



**G A D S H I L L**  
**C E N T E R**

# **Solidarity in the Midst of Inequity:** The Experience of Gads Hill Center Families

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# Overview & Agenda

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## Understanding the Landscape: The Communities We Serve

- Pre-Pandemic & During the Pandemic
- Mental Health: Intergenerational Trauma & Psychosocial Wellbeing

## Mental Health During the Pandemic

- Multi-Tiered System of Support
- Whole Child Approach
- Complex Trauma Exposure

## Our Response: Gads Hill Center Safety Net

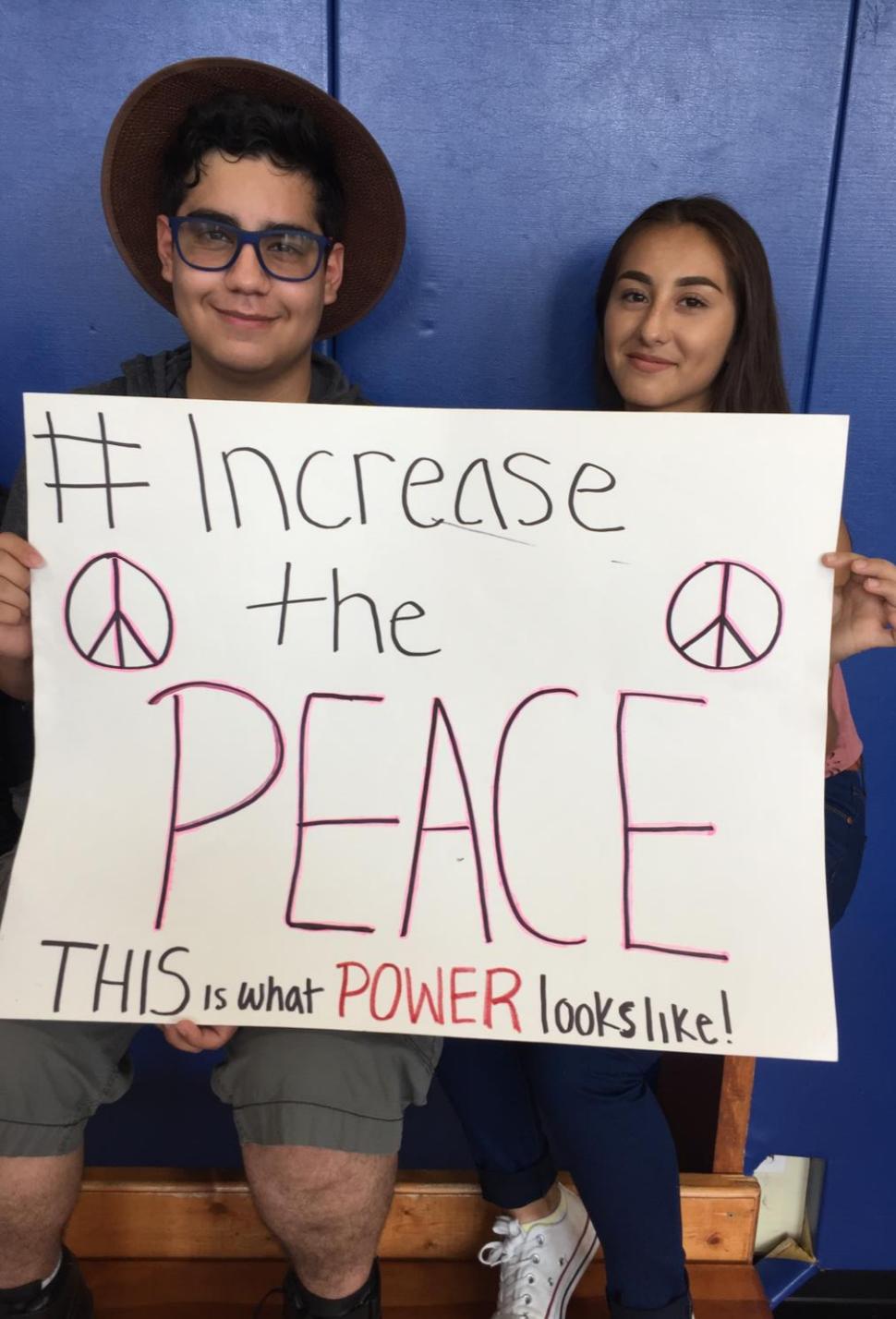
- Long-Term Effects Unknown

## Takeaways



In response to the crisis, Gads Hill Center leveraged its workforce to conduct daily and weekly surveys to provide individualized support

- Gads Hill Center staff began surveying parents as soon as the lockdown in Chicago began on March 17<sup>th</sup>, 2020. The last survey took place on March 19<sup>th</sup>, 2021.
- Total Surveys Conducted: 12,026
- Total Number of Families (unduplicated): 1,140



## Understanding the Landscape: Pre-Pandemic Context

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The primary neighborhoods our families reside in have either been ignored by the city or negatively impacted by the city's choices (Brighton Park, North Lawndale, Chicago Lawn, Pilsen)

- Average crime rate is close to three times the national average.
- 6 out of 7 of the communities we serve contains a food desert.
- Mental Health resource deserts; there are only 63 mental health clinicians per 1k residents on the southwest side versus 381/1k in Chicago's downtown affluent neighborhoods.

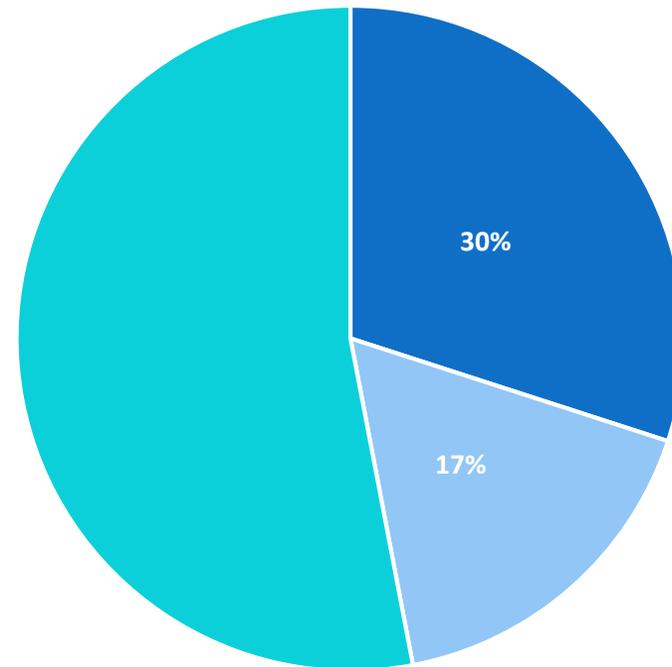
# Understanding the Landscape: Pre-Pandemic Context

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Families were faced with many challenges before the pandemic:

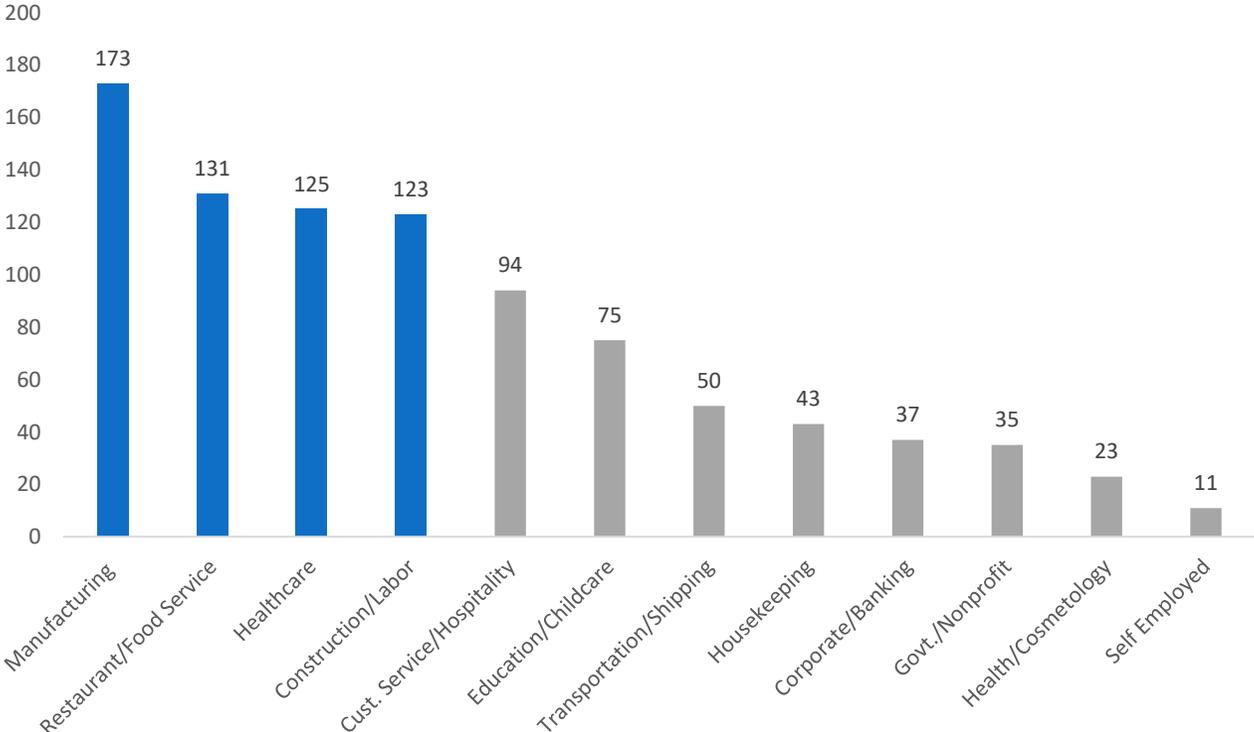
- 98% of families below FPL
- Majority of families worked in industries with low pay (working poor)
- 37% of parents were uninsured pre-pandemic
- Only 66% of individuals graduate high school in the communities we serve (compared with national average which was 86% in 2018)
- 30% of families were of mixed status
- Our families primarily reside on the south and southwest sides of Chicago
- Public Charge caused a lot of hesitancy to access services

**30% of families surveyed** were mixed status. **17%** of families did not report



# Understanding the Landscape: Pre-Pandemic Context

Number of Jobs By Industry Held by GHC Parents



# Self-Reliance in Our Families

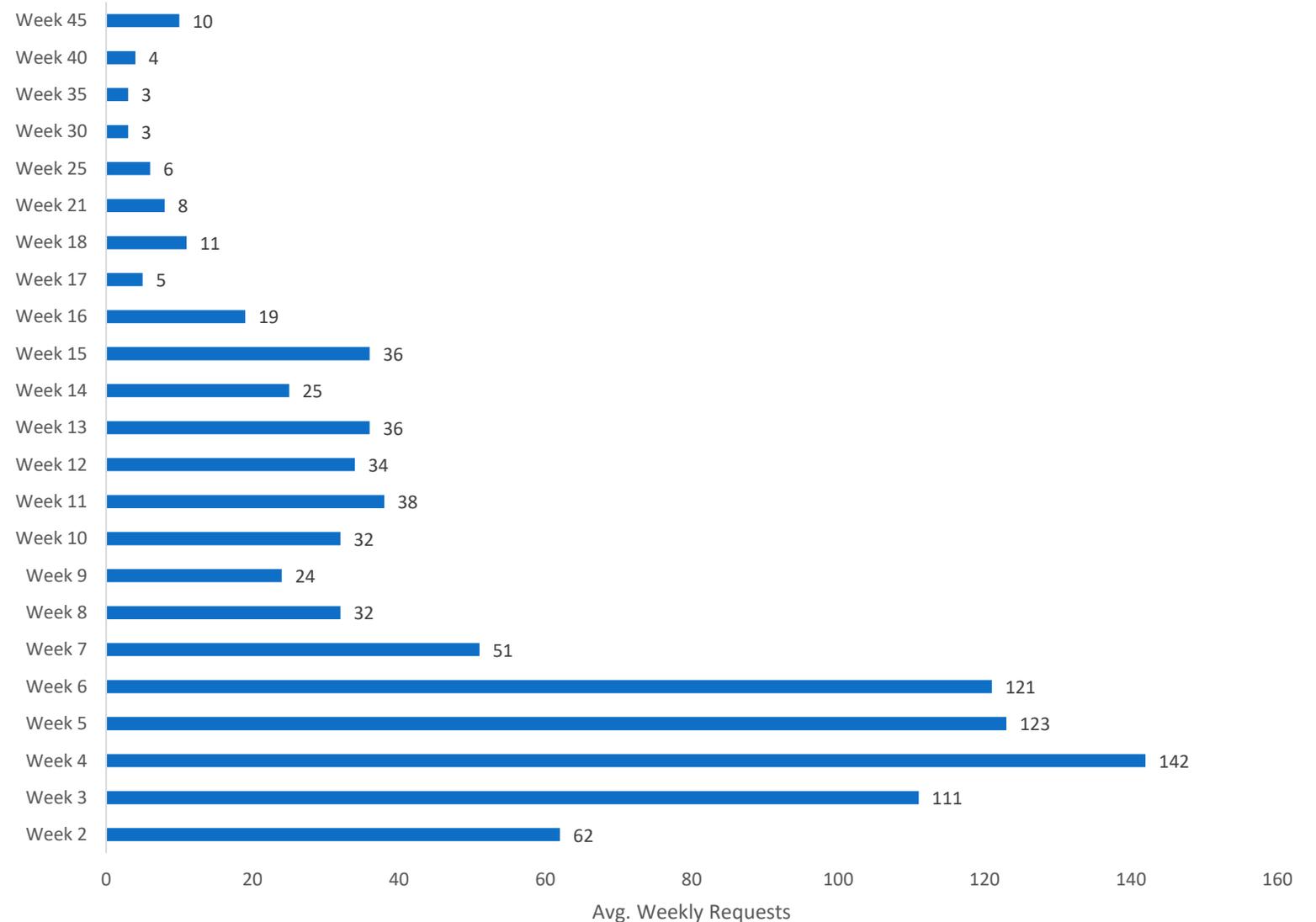
Self-Reliance is a key protective factor among immigrant families; so, while they are extremely resilient, they also struggle to access and utilize the resources available.

*A month into the pandemic, many had exhausted their savings and needed assistance but requested smaller amounts indicating that they still had modest savings to sustain their families.*

## Other environmental factors:

- Public Charge concerns/confusion
- Political climate/Social unrest
- Culture of self efficacy among our families

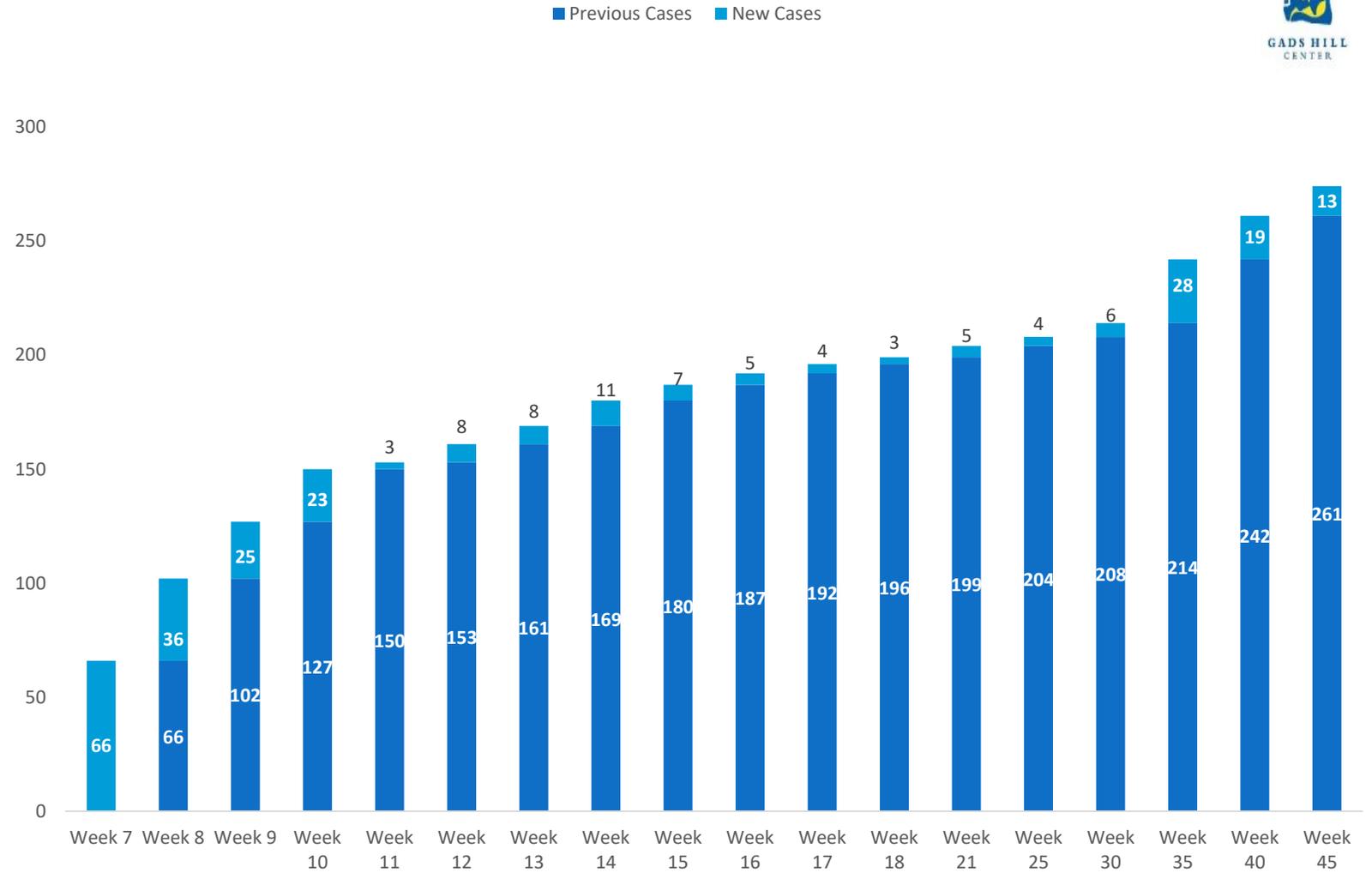
Request for assistance quickly fell when families received support



# Twin Pandemics: COVID-19 and Poverty

- **The pandemic directly impacted industries where our families were working**
  - 25% of parents lost their job, with 79% of them still unable to find work
  - 53% of parents had their hours reduced, with 85% still not working at their full rate
  - Although many families received stimulus checks, 10% of them waited 2-5 months for their first check to arrive. Mixed status families were excluded.
- **650 parents had to continue working, despite the risks**
  - 53% worked in jobs with high person-to-person contact and no option for remote work (Manufacturing, Food Service, Customer Service)

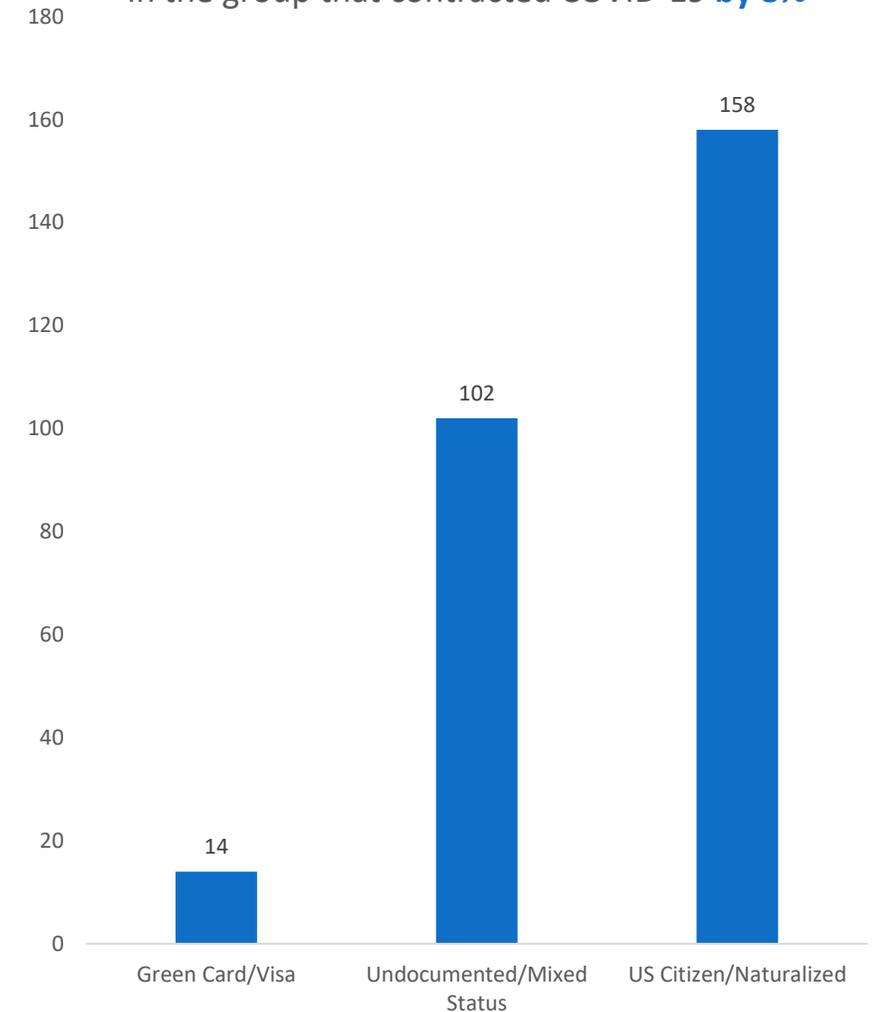
Almost 1 in 4 GHC parents reported contracting COVID-19 in the last year



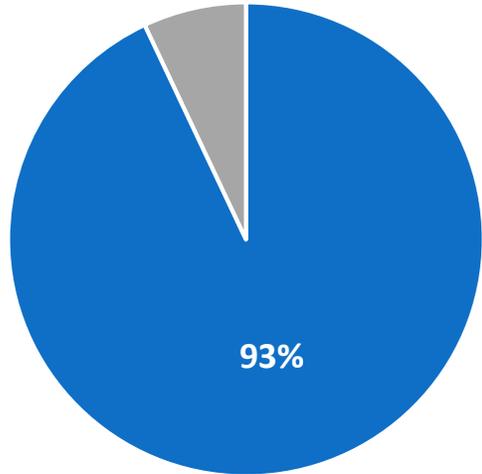
# Twin Pandemics: COVID-19 and Poverty

- **COVID-19 hospitalizations are estimated to range from \$51,389-\$78,569 for those without insurance or receiving out-of-network care**
- **24% of all parents contracted COVID-19, with mixed status families being 8% more likely to get infected.**
  - 33% of Parents working in some of the most vulnerable workplaces contracted COVID-19
  - 1 in 3 parents who got sick were uninsured
  - 29% of parents who got sick lost their job
  - 59% of parents who got sick also had their hours reduced

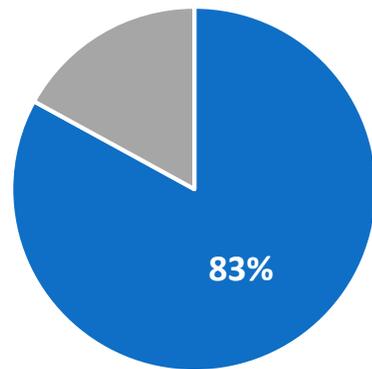
**Mixed Status families were overrepresented in the group that contracted COVID-19 by 8%**



**Over 9 out of 10 students** had had an increase in the severity of their symptoms



**4 out of 5 students** had experienced new symptoms separate from their primary diagnosis

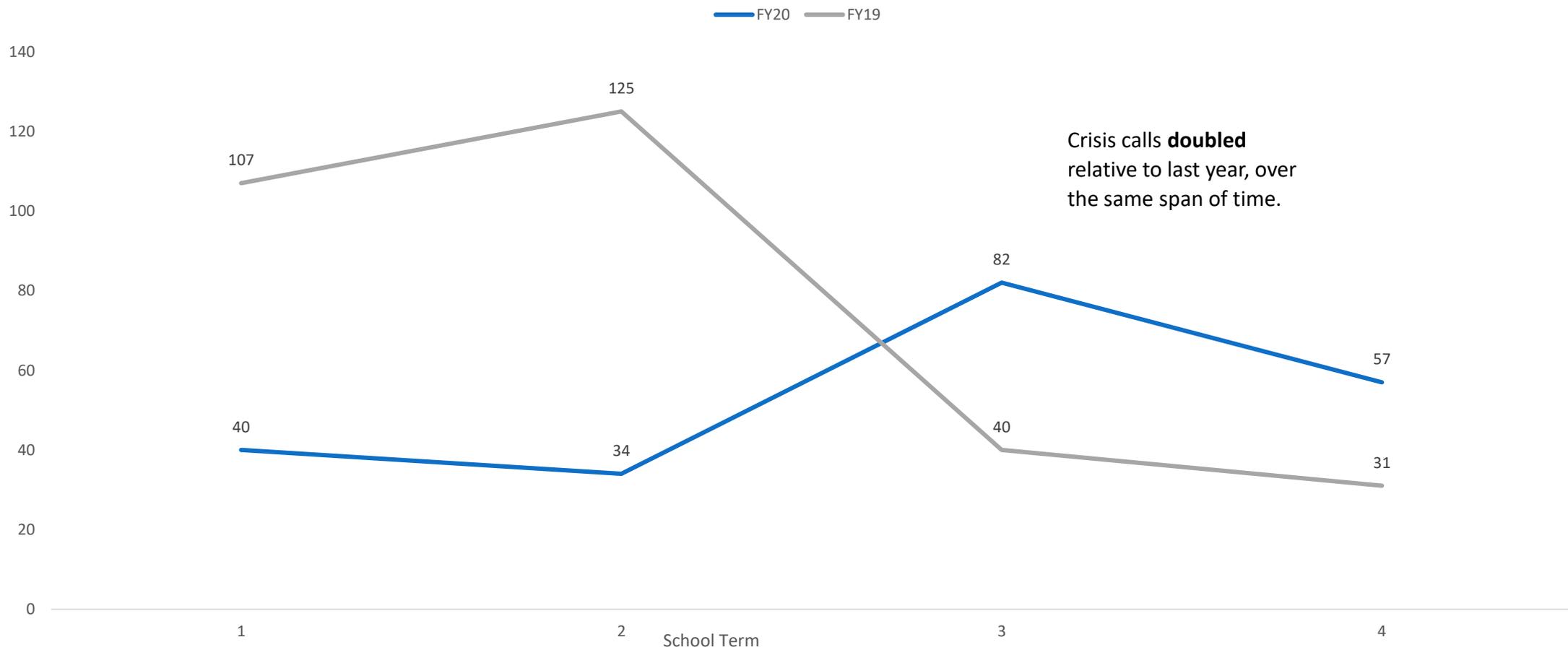


# Mental Health Deterioration of Children in Poverty & Mixed Status Families

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- The toxic stress that mixed immigration status families endure on an ongoing basis creates mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, substance abuse, and even domestic violence.
- Child poverty, especially ways in which being cut out of public services limits families' ability to raise healthy, thriving kids.
- A shift in our families needs: from "Barely Surviving" before the Pandemic to "Crisis Mode"

When looking at crisis patterns among students,  
there was a sharp increase in events that occurred in contrast from last year



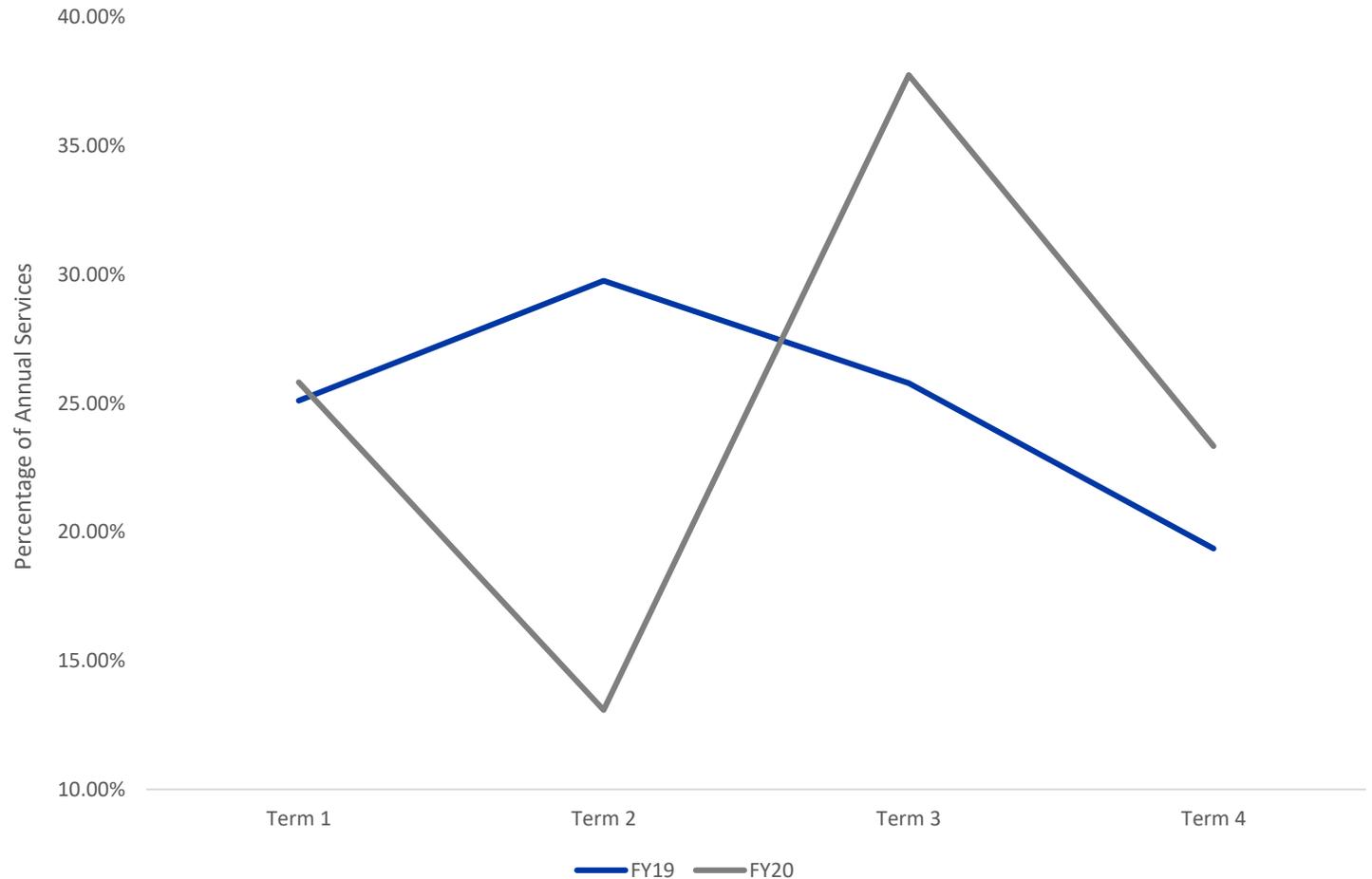
Crisis calls **doubled**  
relative to last year, over  
the same span of time.

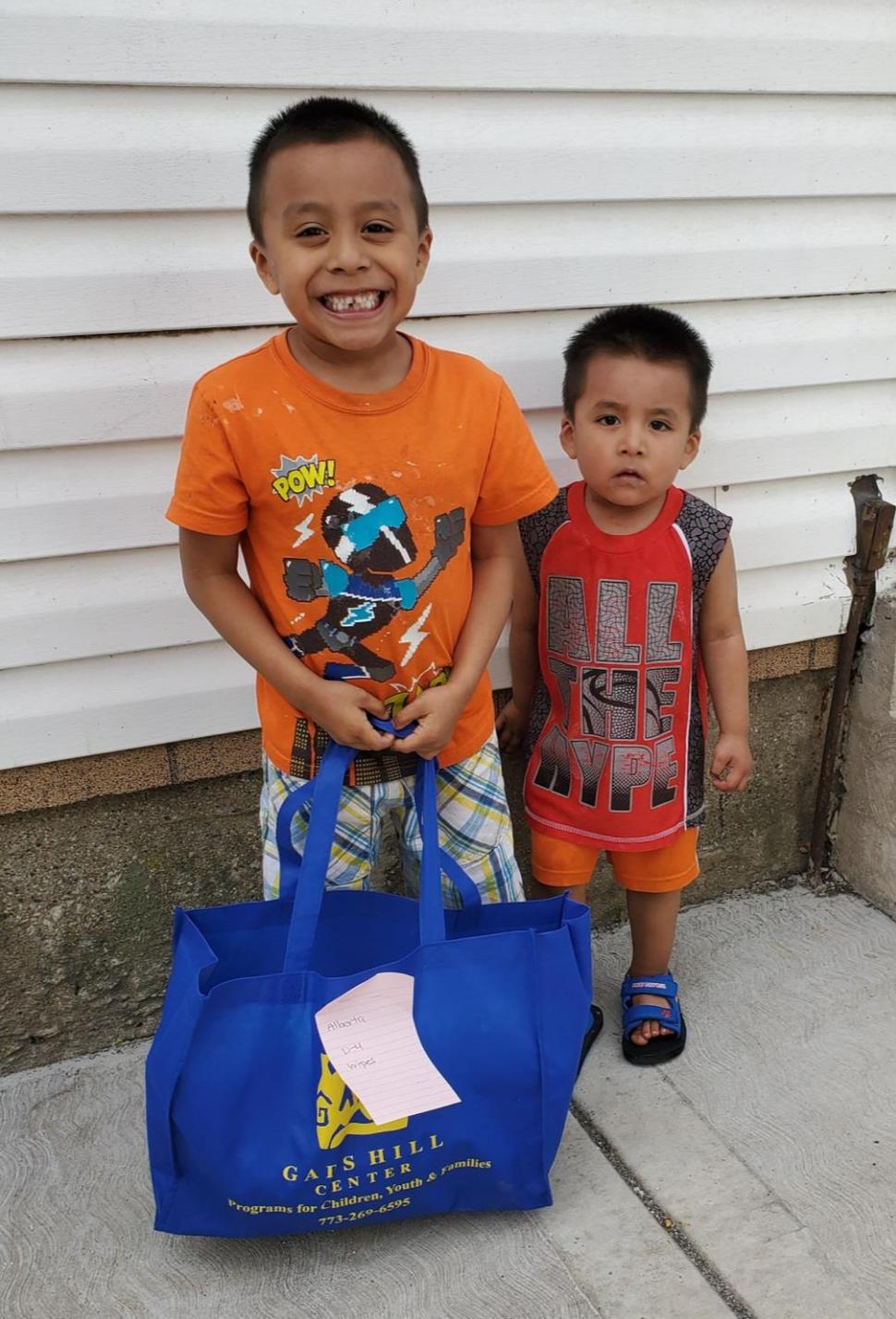
# GHC's Response to the Mental Health Crisis

## GHC Tiered System of support:

- A whole-agency approach: mental health first aid
- Whole child approach (academic, social emotional learning, mental health, physical wellbeing, and critical thinking)
- Intergenerational approach: serves the whole family
- Staff mental wellbeing/resources
- Community partnerships

Clinicians showed an **8% increase in the number of services provided** during the shelter-in-place relative to last year



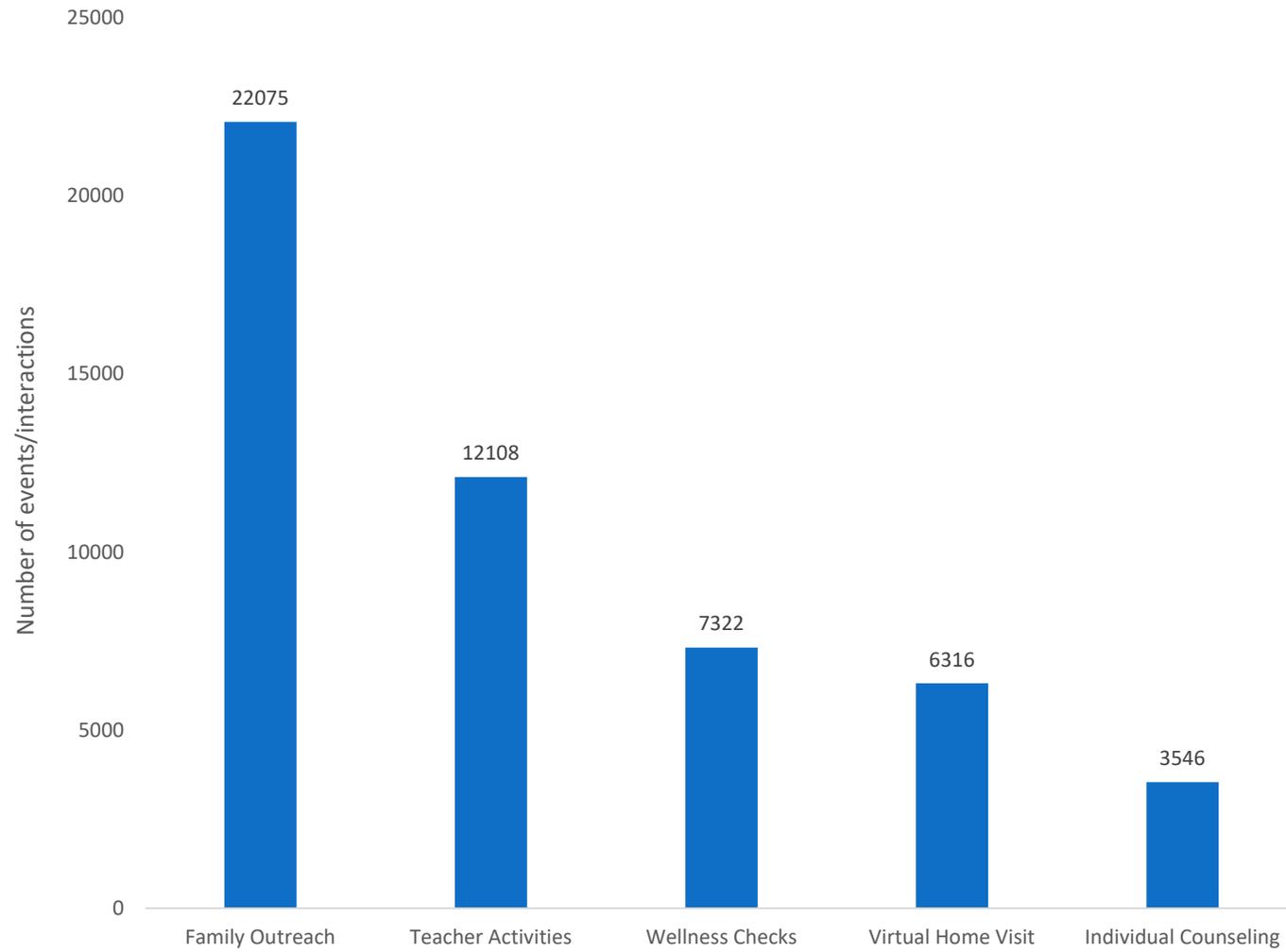


## GHC Safety Net: A collective and coordinated response to a global crisis at a community level

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- The pandemic exposed the effects decades of disinvestment in public health and education on communities of color
- Gads Hill Center mobilized staff to engage families to offer our full range of programs and augmented services to provide immediate mental health first aid and digital skills training to address gaps in public and private resources

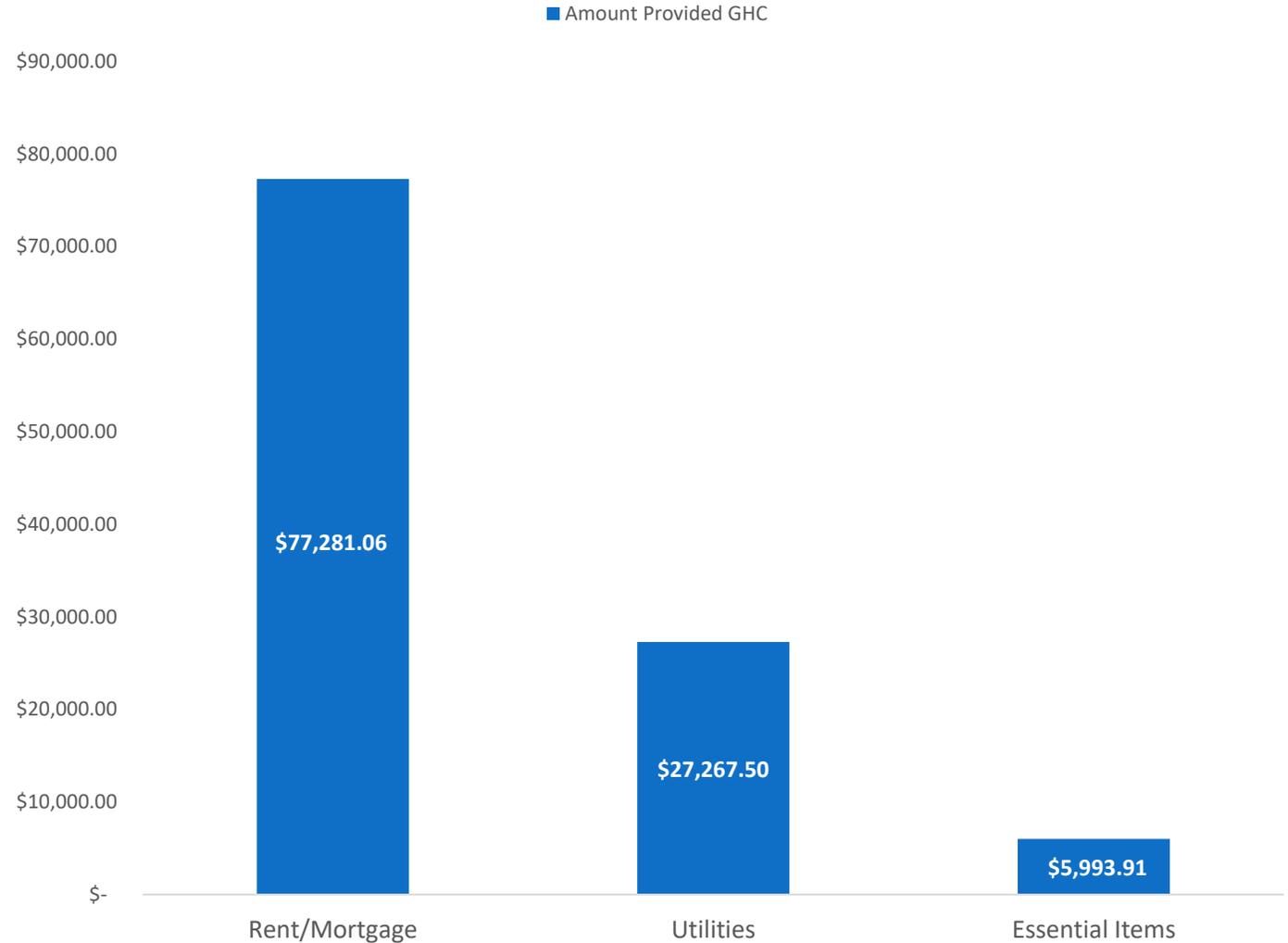
## Snapshot of Safety Net Services



Gads Hill Center created an Emergency Response to support our families' most pressing challenges to survival/daily life

Gads Hill Center advocated on behalf of our families to raise **over \$200,000** toward our Emergency Response Fund

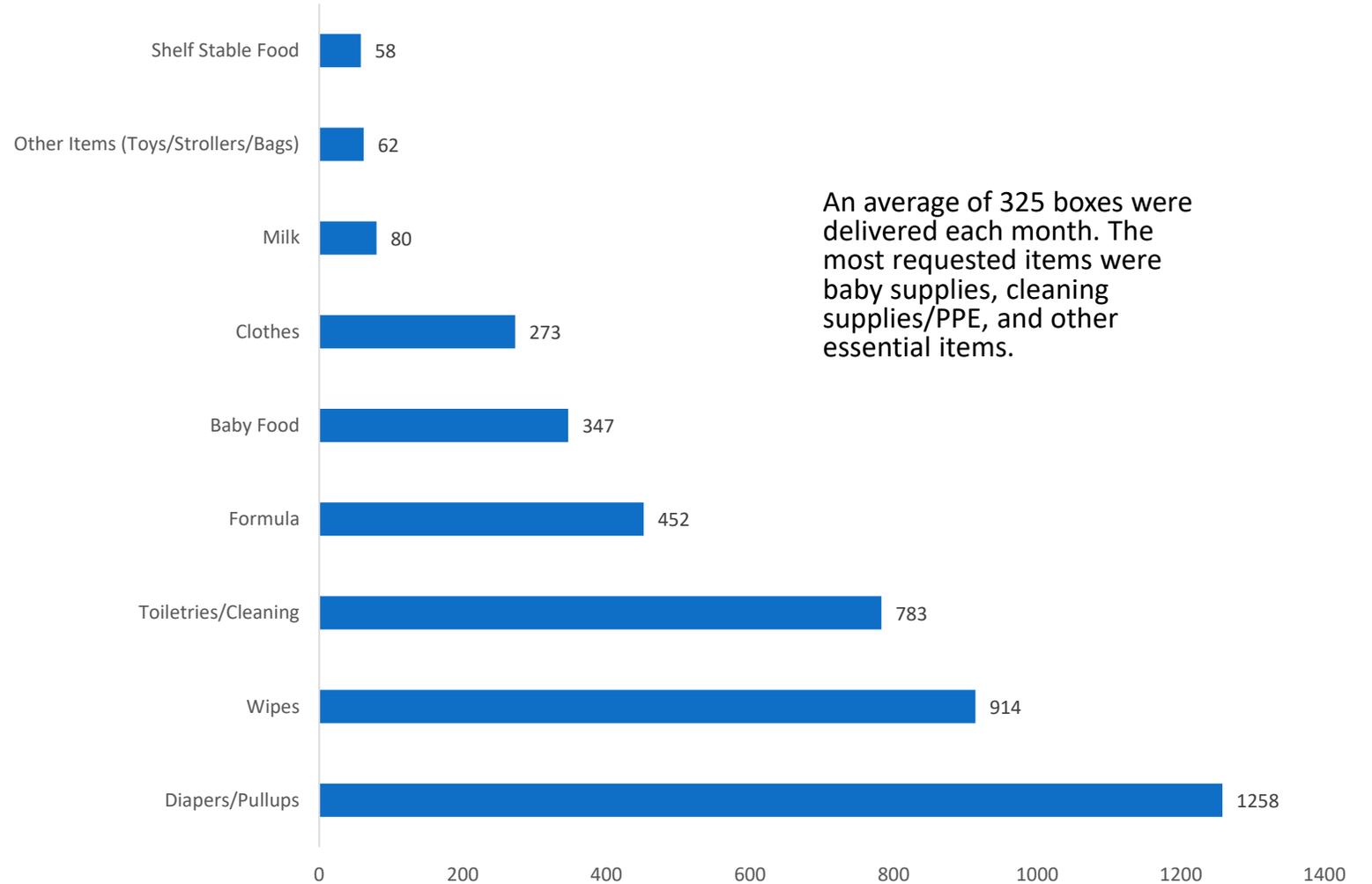
To date, Gads Hill Center has disbursed over **\$110,000 to families**, with the overwhelming majority of funds going to rent and utilities



Gads Hill Center created an Emergency Response to support our families' most pressing challenges to survival/daily life



Over the course of the last year, **over 4,000 boxes** of necessary goods were delivered to families



## Systemic Barriers

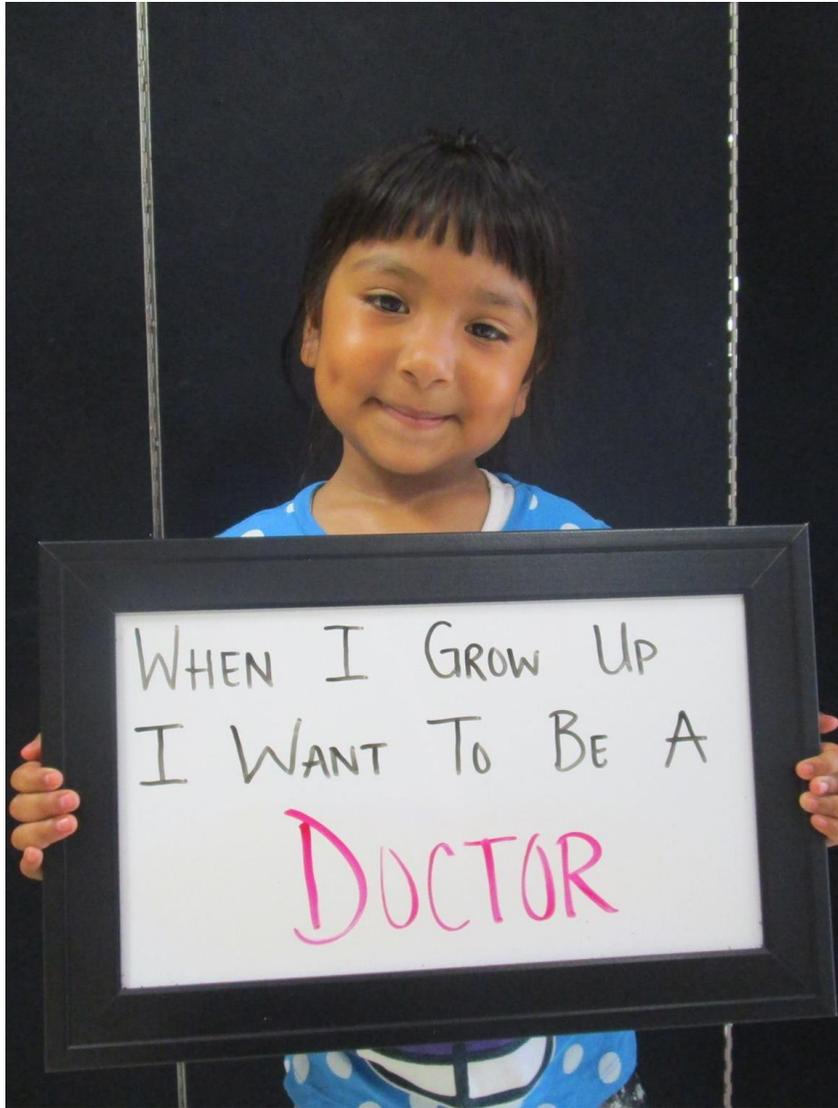
- On a normal basis, 100% of our families struggle to make ends meet
  - Families were excluded and deterred from the government safety net
  - Expansion of Public Charge Rule
- Hypervigilance & anxiety around accessing public resources
- Fear of effects on their immigration status
- Disproportionate health risks that our families face
  - Working in high-risk industries
  - Families without insurance or underinsured
  - Food insecurity & Short Supply of Essential Goods
- Systemic racism & ongoing social unrest

## The Digital Divide

- Access to devices
- Limited access to internet/hotspots

## Advocacy - at all levels

# Challenges to our Response



# ~~Post~~ Pandemic

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## **Following the Pandemic:**

A year into the pandemic, a majority of our families who lost jobs have still not found reliable and stable employment. To date, there have been no comprehensive municipal or federal initiatives that use a social equity lens to support our most vulnerable families.

The recession triggered by the pandemic will exacerbate not only economic disparities and widen the racial wealth divide but will have long-lasting psychosocial effects for generations to come.

# The Crisis that Brought Us Back to our Roots



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CENTER

From *Gads Hill Center: revisiting the function and cause of social settlements in a time of COVID* a case study written by our CEO Maricela Garcia:

“The Covid-19 pandemic brought about an unprecedented and ongoing global crisis. In Gads Hill Center’s 122 years of existence, this has to have been one of its most challenging periods. But crisis can also bring out the best in us. **During this time, we’ve recognized our vulnerabilities and acknowledged our humanity in order to become a stronger community, discerned our interdependence to stand in solidarity with each other, and reaffirmed hope as the energy to build courage and strength in the midst of uncertainty.** The pandemic is by no means over, but Gads Hill Center stands strong as the beacon of hope that it has been for the community since 1898.”

– Maricela Garcia, Chief Executive Officer

# Call to Action:



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- A Whole Child, Whole Family, and Whole Community approach
  - Interventions need systemic support for the entire ecosystem to nurture and sustain healthy development.
- Continue to uplift and magnify the voice of our families;
  - Policy changes are desperately needed that humanize mixed-status children and our families.
  - Safety Nets must be expanded to include all families.
  - Government must first LISTEN, step up, and be held accountable to the people.
- Gads Hill Center and other non profits have a unique role in connecting communities with resources –
  - Investment is needed for these agencies
  - However the burden cannot fall solely on us to fill the gap!