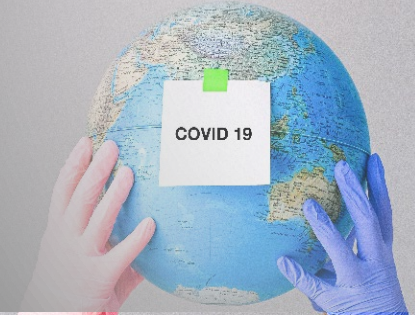




Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Services for New Jersey Families

2020 COVID-19 IMPACT BRIEF



The New Jersey Department of Children and Families (DCF) funds a network of agencies to provide services and supports to children, families and individuals living in the state of New Jersey. In June and October 2020, DCF requested its direct service providers with cost-reimbursement contracts to

complete a survey to help DCF understand the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the networks' ability to deliver essential services.* DCF wanted to know how programs' operations were affected by the pandemic and the most pressing challenges providers were facing as a result of the pandemic.

Survey Respondents

DCF surveyed approximately **940** programs within **290** agencies about their experiences at two points during the pandemic - May and September 2020. For the first reporting period in May, **81%** of programs completed the survey.

Ninety percent of programs completed the survey for the September reporting period.

Survey respondents represented 7 different types of services.



CLINICAL



EARLY CHILDHOOD



EDUCATION



EMPLOYMENT & TRAINING



FAMILY SUPPORT



RESIDENTIAL CARE



SEXUAL & DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SUPPORT

*Information regarding programs with fee-for-service contracts is captured in other NJ DCF reports

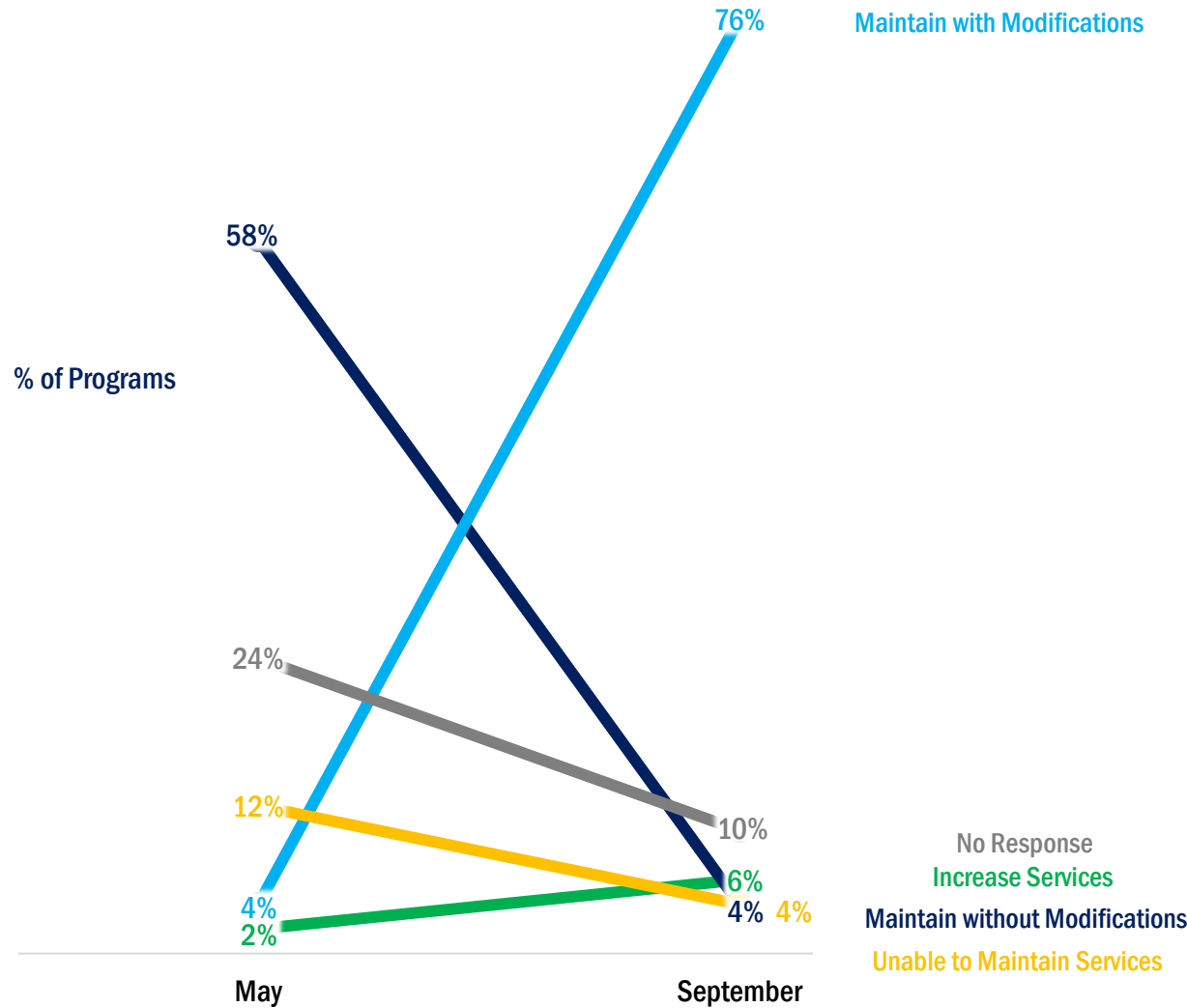


Impact on Operations



Impact of COVID-19 on Operations

Most programs were able to maintain services in May and September, although many reported making modifications in order to do so.

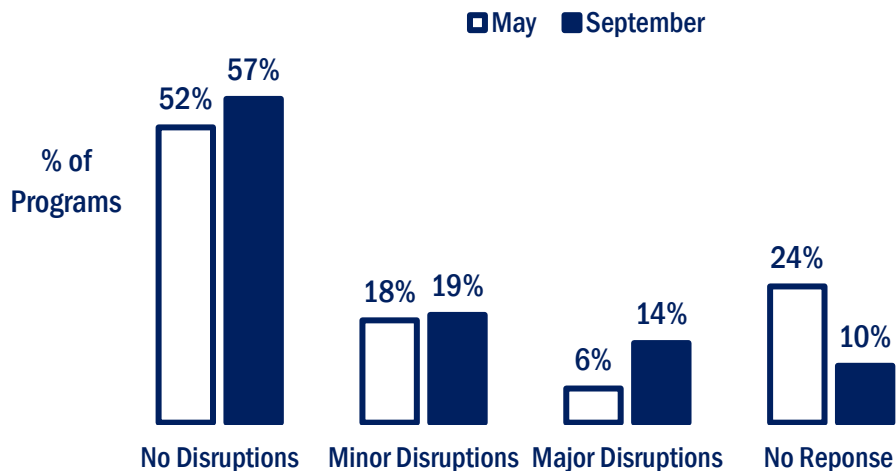


While the majority of programs were able to maintain services for children and families during the pandemic, over time, most did so with modifications. In May, **64%** of programs reported being able to maintain services. This increased to **86%** in September with 76% of programs making modifications.



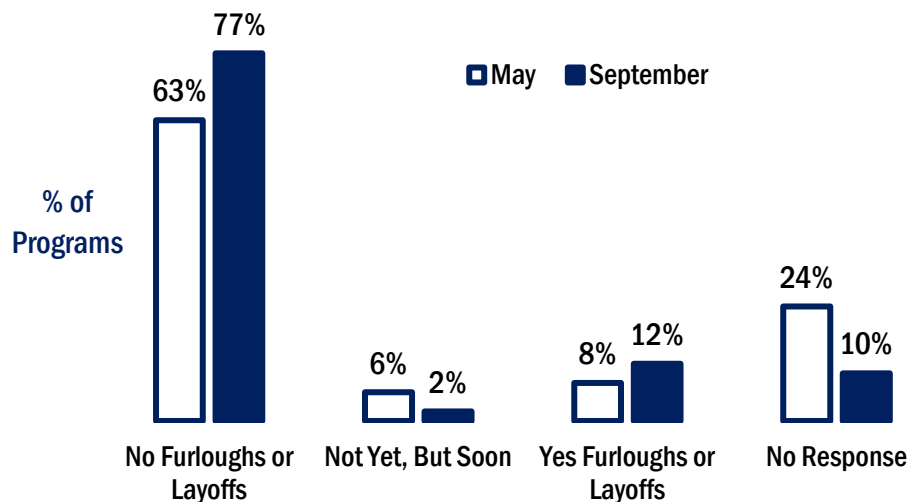
Most programs did not experience any financial or funding disruptions due to the pandemic.

In May, approximately **1 in 4** programs (24%) reported minor or major financial disruptions due to the pandemic. This increased to **1 in 3** programs (33%) in September 2020.



Staffing in May and September was generally stable, with the majority of programs reporting no furloughs or layoffs.

Staffing remained generally stable among NJ DCF's surveyed network of service providers however, a small group of providers reported experiencing staffing reductions during the pandemic. In May, **8%** of programs reported furloughs or layoffs with another **6%** anticipating staffing reductions soon. In September, the percentage of programs that reported layoffs or furloughs increased to **12%** with another **2%** reporting that layoffs or furloughs were imminent.

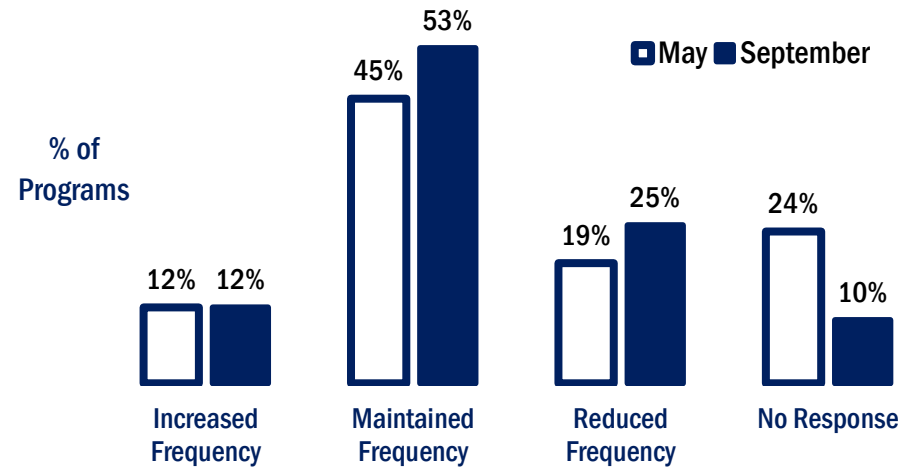


Impact on Services for Children and Families

Approximately half of programs were able to maintain the frequency of services in May and September.

In September, **53%** of programs reported being able to maintain the frequency of their services, up from **45%** in May. The percentage of programs that reported a reduction in the frequency of services also increased from May (19%) to September (25%).

The duration of services that programs provided was also impacted (not pictured). While over half of programs maintained or increased the duration of their services in May (61%) and September (68%), about **one-fifth** of programs (22%) reported reduced service duration in September compared to **16%** in May.

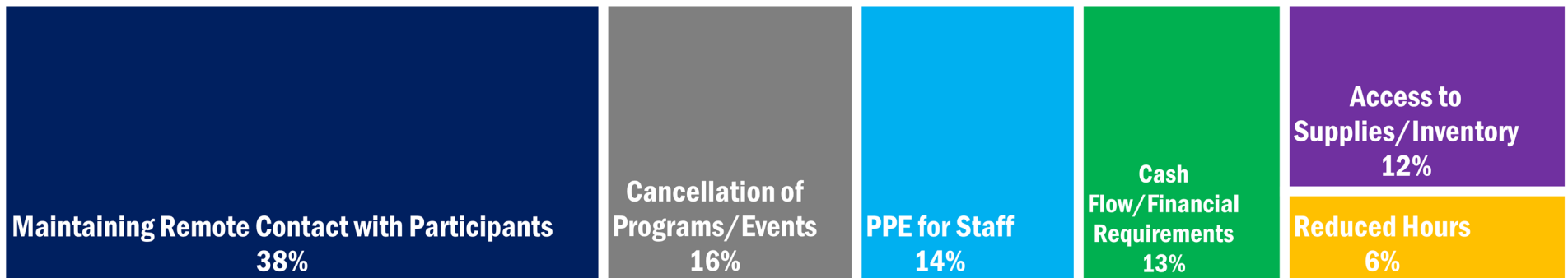


Operational Concerns

Maintaining remote contact with families was programs' most common operational concern during the pandemic.

In May, programs' greatest operational concerns included maintaining remote contact with families (38%), cancellation of programs or events (16%), procuring sufficient Personal Protective Equipment for staff (14%) and cash flow (13%) (see figure below). In September, technology continued to be an

issue: **45%** of programs struggled to engage families in remote technology sessions and **33%** of programs experienced challenges maintaining contact with families through technology.



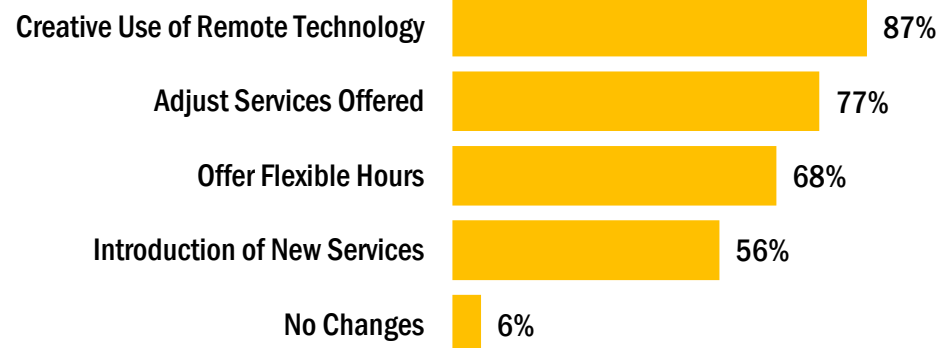
Lessons Learned



"At the beginning of the COVID crisis, we moved swiftly to connect with our families. We relied on technology to speak with and keep in touch... We saw a significant increase in the number served. We developed creative strategies and innovative solutions to get food, diapers, adult briefs, masks, cleaning supplies, personal hygiene items, and more into the hands of our families. We used home drop-off as well as mailing of grocery cards. We host grab and go events. We see a huge and frequent telephone contact with clients for emotional support. We set up our staff to work effectively remotely with remote technology." - **NJ Family Success Center**

Service Adaptations

In September, the vast majority of programs reported adapting their services (**94%**) to meet children's and families' needs during the pandemic. The most common adaptations were creative uses of remote technology followed by adjustments to the types of services offered. More than half (**56%**) of programs introduced new services in response to the pandemic. Examples of innovations included virtual camps, pop-up food banks for families, baby pantries, and curbside drop-offs of essential items. Programs found that engaging families during the pandemic required flexibility in the timing and frequency of services provided and overcame setbacks by monitoring their work and making quick adjustments when needed.



Lessons Learned

While some programs within NJ DCF's service provider network experienced service disruptions during the pandemic, the majority were able to successfully maintain services for children, families and individuals living in New Jersey. Though programs faced challenges maintaining remote contact with participants during pandemic-related lockdowns, many were able to quickly adapt their approaches to meet the needs of children and families in a quickly evolving context.

