

# COVID-19 Pandemic Response: Pennsylvania's Office of Developmental Programs's After Action Review

After Action Review (AAR), a process for extracting lessons from one event (through surveys, interviews, and focus groups) and applying them to others,<sup>1</sup> has provided the Pennsylvania Office of Developmental Programs (ODP) a means to debrief with stakeholders to gather a) feedback on ODP's response to the pandemic and b) stakeholder perspectives on their individual actions in response to the pandemic. To implement this process, ODP conducted two online surveys and four focus groups with a total of 301 participants to obtain multiple perspectives in a maximally accessible way. The purpose of this brief is to describe the development of the COVID-19 Pandemic AAR and report on findings from one subset of data that was collected through an online survey of providers.

## Methods

- Survey tool development
  - Identified respondent pool. That is, determined who was most impacted by ODP actions.
  - Developed “universal questions” focusing on what ODP wanted to know (e.g., was this modification useful to agency operations and practices).
  - Reviewed Appendix K and all ODP communications to identify modifications and suspensions and domain areas.
  - Identified Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) in ODP for each domain area.
    - Initial list of modifications and suspensions generated was reviewed by ODP SMEs in an effort to confirm, add or clarify items.
    - Identified which domains would relate to the “universal questions” and which did not. For those domains that did not relate,

[1] Harvard Business Review (2005) <https://hbr.org/2005/07/learning-in-the-thick-of-it>

alternative response methods were developed (e.g., support received and General Safety Precautions).

- Using a matrix capturing domains and corresponding items, ODP SMEs a) identified which items could be sustained during and after pandemic (generated new survey domain re: Sustainability) and b) identified which items were relevant to which provider types to design survey logic.
- Designed a survey in QuestionPro -- an online program used to design custom surveys with enhanced logic features. Based upon three demographic variables (i.e., region, program, and services), branching logic was applied to every question to maximize the user experience as not every question was applicable to every provider and service
  - All questions were coded with numerical/alphabetic combinations to help find and track each question when building the survey as well as to make the analysis as efficient as possible.
  - In order to efficiently analyze the data collected, open response questions were included at the end of every section, instead of every question.
  - A few sections did not include the universal questions. Rather, a complex grid/flex matrix was developed for those sections to capture the specific information needed and also to minimize the overall number of questions in an already comprehensive survey.
- ODP SMEs reviewed final draft survey in QuestionPro.
  - Sent survey link via email.
  - Provided a spreadsheet to record comments, questions, or concerns with any specific item/question and/or overall design or technical issues.
  - Changes were made to the survey tool based on this feedback.
- Implemented survey tool
  - Group of residential providers piloted survey by completing based on their agency's experience.
    - Suggestions made by pilot participants:
      - Have a PDF version of the survey to collect responses with a team prior to submission.

- Allow people to stop in the middle of the survey and return at a later time.

Consider breaking the survey into smaller surveys to decrease time spent responding.

- Changes made base on pilot feedback:
  - Developed a PDF version of the survey (see attached) as a reference page.
  - Added a “Save and Continue” feature to the survey for respondents to leave survey and return to where they left off in the survey.
  - Moved provider contact information to the beginning of the survey instead of the end.
- Sent PDF version of survey and QuestionPro survey link via ODP provider listservs requesting responses within a two week timeframe.
- After deadline date, reviewed survey for omissions and followed up with respondents to provide the missing information.

## **Analysis**

Utilized a multi-pronged analytic strategy that included:

- Rank order for each domain
- Item level distribution across potential responses
- Regional/geographic comparative analyses
- Service-type specific analysis

## **Limitations**

- This sample was a convenience sample based on voluntary participation.
- Survey was limited to providers with shared experience related to ODP suspensions, modifications, and exemptions (e.g., Residential, Employment, Behavioral Specialist, Nursing, etc.)
- Limitations of QuestionPro hindered the ability to format questions in a way that would have shortened the length of the survey.
- The intention was to allow respondents to complete the survey one time for each service they provide, but the length of this survey made it difficult for providers to complete multiple surveys. Alternatively, we recommended

respondents either a) delegate to other colleagues based on services they provided or b) choose the primary service they provide.

- Despite multiple technology checks and the understanding that the survey was working as intended, an entire section was skipped by respondents due to one small logic error. It required sending targeted emails to those who responded asking them to complete the missing information. We did not get 100% responses despite multiple follow up with respondents, only 64% completed the missing information. However, we did have response across all regions, programs, and services targeted in the survey.
- The convenience sampling perhaps resulted in overrepresentation from a specific geographic area or provider type.
- Could not break the survey into smaller surveys, as requested, due to the design, logic, and need for the final analysis/comparison.

## Findings: *n*=223

### Demographics

#### Service Type

Residential- Community Home	99	44.39%
Residential- Life Sharing	5	2.24%
Residential- Supported Living	3	1.35%
Behavioral Services	21	9.42%
Employment	18	8.07%
Nursing	3	1.35%
In-Home Community Supports and Companion (ID/A only)	62	27.80%
Community Supports and Systematic Skill Building (AAW only)	12	5.38%

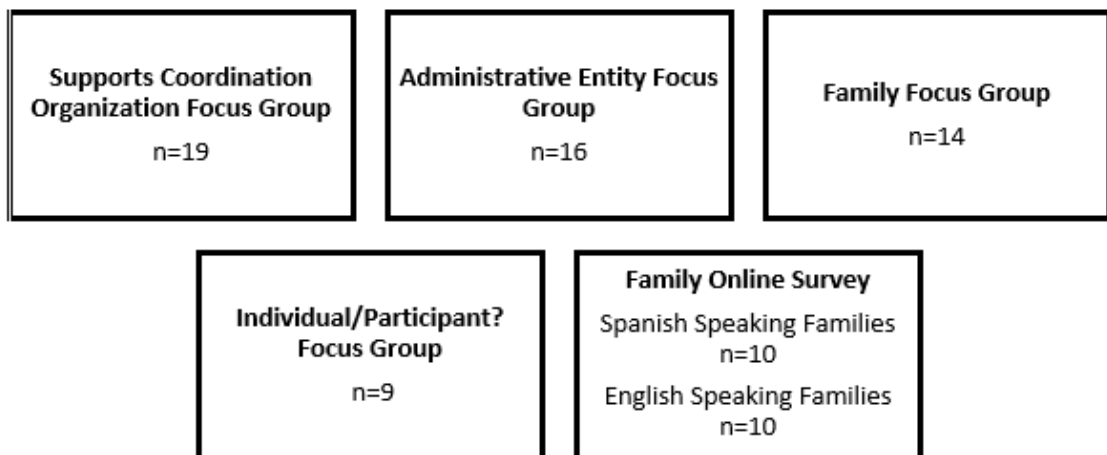
#### Region

Central	48	21.52%
Northeast	38	17.04%
Southeast	57	25.56%
Western	80	35.87%

- Experience with **remote inspections** were seen as helpful to provider operations. In the future, a combination of on site and remote inspections is preferred.
- **Waiver exemptions, modifications, and suspensions** made were all rated favorably and positively impacting provider operations.
- Not many respondents implemented the allowance: *A staff person may work for more than one provider, but only one provider needs to determine that the staff person is qualified to render a waiver service.* Those who did implement, primarily did not feel strongly that this impacted their operations.
- All modified and extensions related to **Medication Administration training and implementation** were received favorably to operations.
- Most respondents utilized **virtual/remote witness interviews for incident investigations** and found it helpful to operations.
- Administrative Entities and ODP were identified as the two entities that respondents received used the most for **support**, and reported that support received from any entity offering was mostly positive.
- **ODP's communication and training efforts** were primarily viewed as "just enough," but some comments noted that it was difficult to keep up with the influx of information.
- Over 60% of providers reported receiving **Retainer Payments** and over 80% reported receiving **CARES relief funds**.
- Aside from maintaining staffing, respondents rated their agency primarily as "good" or "excellent" regarding their "**General Safety Precautions**" practices.
- Most items in the survey that ODP indicated as possible to **sustain** after the pandemic were supported by respondents to continue if respondents were impacted by the item (particularly remote/tele services).

## Additional Data Gathering Efforts

In addition to the provider online survey, ODP conducted another online survey and focus groups that garnered additional perspectives related to ODP's and stakeholder response to the pandemic. Despite the smaller pool of respondents, the experience of families and individuals has been important to ODP actions and decisions moving forward.



### Overarching Themes:

- Accessing **supplies** like PPE was discussed but not the primary challenge highlighted by any of the groups.
- **Technology** challenges are ongoing including access to equipment and internet (especially in rural areas).
- ODP **guidance and resources** were appreciated for both the speed they were released and the content, but the volume was overwhelming (as people navigated other sources of information).
- There was mixed experience in delivering and receiving **remote services**. Some individuals and families did well, but others struggled especially with behavioral services. Some SCs also found remote service challenging.

- There was a mixed response from families and individuals regarding the **frequency of contact** with service providers. Some thought it was too frequent, others were satisfied, and some felt that they couldn't get in touch with their service providers.
- Some families and individuals experienced **unmet service needs** due to lack of in-person services, lack of availability of remote supports, lack of staffing, or poor response to remote services.

**To access a copy of the survey:**

<https://aar2020copied.questionpro.com>

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