

NIC/NASEM Action Collaborative on Disaster Research

Response and Recovery During COVID-19: Embracing Learning on Human Services Resiliency

Washington State Department of Social and Health Services
Economic Services Administration
January 22, 2021

Presented By:
David Stillman, Assistant Secretary, Economic Services Administration

Community Services Division

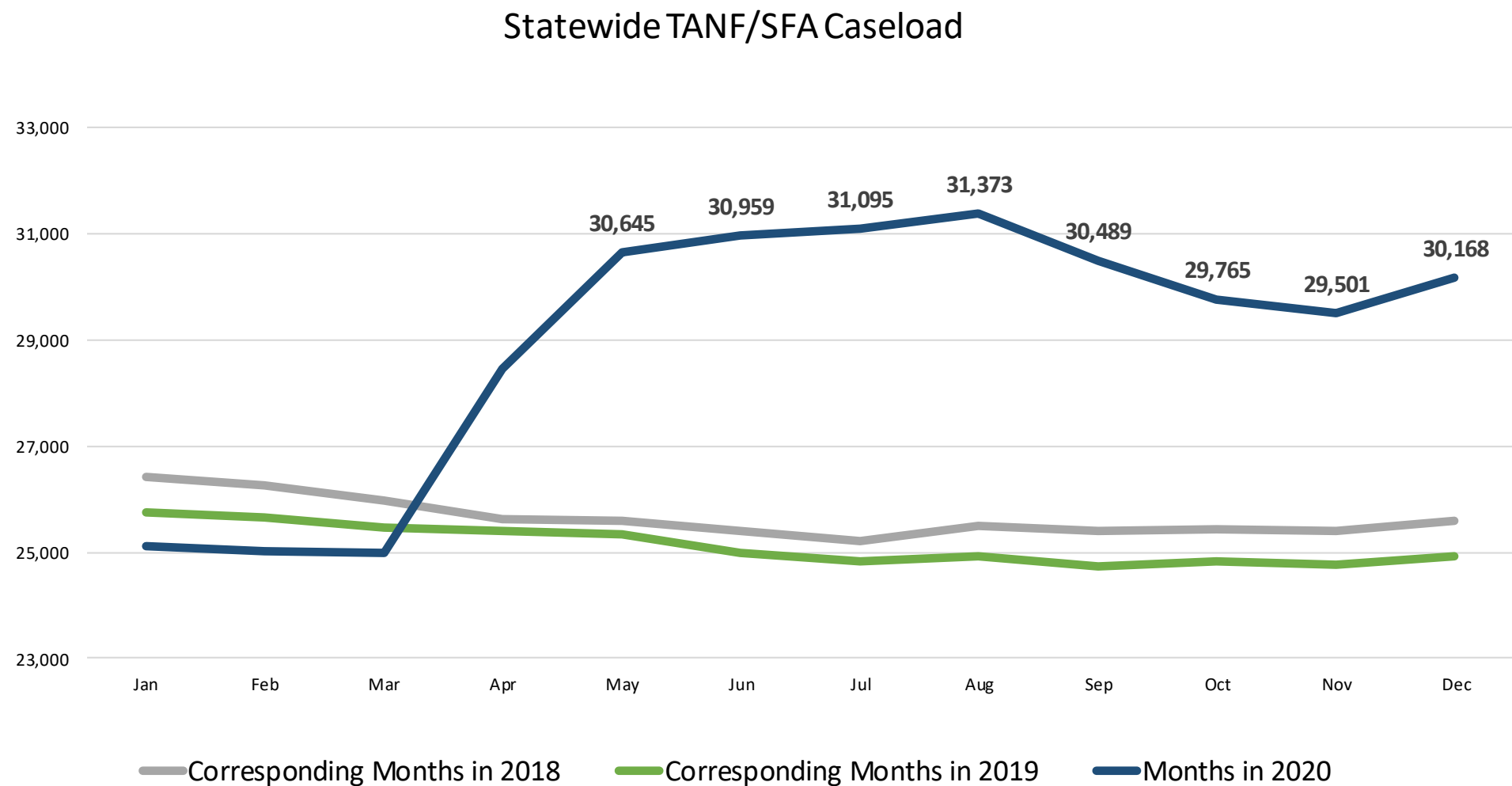
Helping people with low-incomes to meet their foundational needs and achieve economic security through cash grants, food and medical assistance, and employment focused services.

Transforming
Lives

CSD Major Program Caseload Trends

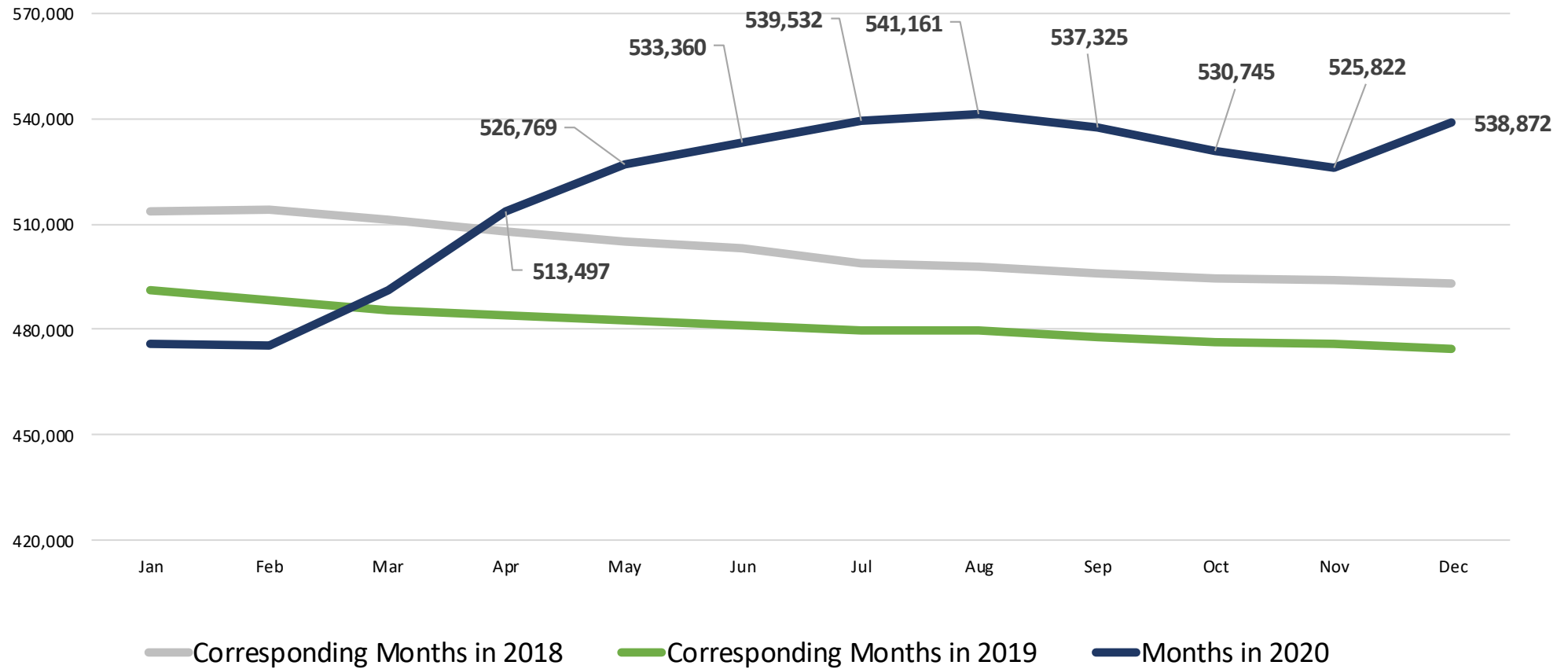
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families and State Family Assistance
- Basic Food
- Aged, Blind, or Disabled and Housing and Essential Needs
- Disaster Cash Assistance (COVID 19 & Wildfire)

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families and State Family Assistance



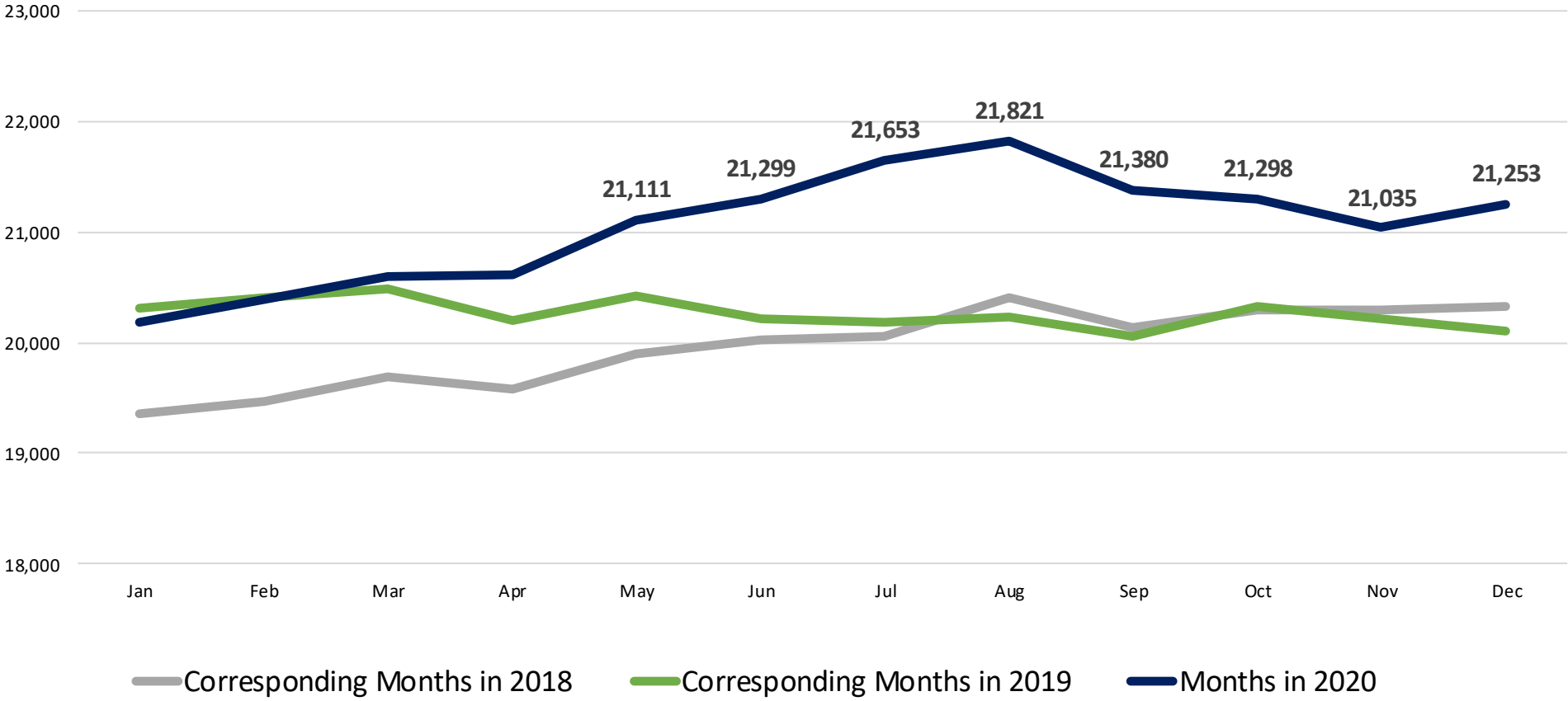
Basic Food

Statewide SNAP/FAP Caseload



Aged, Blind or Disabled and Housing Caseload

Statewide ABD Caseload



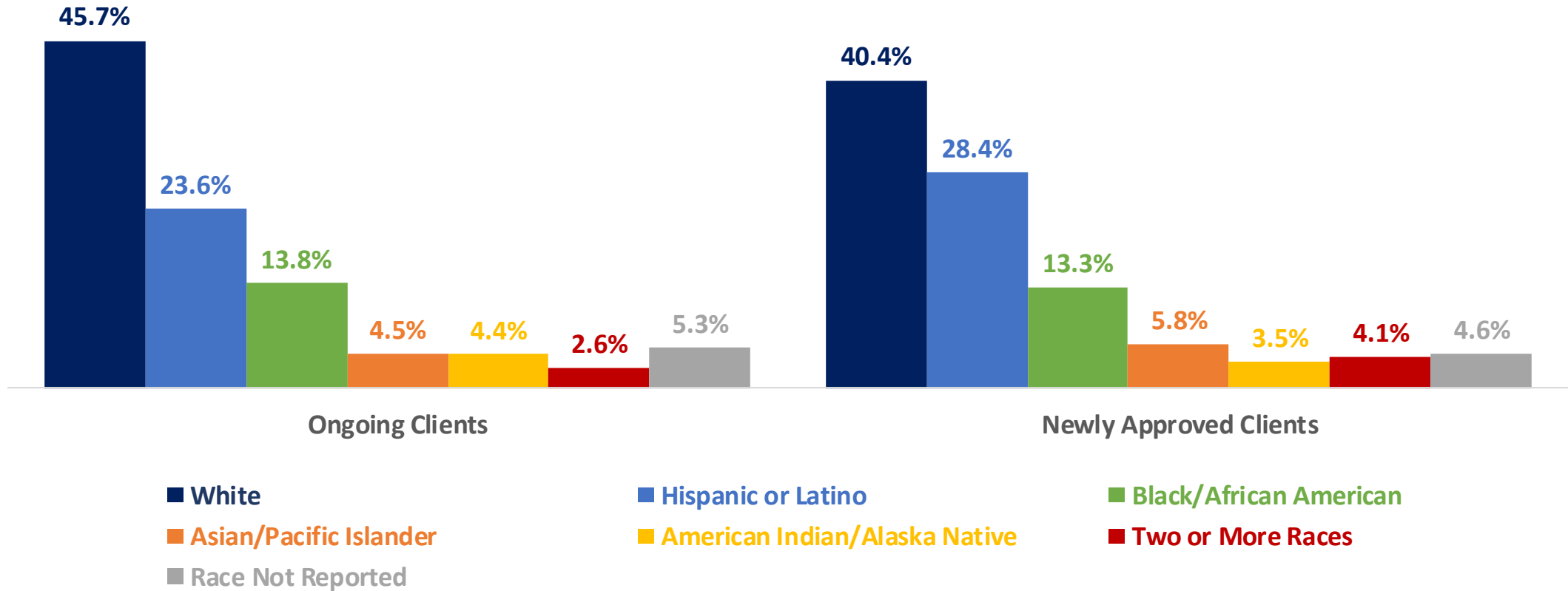
COVID-19 Pandemic Trends in Race and Ethnicity among CSD Clients

Nationally, data indicates that the COVID-19 pandemic is disproportionately affecting people of color

- Black Americans are dying at twice the rate of white Americans
- Latinos and Blacks are about three times more likely to contract COVID-19 as whites
- Increases in poverty from February to June 2020 have been concentrated in Black, Latino and Asian households.

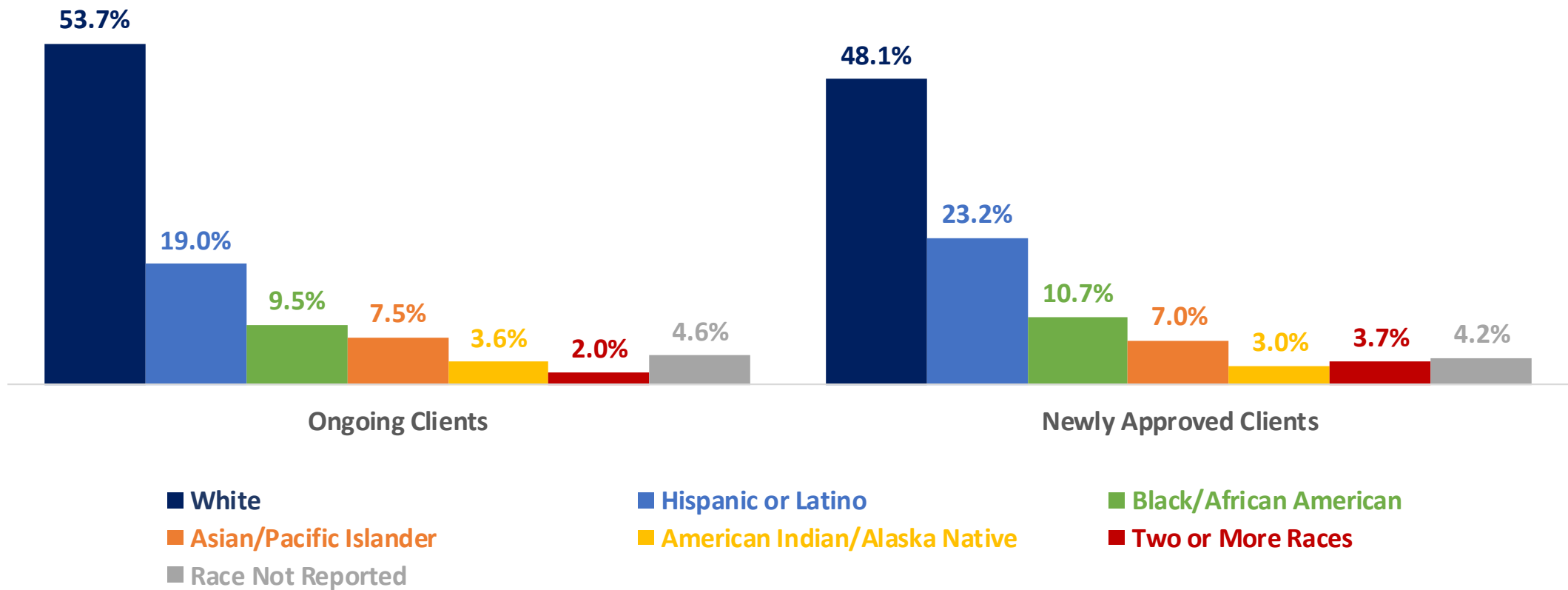
Sources: The New York Times, [The Fullest Look Yet at the Racial Inequity of the Coronavirus](#); The COVID Tracking Project, [COVID-19 is affecting Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and other people of color the most](#); Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, [Research Note: Number of People in Families With Below-Poverty Earnings Has Soared, Especially Among Black and Latino Individuals](#).

TANF/SFA: Demographics of Ongoing Recipients vs. Newly Approved Recipients



Note: Includes all household members who received a benefit. All groups other than Hispanic or Latino are non-Hispanic.

Basic Food: Demographics of Ongoing Recipients vs. Newly Approved Recipients



Note: Includes all household members who received a benefit. All groups other than Hispanic or Latino are non-Hispanic. Includes federally funded Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and state funded Food Assistance Program recipients.

COVID-19 Impacts on the Community Services Division

Transforming
Lives

1. Service delivery

- Most business conducted remotely
- Limited in-person services by appointment only
- WorkFirst partners also impacted and in many cases services are less available or unavailable

2. Safety measures

- Social distancing in offices
- Increased sanitation
- Protective equipment

Telework

ESA rapidly expanded telework capacity during the COVID-19 pandemic for staff safety/physical distancing purposes.

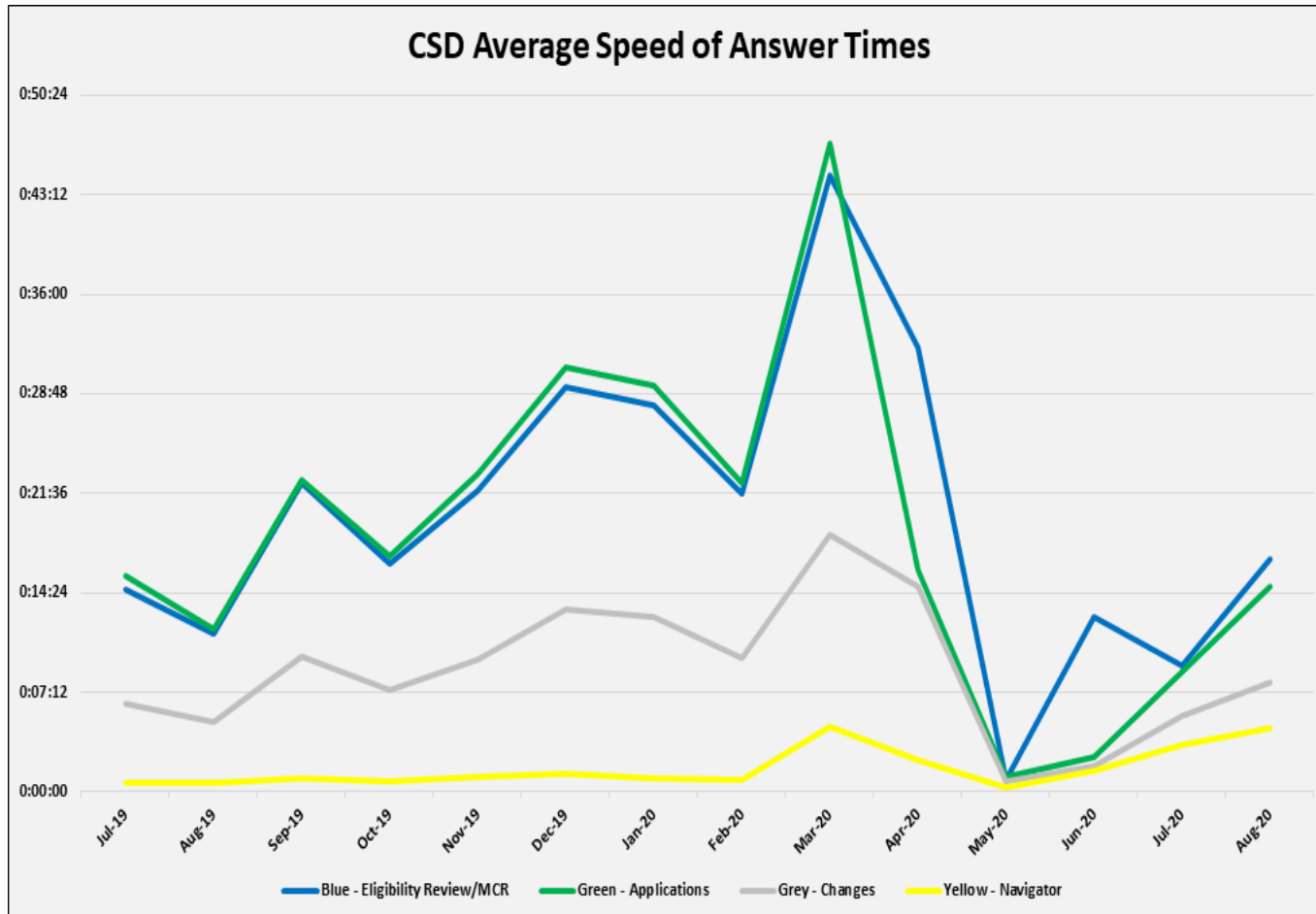
- The pandemic supercharged an effort already in progress. A number of recent staff surveys indicated that teleworking is important to staff.
- This fails to reflect our client and community capacity to access services when both qualitative and quantitative information indicates there is a significant and multi-faceted digital divide.
- How do we incorporate the pandemic response lessons learned into future service delivery models? Is better service with a smaller physical footprint possible in the near term?

	Staff *	Telework Ability February 2020	% Beginning	Telework Ability July 2020	% Now
ESA	4234	1256	30%	3881	92%

* Includes contractors

Transforming
Lives

COVID-19 Impacts on the Community Services Division



- Increased workload
- Increased application processing times
- Changes in customer service contact center hold times

Mitigating COVID-19 Impacts

- 1. Building capacity to meet demand**
- 2. Implementing program and policy changes**
 - Basic Food:
 - Emergency food supplements
 - Pandemic EBT
 - Good cause for Basic Food work requirements
 - Social Security Number good cause waiver
 - Student eligibility for Basic Food

Mitigating COVID-19 Impacts

3. Implementing program and policy changes, cont.

- Disaster Cash Assistance Program
 - 59,997 applications received
 - 45,175 approved (an additional 1,281 pending)
 - 93% of applicants are single person households
 - Average grant amount of \$338

Mitigating COVID-19 Impacts

3. Implementing program and policy changes, cont.

- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families:
 - Changes to WorkFirst participation and sanction
 - COVID-19 hardship time limit extension
 - Suspending Home Visits for the Teen Living Assessment
 - WorkFirst Orientation

Mitigating COVID-19 Impacts

3. Implementing program and policy changes, cont.

- Aged, Blind or Disabled/Housing and Essential Needs Referral:
 - Changes to monitoring participation and good cause
 - Modification to reviews and acceptable medical evidence
 - Telephonic psychological evaluations
- Refugee and Immigrant Services:
 - Emergency Support Services for Refugees
 - COVID-19 Immigrant Relief Fund

Ongoing Challenges

- Sustaining policy and program changes
- Managing workload
- Budget
- Safe start
- The less discussed and attended to challenges and needs of our clients (debt, transportation, and digital access).

Transforming
Lives

Looking Forward

ESA has a unified goal of reducing the number of individuals and families living in poverty by 50 percent by 2025 in a way that eliminates disparities. Our interim goal was 20 percent by 2020 and we were well on track to achieve that. The record job losses due to the COVID-19 pandemic has truly exacerbated the challenge – the number of families living under the poverty line has increased significantly. Further, the financial impacts have been felt most starkly by families already experiencing poverty and in particular by people of color. ESA along with its partners needs to respond in ways that truly help our clients to thrive.

Transforming Lives



Washington State
Department of Social
& Health Services

Transforming lives