increase access to services and resources.

2

Advocate for affordable and high-quality early care and learning experiences for all children.

3

Build bridges between schools & community organizations supporting the needs of the adults.

4

Improve public transportation and subsidize use for working families.

5

Offer responsive, flexible, and non-traditional hours to meet the needs of working families.

6

Increase partnerships to bridge the support gap of undocumented families.

# How Community Leaders and Policy Makers Drive the Change We Need

## Guiding Questions:

- What would it take to create change on these issues and or uplift strengths?
- If success was guaranteed, what bold steps could we take?

**“These are all our children. And we will benefit by or pay for what they become.”**  
- James Baldwin

# CONTACT INFO

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# Identifying and Serving Children with Special Needs in San Mateo County

First 5 SMC Commission Meeting  
February 28, 2022

Carol Elliott, Director of Family Support Services, AbilityPath  
Emily Roberts, Strategic Initiatives Project Manager, First 5 SMC



# Overview

- Overview of First 5's Role
- Help Me Grow and the Integrated Systems for Children with Special Needs
- High Level Successes & Challenges
- Looking Forward

# First 5 Core Functions

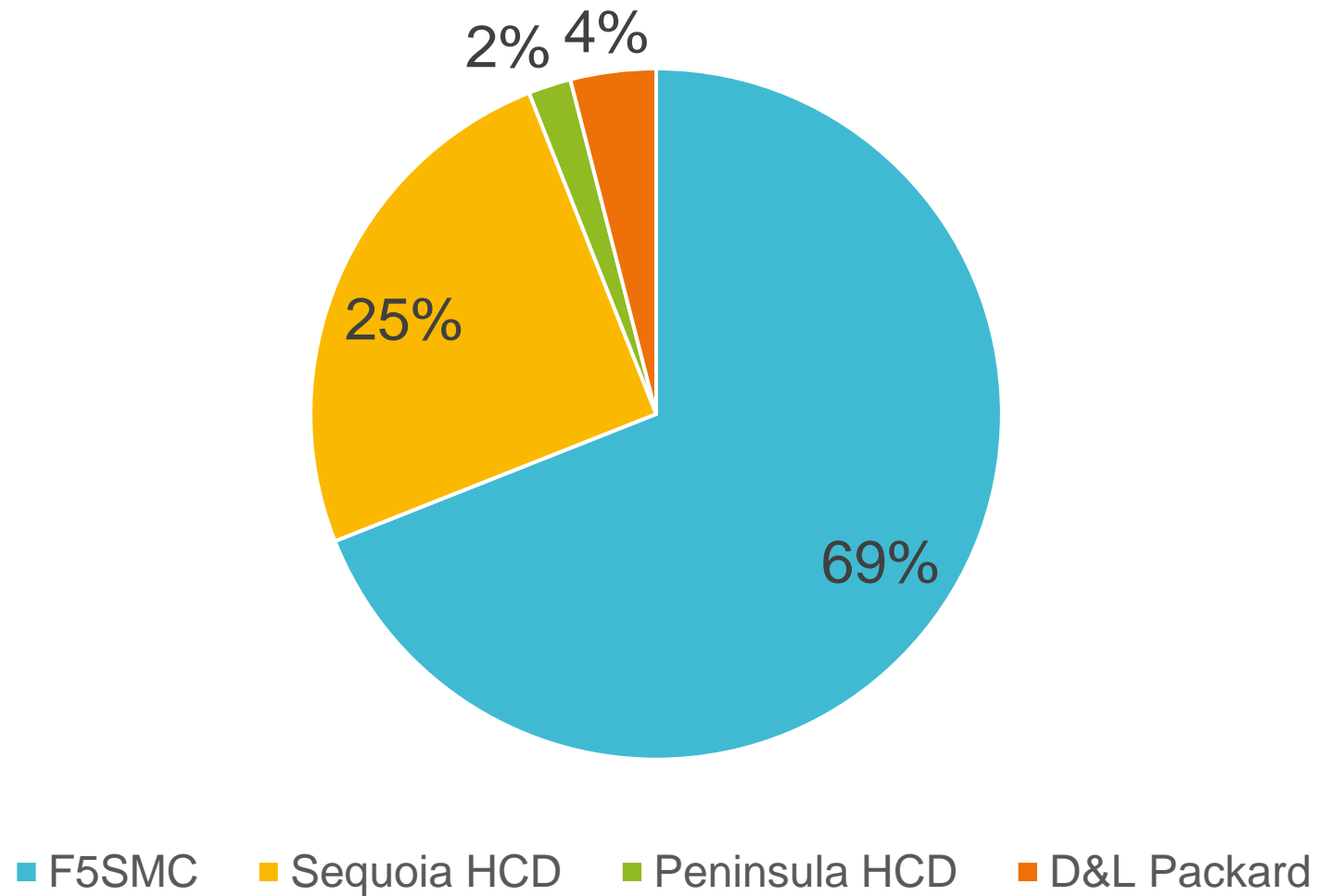
Strategic Financial Investor

Community Partner

Systems Leader



# Integrated Systems for Children with Special Needs: Funding



# First 5 Update

## Community Partner

- Locally
- Regionally
- Statewide

## Systems Leader

- Backbone Agency for HMG SMC
- Systems Change for Children with Special Needs
- Early Identification and Intervention Environmental Scan

Help  
Me  
Grow  
National  
Model



First 5 as HMG  
Backbone +  
Knowledge of  
Local Gaps



Integrated  
Systems for  
Children  
with  
Special Needs

## Help Me Grow SMC Core Components

Help Me Grow is a comprehensive system that promotes universal early identification and linkage to intervention and ensures that all children reach their greatest potential



# Integrated Systems for Children with Special Needs

## AbilityPath

Stanford Children's Hospital  
Government Relations

Life Steps

StarVista

Stanford Children's Hospital  
Developmental Behavioral Pediatrics

Legal Aid

Silicon Valley Community Foundation

	Children 0-5	Parents	Providers
Parent/Child Groups (6-10 sessions per group)	259	246	
Mental Health - Short Term Services	18	22	
Care Coordination & Support		781	
Developmental Screenings	307		
Complex Cases - MAC Roundtable	26		
Legal Services	49	58	309
Provider Trainings & Support			356
Parent Coaching videos		1538	

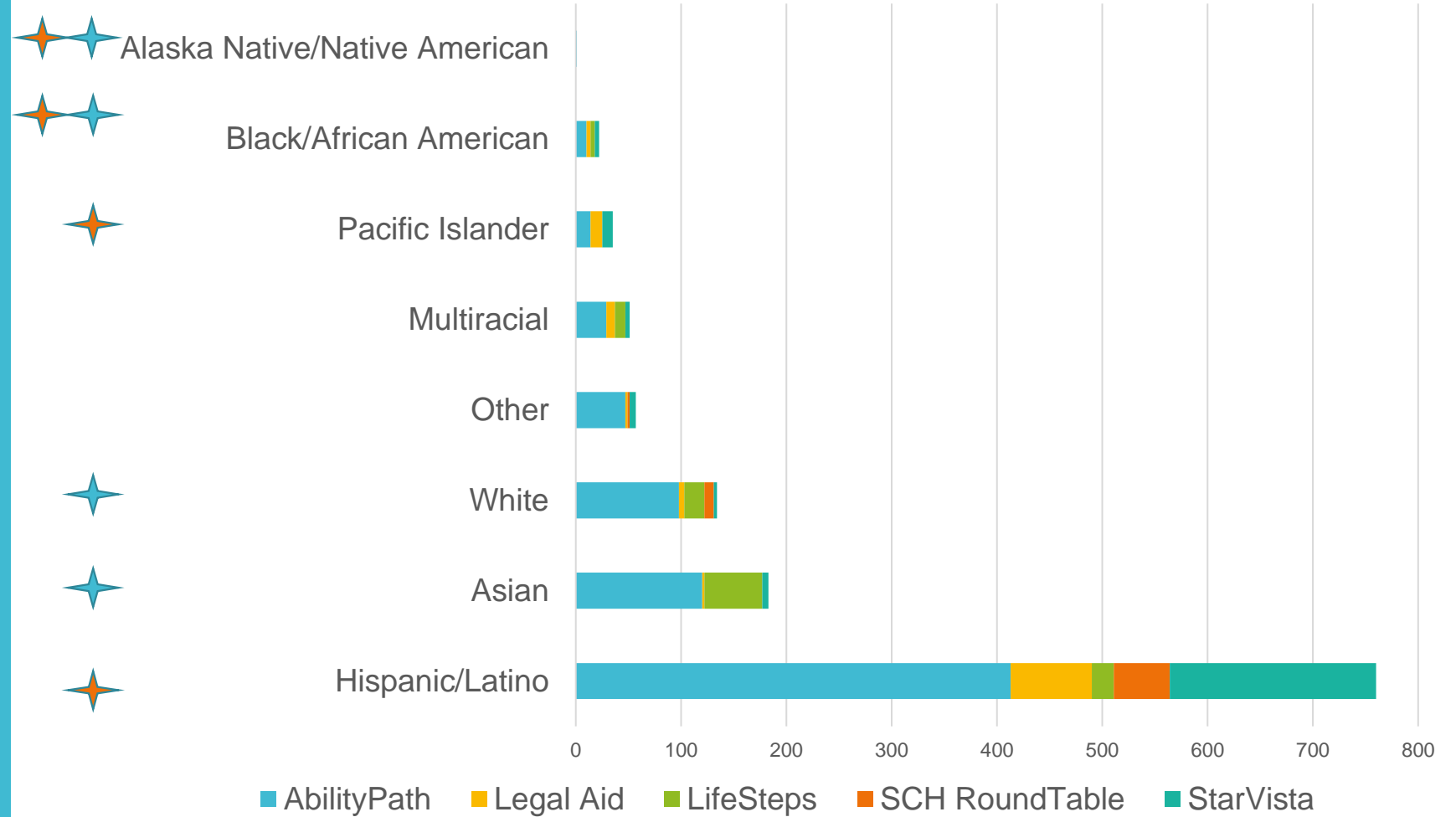
# Direct Services Overview

FY2020 - 21 Data



# WHO ARE THE ISCSN SERVICES REACHING?

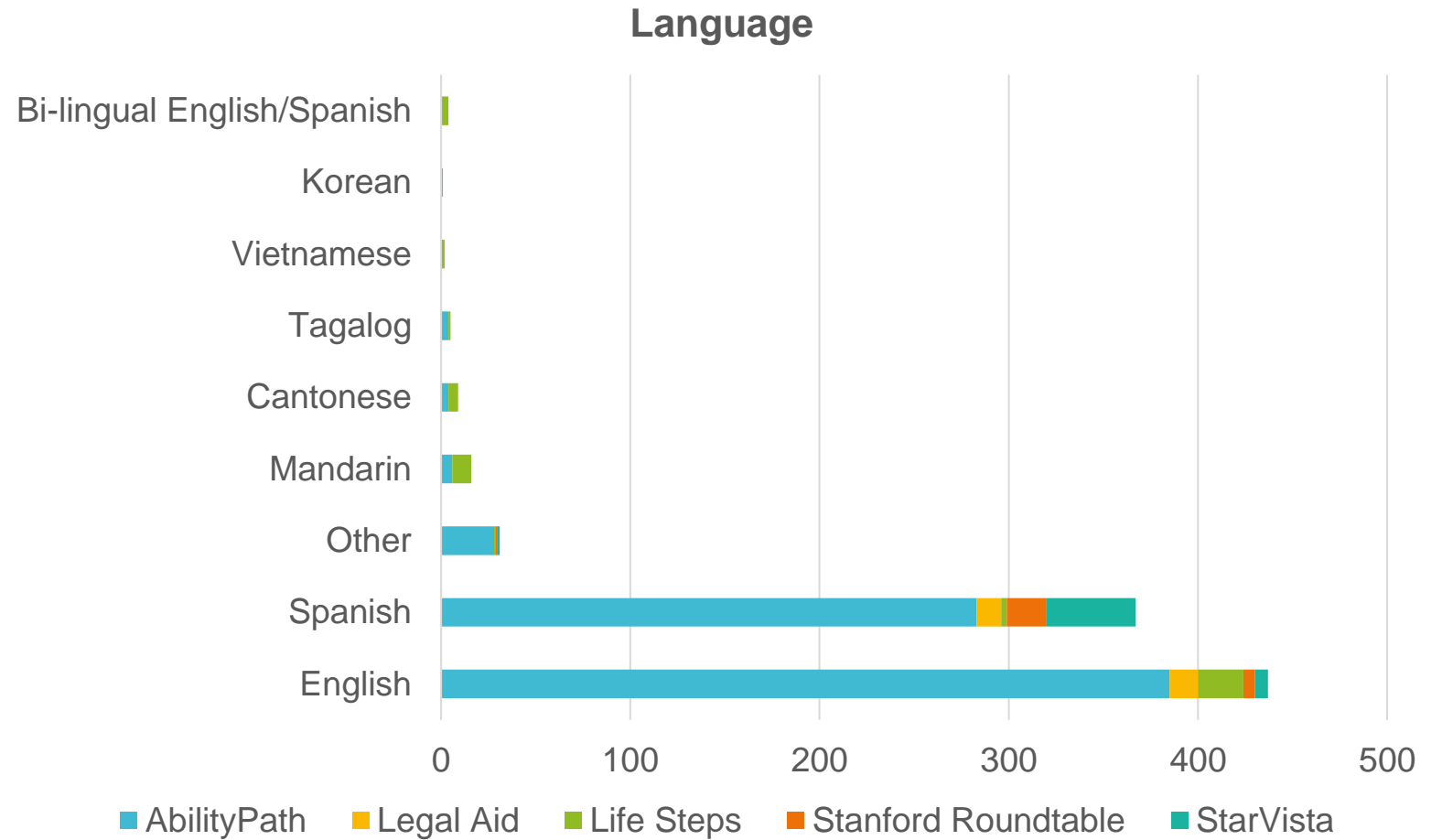
## Adults & Children Served – Ethnicity



under-represented compared to population  
median income below county average

FY21 Data

# WHO ARE THE ISCSN SERVICES REACHING?



Unknown: 473

# SUCCESSES - THEMES

- **Resiliency** to find successful strategies that helped overcome challenges caused by Covid
  - **Collaboration**, staying connected to other service providers, sharing of information
  - **Innovating** and **Iterating** on new strategies (virtual groups, formats, technology, outreach)
  - **Leveraging** the virtual format to reach both families and providers (videos, online trainings & presentations)
- Maintaining focus on **family-centered care** and **trauma-informed strategies**
- **Virtual supports** for parents & children filled a big void
- Systems level progress

## CHALLENGES - THEMES

- Virtual services worked for many activities, but for certain activities their **limitations** can't be overcome
- **Need of families intensified**, families moving posed challenges, impact on marginalized families was acute
- Capacity of everyone - **families, providers, staff** – was much lower due to myriad of **impacts from covid**.
- **Systems level challenges**: lack of providers, complexity of systems
- **Staffing turnover** – internal and external effects

THANK YOU!

## Discussion & Questions

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Carol Elliott: [celliot@abilitypath.org](mailto:celliot@abilitypath.org)