

Impacts of COVID-19 on child and family services

Centre for Excellence in Child
and Family Welfare



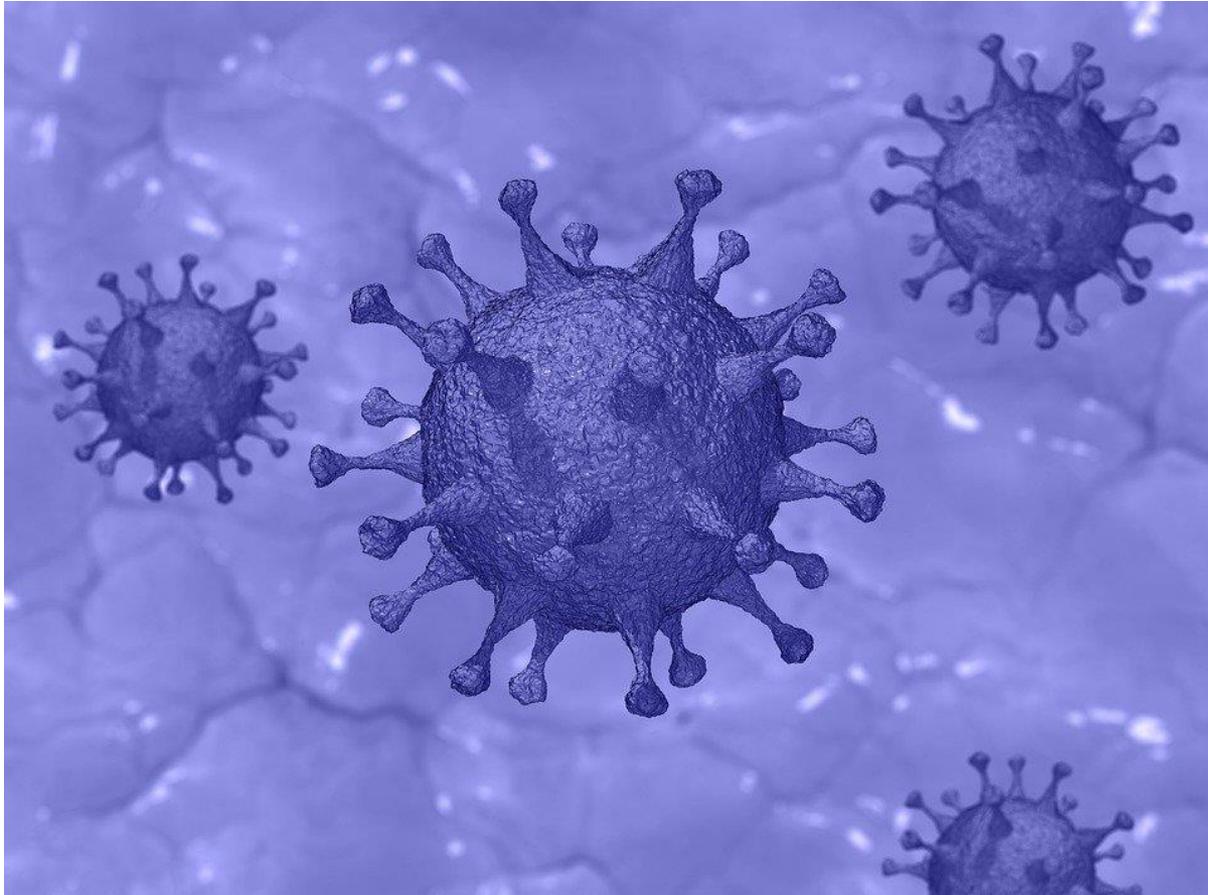
March-June 2020: First 'wave'



What did we learn from the first 'wave'?

- **Clients** experienced economic hardship: needed emergency relief (food/petrol vouchers, basic grocery items; technology for children's learning)
- **Practitioners** adopted creative case management strategies: meeting clients via technology; posting information; giving families data packs; face to face with social distancing; advocated for children
- **Agencies** adapted quickly: set up COVID specific response teams; set up staff to work remotely; moved to virtual service delivery

July-August 2020: Second 'wave'



What have we learnt about client experience?

- Greater vulnerability of families; increased strain; people struggling with mental health; loss of motivation; loss of hope; more disconnected from community
- Decline in mental health for children & young people unable to socialise
- Increased violence in the home; increased risk to children
- Reduced developmental opportunities for children
- Greater sense of isolation and reduced avenues for support for families
- Some parents reporting increased anxiety from and susceptibility to conspiracy theories

What have we learnt about practitioner experience?

- Continuing to use creative strategies to engage with clients e.g. walk & talk; virtual home tours; WhatsApp
- Dropping off face masks; laptops; food;
- Increased contact with clients at risk; follow up calls; text messages; more frequent check-ins; increased case management
- More flexibility in processes to accommodate victim survivors; more focus on safety planning and safety checklists
- Increased information sharing to keep children visible (e.g. with school wellbeing teams, MCH, other services)
- Increased fatigue, burnout of staff

What have we learnt about agency experience?

- More flexible working-from-home arrangements
- Overt appreciation: an additional paid COVID/wellbeing day off; gifts/care packages; thank you letters
- Greater emphasis on self care; PD sessions; specific wellbeing policies; virtual events; fun activities together; greater encouragement of EAP; regular reflective practice and external supervision
- CEOs/exec/management meeting regularly with staff to communicate and do check-ins; sharing information internally
- Time made available for PD activities and learning

What will be sustained?



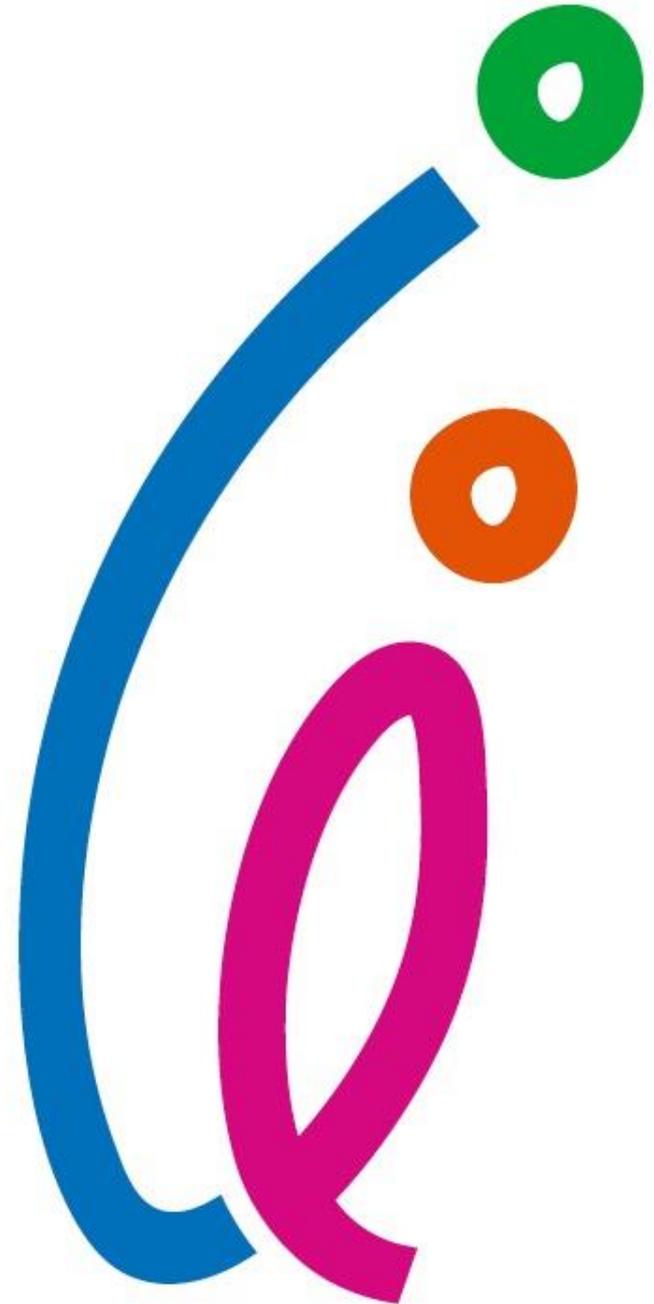
What is likely to be sustained into the future?

- Greater use of virtual platforms to engage with clients; mix of face to face and remote service delivery; creative use of technology to engage
- Flexible work arrangements to accommodate staff home situations; more staff working from home for more of the time
- Regular meetings and communication between management and staff; more information sharing
- Continued organisational awareness of staff wellbeing and importance of self care
- Shift to more virtual learning PD opportunities for staff

Conclusion

- This kind of rapid data collection in a dynamic environment can provide insights into what works and inform decision making and planning.
- *It's so valuable to hear about what is happening around the state while it is happening and feed that back to our local area.*

(Alliance Project Coordinator)



Thank you!

