

# Social Work: Caring Contacts Program

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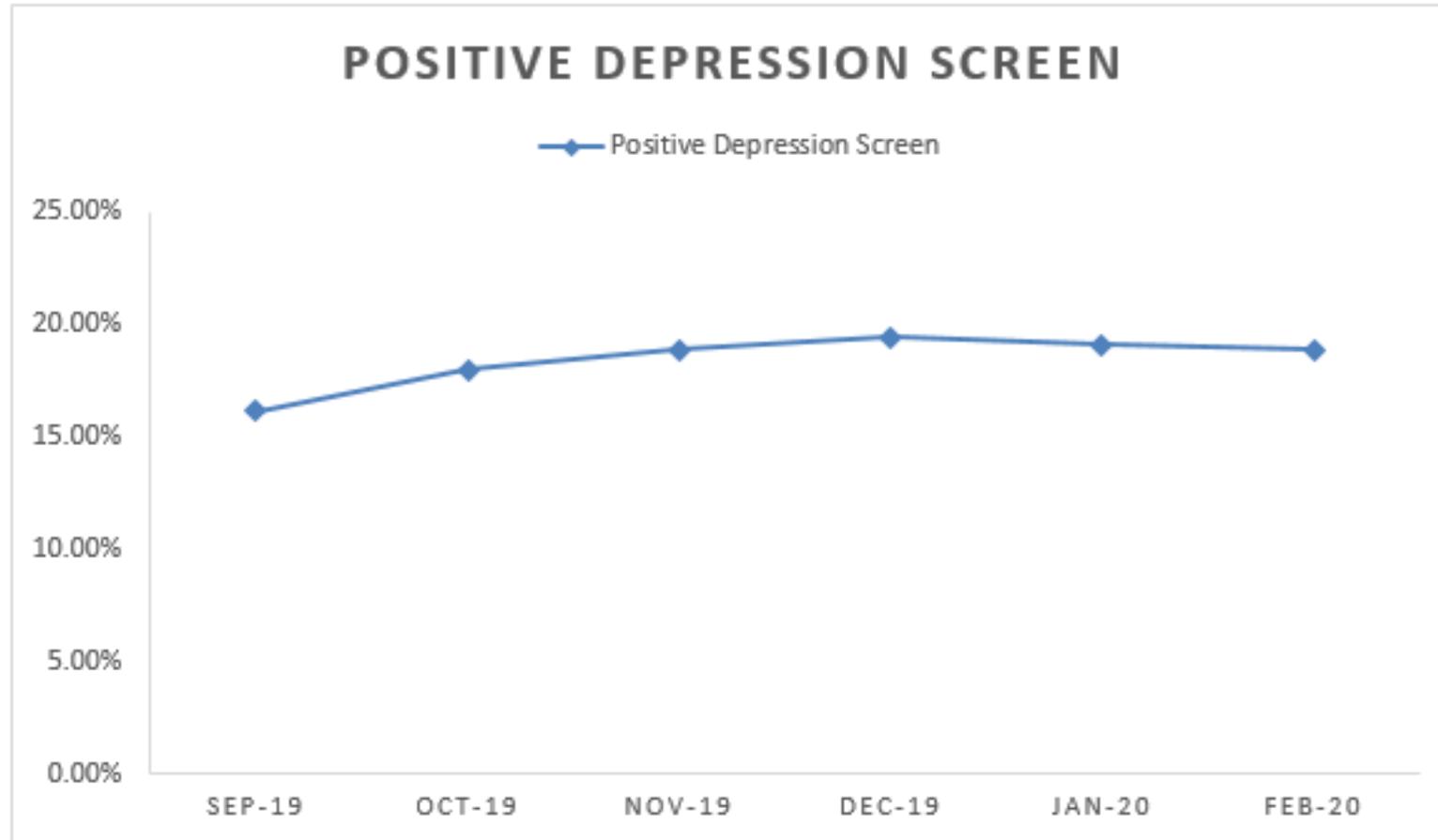
# Landscape in Fall 2019

- **MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS:** The number of patients seen for suicidal ideations or suicidal gestures at CHMC has more than doubled since 2008
- The Social Work Department wanted to implement a program that would help ensure struggling patients stay engaged in mental health services, after their acute crisis resolves.

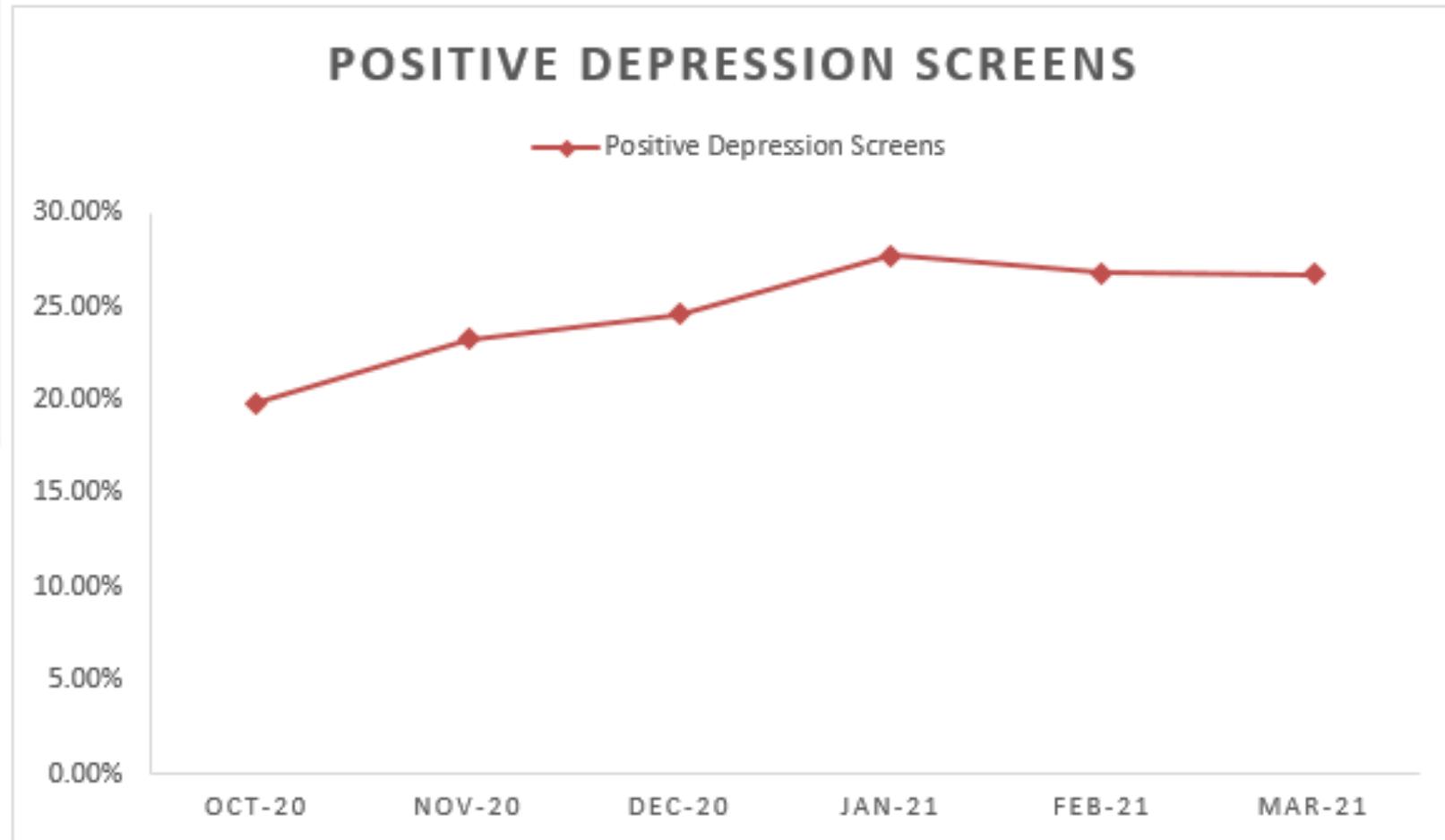
# Baseline Data

- Suicide Ideation and Suicide Attempts have doubled the percentage of patients seen in Children's Hospital's (Dinh & Carr, 2018)
  - Encounters increased from .66% in 2008 to 1.82% in 2015
- Adolescents who completed suicide were found to have contact with a health care provider within 3 months of death (Kitts & Ibeziako, 2020)
- Death by Suicide in Local Youth (Information gathered by the Kim Foundation in cooperation with Douglas, Sarpy, and Cass Sheriffs)
  - 2018 – 4
  - 2019 – 5
  - 2020 - 11

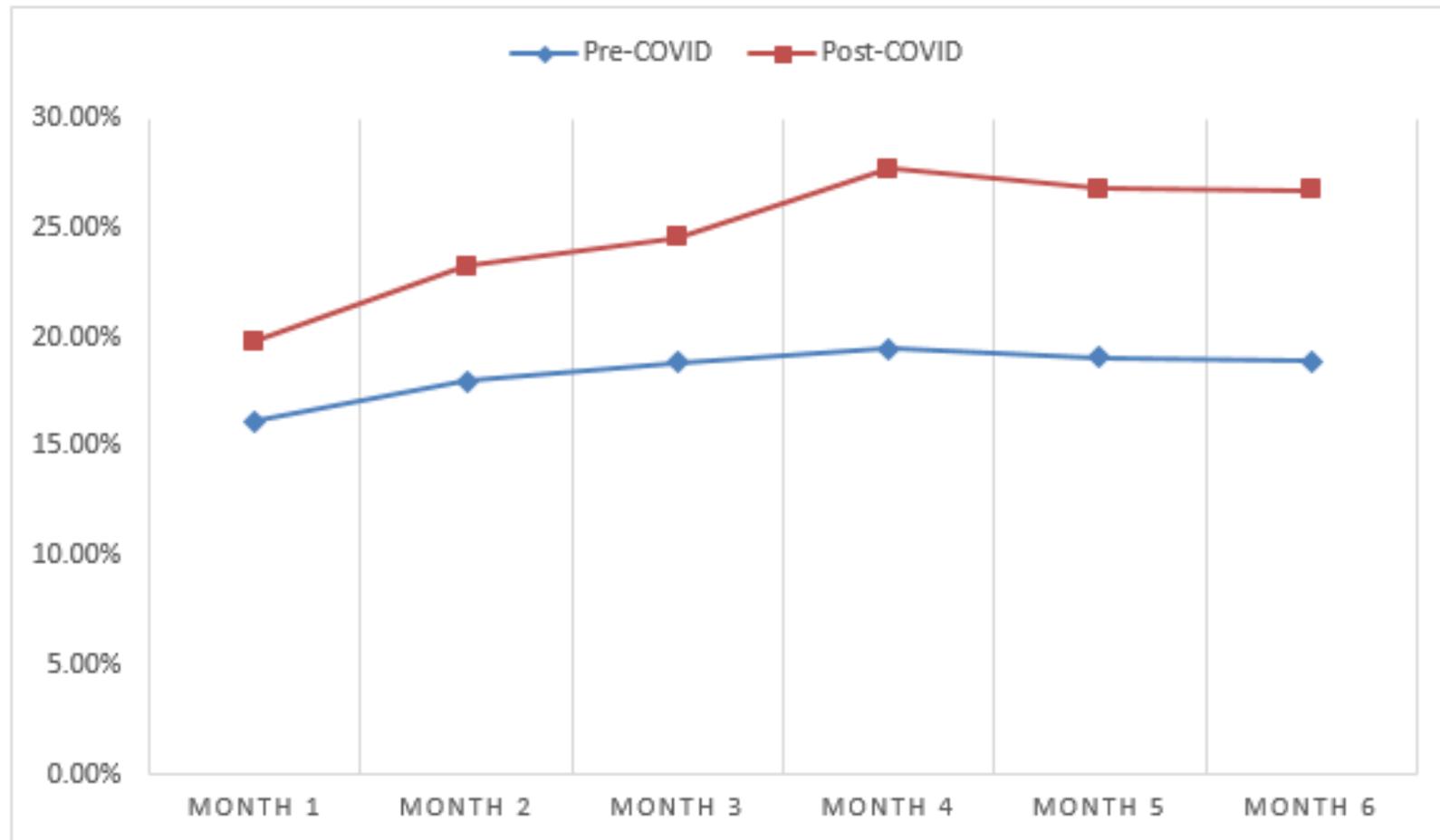
# PHQ-9 Depression Screen: Positive Score Data prior to COVID-19



# Recent 6-Month Depression Screen Data (One-Year Post COVID)



# Comparison Data (6 months Before COVID & Past 6 months)



# Nebraska Benchmarking

Previously, there was no follow up process after a child is sent home from an Emergency Department or Inpatient Stay after Suicidal Ideation or Gesture in Nebraska

Time after a person leaves care is critical as risks rise sharply one week after discharge and remains high (Oaklander, 2019)

# Caring Contacts Project

- Research lead the Social Work team to the work of the Zero Suicide Institute;
- Developed a follow up process for discharged patients
  - Handwritten letters are sent from Social Work staff members to patient including personalized messages;
- The Social Work team received unanimous support from the ED and Children's leadership teams
- Program Initiation = May 1, 2020

# Sample Caring Contacts Notes

Hi [redacted]!

I am apart of the social work team at the Children's Hospital Emergency Department you were seen at about a month ago. I wanted to send you a note to let you know we've been thinking about you. I hope you're staying engaged in your treatment and getting the help you need to keep yourself safe and healthy! We will be cheering for you every step of the way!

If you'd like to write us back, we'd love to hear from you, you can do so with the return address on the envelope!

😊 Best Wishes, Nadia + Children's Social Work Dept

Hey [redacted]!

I'm just checking in again to offer a word of encouragement. Working on our mental health is a life long process and so important to having a full, productive life. So, don't give up! Keep talking to adults or friends you trust, and following the treatment recommendations of your care team.

I will keep you in my thoughts and send positive vibes your way! 😊

-Nadia (Children's Social Work team)

Letters are sent out every 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup> month up to 1 year

# Key Improvements

## Before

- Patients who were assessed in Children's Emergency Department for suicide risk were discharged home or transferred to another facility for Inpatient Acute Psychiatric Care;
- No further contact was made with these patients once they discharged or transferred from Children's ED;
- No opportunity for Children's Hospital staff to provide ongoing encouragement and support for patients struggling with mental health needs.

## After

- Every patient assessed in Children's Emergency Department for suicide risk is given an opportunity to enroll in the Caring Contact program;
- Program allows for staff to send 6 contacts over the course of the next 12 months, to ensure that patient and family are aware that they are remembered, supported and cared about by Children's staff;
- Program participation assures that parents and patients know they can reach out to Social Work department post discharge, as support or resource needs arise.

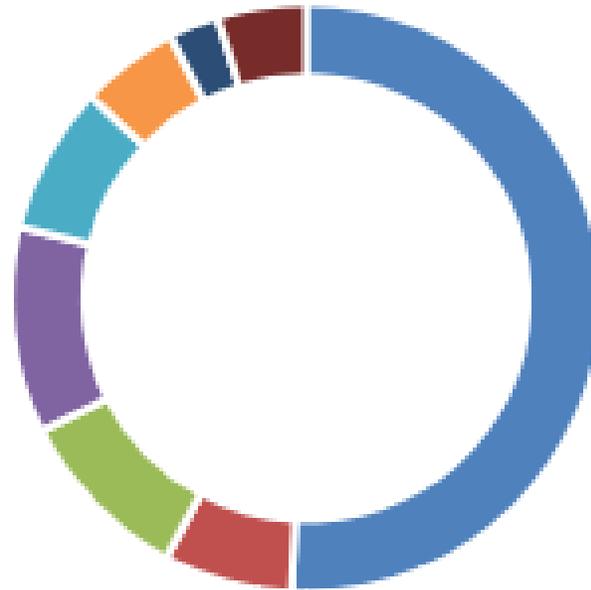


# Improvement Methodology & Tools

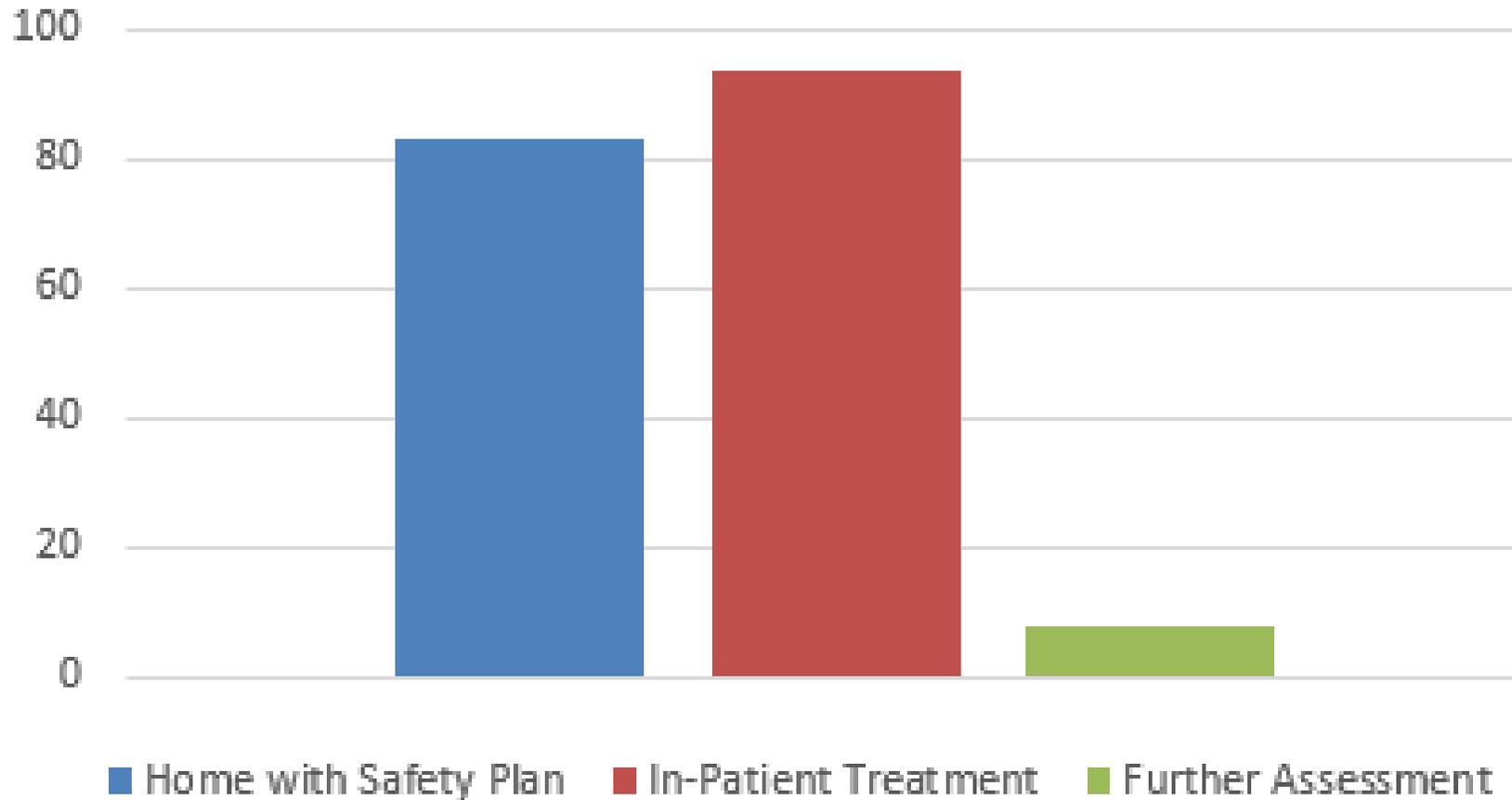
	May	June	July	Total	August	September	October	Total	November	December	Jan-21	Total	February	March	April	Total	YTD Total
Total # of Patients Seen																	0
# of Mental Health Assessments Completed in the ED	10	7	7	24	14	11	17	42	11	17	13	41	18	21	15	54	161
# discharged Home on a Safety Plan	6	3	3	12	6	2	7	15	8	11	3	22	6	7	10	23	72
# discharged to InPatient Psych	4	4	4	12	8	8	9	25	3	6	10	19	9	12	5	26	82
# that OSH required ED re-assessment at their facility	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	2	0	0	0	0	3	2	0	5	7
# enrolled	10	7	7	24	14	11	17	42	11	17	11	39	17	20	15	52	157
# who have a subsequent gesture	0	1	2	3	0	2	1	3	3	2	4	9	2	5	2	9	24
# who have subsequent ER encounter due to ideation	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	2	3	4
# who die by suicide	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
# of patients who respond	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	1	2	0	2	4	1	0	0	1	7
# of family members who reach out	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

# 15-Month Data (May 2020 – July 2021)

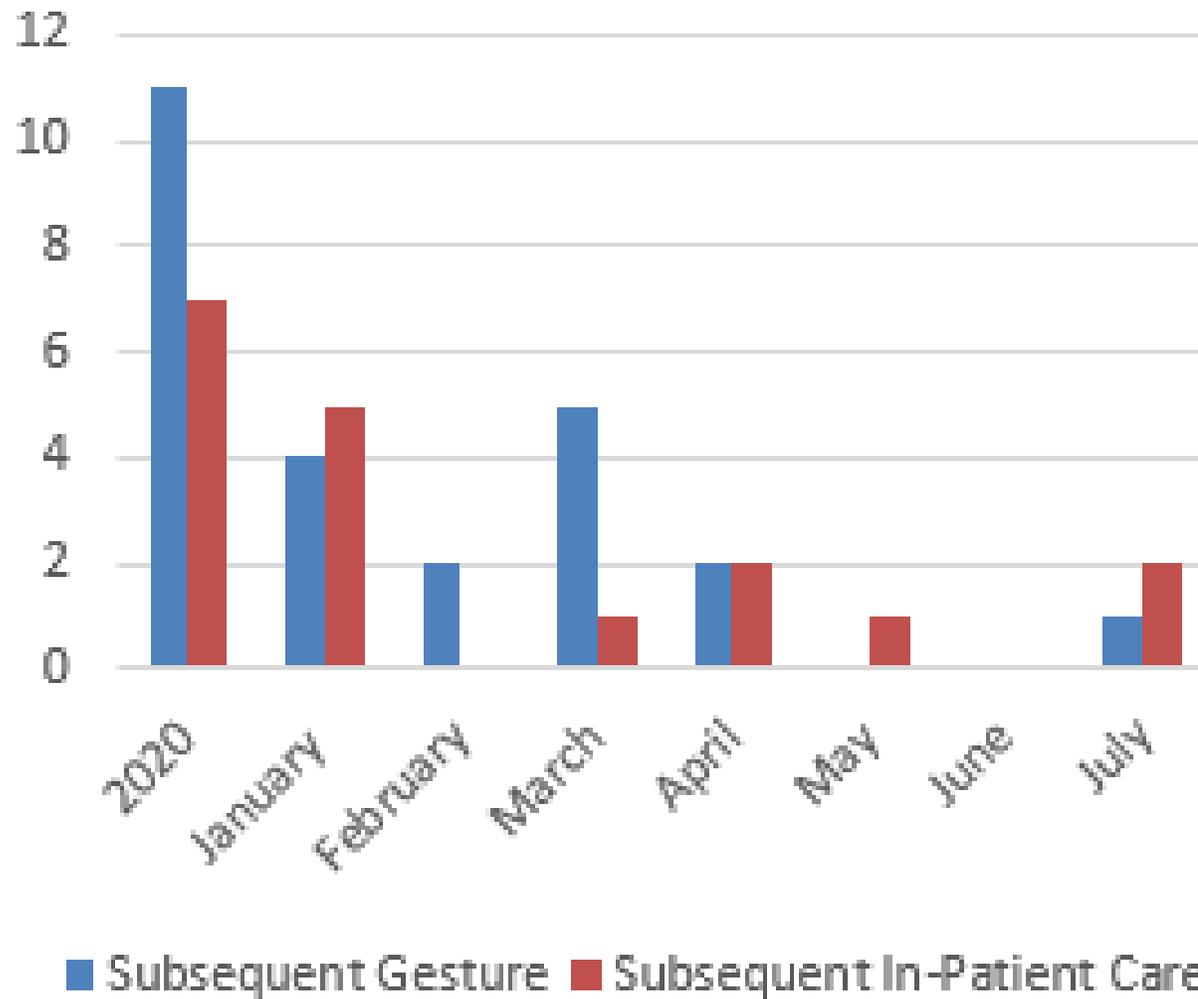
Total Patients = 185



## Mental Health Assessment Outcome



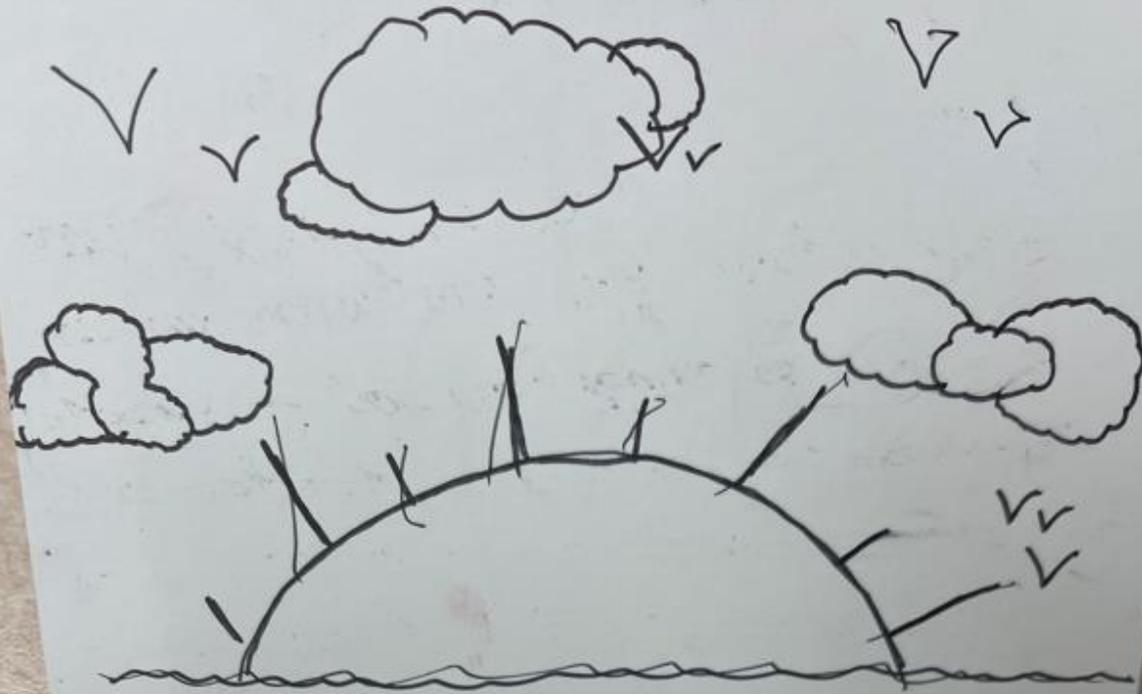
## Patient Follow-Up



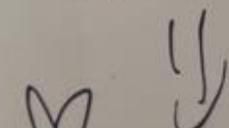
# Success Measures & Outcomes

## Highlights

- ❖ 98% of patients enrolled in the Caring Contacts Project with parent/guardian permission.
- ❖ Multiple patients responded to the handwritten cards by the ED Medical Social Workers, some more than once.
- ❖ Only 17% have experienced a repeat incidence of suicide ideation— compared to a 27% rate of repeat suicide attempts among teens and adolescents nationally (according to a 2018 study).
- ❖ There were no patient deaths of enrolled patients reported to date since the program began.



Thank you so much. I appreciate you. Thank you for thinking and caring about me. I'm really trying to be better. It's working it just takes baby steps. I have so many support systems. I got this. You're so nice. I'm safe and healthy now. I'm going to PRTF soon, I think I'm ready.



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Hi! I'm so sorry I haven't responded recently, I've been so busy recently with school. But, I was so glad to hear from you again. I've been doing really good and I was shocked to hear it's been six months already. I've been doing so much better since then that I didn't even realize. Enough about myself, how have you been? What have you been up to?

Thank you for keeping up with me and, again, I'm sorry I haven't been able to respond. Have a nice day!!



Thank you so much for all of your letters!

It means a lot to me! I have finally made it out

of treatment. I have been doing better but not quite perfect. I never really got the chance to

thank you  
for saving  
my life ♡

May all your dreams  
come true this Christmas!

Thank you so much and have a great holiday



I like that you write letters to me. Are we Penpals? I'm writing a letter to you because I thought we were penpals. I'm doing great with my behavior - not at hospital rate - and I've had a great day today.



Trisha,

I do appreciate you writing to me for an entire year since I was seen. I honestly did not want to write back for a long time because I didn't know quite what to say. You said it was the last card so I didn't want to miss my opportunity one last time, even though it's really late.

When I was seen, I thought the only way out was that "permanent solution" and it is still so hard for me to talk about. I want you to know I am insanely grateful for you cheering me on, and I have gotten SO much better since then. Bad days and bad things happen all the time, still... But I know now that it's not forever and there are so many other solutions besides suicide.

I know that life has so much to offer and thank you so so much for pushing me in the right direction.

I don't expect you to write back, but I want you to know I'm grateful that you wrote me all those notes and helped me out so so much. You are truly part of the reason I'm still here.



# Additional Benefits

- Program development and implementation reduces burnout rate for staff, as they feel empowered by having a positive impact on young people struggling with suicide ideation.
- Keeps the importance of ongoing mental health treatment on the forefront of the minds of patient and families, over the course of the year following a suicide gesture or mental health crisis.
- Offers the opportunity for the Children's Social Work and Emergency Department to be a stand-out amongst other facilities as no pediatric ED is providing support in this way.



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