

Full Circle with →

Circle of Care

*Support for children, youth, and families grieving loss due to
substance use related death and disorders*



In Partnership with the Illinois Family Resource Center and Hour House

Meet Our **TEAM**

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Why We're Here

In the U.S.,
19 million
children
have at
least one
parent with a
SUD.

3.4 million
children live
with a
parent
with
multiple
SUDs.

6 million
children have
a parent with
a mental
health
condition in a
SUD.

1 in **4** children
live in families
with a parent
or caregiver
suffering with
an alcohol or
opioid use
disorder.

**INCORPORATING
VOICES**

**ONLINE RESOURCE
TOOLKITS**

**COMFORT BAGS FOR
KIDS**

**GRIEF SUPPORT
SERVICES DIRECTORY**

**THREADS OF HOPE
TRAINING**

**HANDLE WITH CARE
INITIATIVE**

Incorporating the voices of those with lived experience



**Peer Listening
Sessions**



**Youth Listening
Sessions**



"Friends were not allowed to come to my birthday parties because my friend's parents said we were dirty people."

"When there was drugs/alcohol present in my house, I felt shame that it was happening, especially when I had the opportunity to go to someone else's house where this wasn't the experience."

"Substances always took precedence over everything else. As an adult it's easier to understand why it was that way, but as a child- I didn't understand."

"I did not realize that things in my home were not normal, until someone brought it to my attention."

"It feels like a never-ending feeling of hopelessness. You feel as a second choice compared to substances. You learn to rely on yourself and grow up fast."

"It feels like you are constantly mourning someone that is alive and it is very hard to love someone more than they love themselves."

"It makes me feel very alone and scared and like there is no hope to have a normal healthy and happy life."

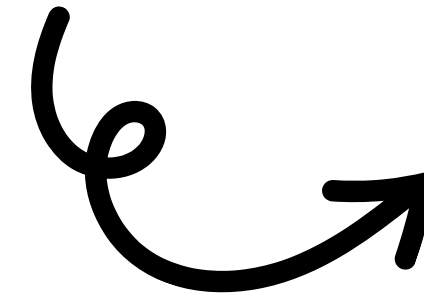
Research

Landscape Analysis of Grief Support Services for Children Impacted by SUD-Related Loss and Grief

Data Focus:

1. **Non-clinical** support services
2. **Clinical** services
3. **Specialized** programs

Read the Landscape
Analysis Summary!



Before

No specific statewide database or directory with information to support the identified population

Disjointed grief support systems (both clinical and non-clinical) which create additional challenges for families, caregivers, and youth navigating difficult circumstances

After

Over 600 grief support resources identified throughout the state of Illinois

Development of a comprehensive Grief Support Services Directory that can be utilized by people across the state to find grief resources in their communities

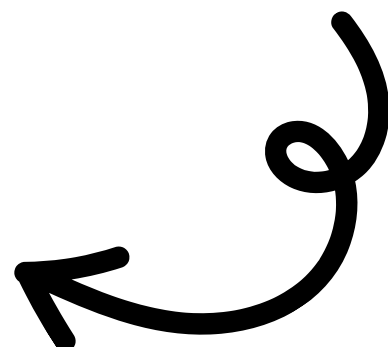
Directory

Collection of 639 clinical and non-clinical grief support services for children, youth, and families across Illinois

Sort by county with the option to include neighboring counties and statewide resources



Check out the directory!



No-Cost Services

In-Person

Multilingual

Report

Northern Illinois Hospice

Bridge of Hope offers grief support services. Primarily focuses on the loved ones of Northern Illinois Hospice patients who have died, however, grief support groups are open to the public. Serving Boone, DeKalb, Ogle, Stephenson, western McHenry, and Winnebago Counties.

Service languages (other than English):
Spanish

Ages served:
Teenagers, Families

Services offered:
Support Groups, Grief Education

Contact

Location: Northern Illinois Hospice/Gateway Arts Building
2225 Gateway Dr, Sycamore, IL

(815) 312-8338

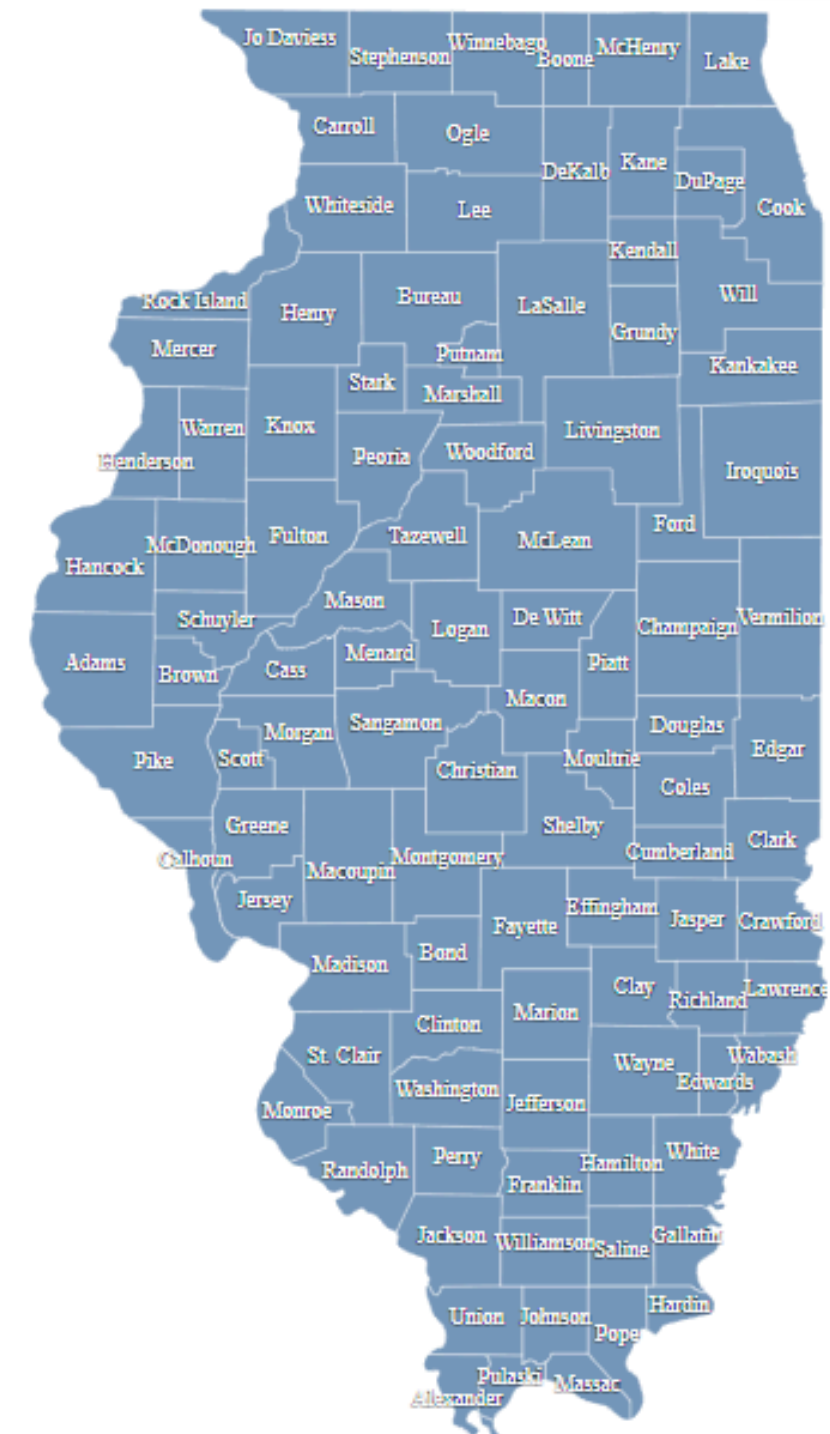
jconley@niha.org

VISIT WEBSITE

Grief Support Services Directory

The Circle of Care Grief Support Services Directory connects families and young people with essential support after the loss of a loved one, particularly when that loss is due to substance use or overdose. This directory offers access to specialized grief support services, including counselors and therapists, whose primary mission is to help individuals and families navigate the journey of grief and loss. In addition to clinical support, the directory contains non-clinical grief resources, such as support groups, grief education, and even recreational activities, all designed to meet the unique needs of children and youth facing this challenging experience. Circle of Care is committed to ensuring that no one has to face grief alone—compassionate help is available.

County: [Select] ☐ Include neighboring counties ☐ Include statewide results





The Circle of Care Online Resource Toolkit

To help foster well-prepared circles of care in all communities, the Circle of Care has collected practical resources from national experts on children's experience of loss, grief, and the effects of substance use disorders (SUD) on families.

Online Resource Toolkits

**Resources in Three
Collections by Children's
Age**

**A Deeper Dive into
Loss, Grief,
and Support**

**Expanding the
Reach of
Resources**

**Children's Books on
Loss, Grief,
and Healing**

Community-based Training

Threads of Hope: Weaving Support for Substance Use and Grief for Children and Families
The landscape of grief and loss and why this training matters



Childhood Bereavement Statistics

- **1 in 5 of bereaved children** is due to a substance use-related death (CBEM, 2023)
- **1,216 Illinois children** lost a parent to an overdose
- **2011-2021 over 300,000 children had a parent die** due to drugs and/or alcohol (Jones et al, 2024)



The reality of Substance Use-Related Loss

- 1 in 8 children lived in a household with one caregiver who has had a substance use disorder (SAMHSA)
- Substance Use Disorder is a **family disease** that benefits from judgment-free support for all including the child



Building awareness and education to combat stigma associated with both

- Stigma creates SHAME which decreases help-seeking behavior
- Increases isolation and decreases social support
- Creates barriers to access point in resources





**WE ARE HERE!
WE ARE HERE!
WE ARE HERE!**

Training for ALL

- Caregivers & Natural Helpers
- First Responders
- Educators
- Mental Health Professionals
- Grief Professionals
- Social Services
- Recovery Oriented System of Care (ROSC) council or member

Connect Systems of Care

- Start the bridges between substance use program, mental health and grief support
- Embrace collaborative approaches that are family centered
- Increase awareness of existing resources and services

Educate

- Highlight the intersectionality in needs between mental health, recovery, and grief-informed support
- Decrease stigma associated with substance affected families and grief
- Understand grief as it relates to all loss, including but not only death

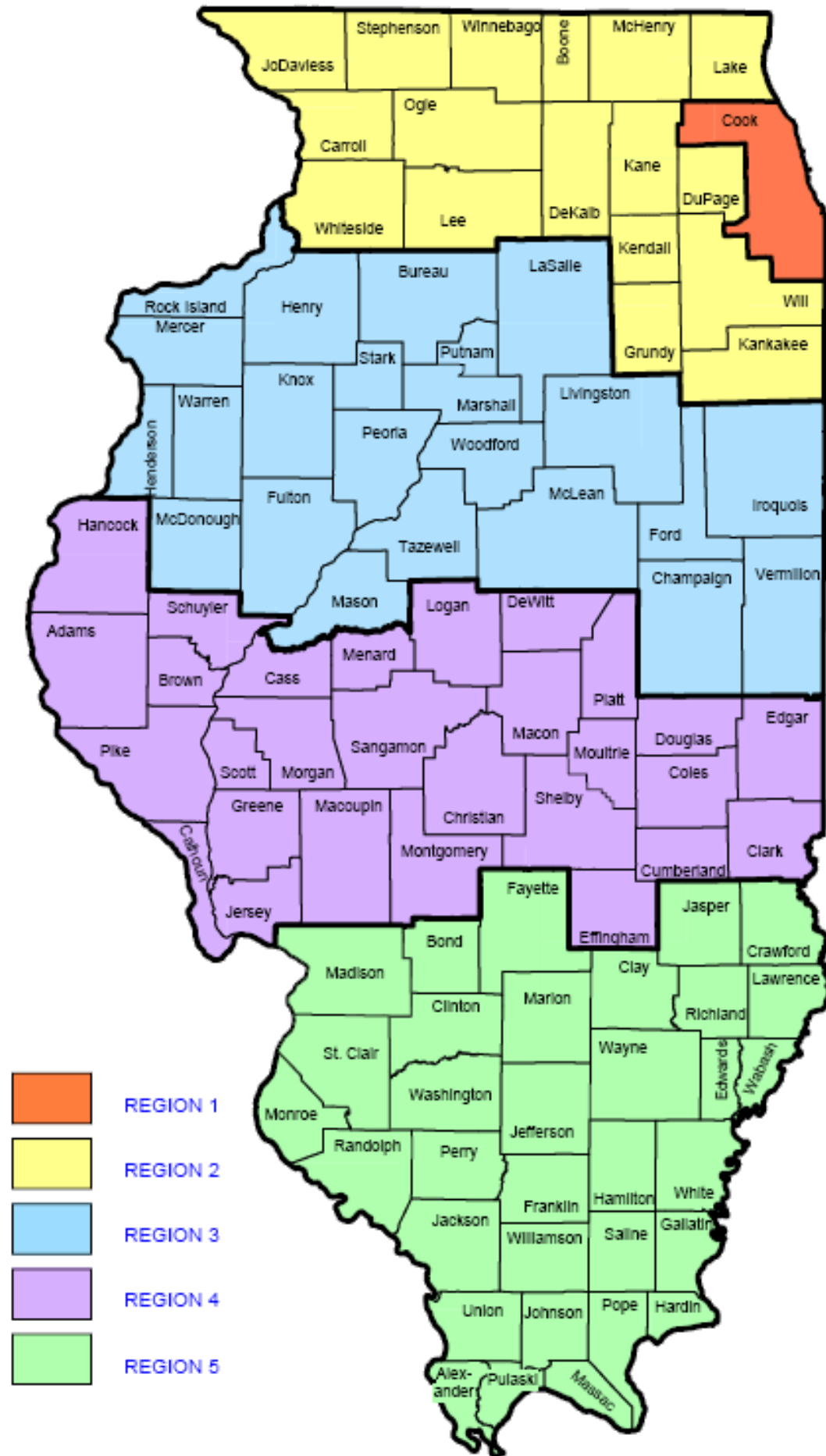
Equip

- Develop age-appropriate language
- Build compassionate evidence-based strategies and opportunities to include children in process
- Strengthen communities and resource



ILLINOIS TRAINING

- Two-day Training - six hours each day
- Virtual only
- Five training opportunities
- Delivered by Regions
- CE Offered
- Recorded and housed on website



437

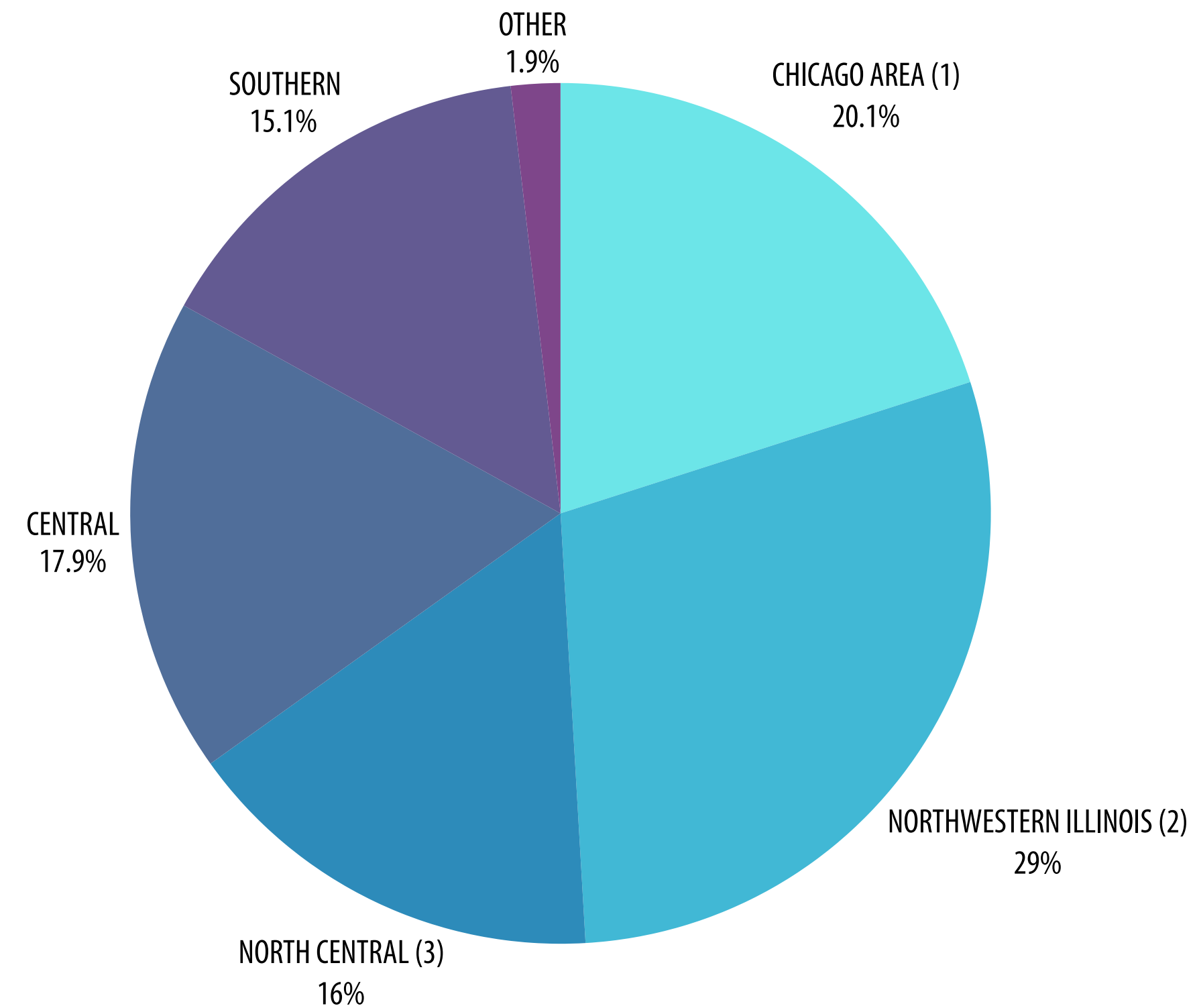
TOTAL

324

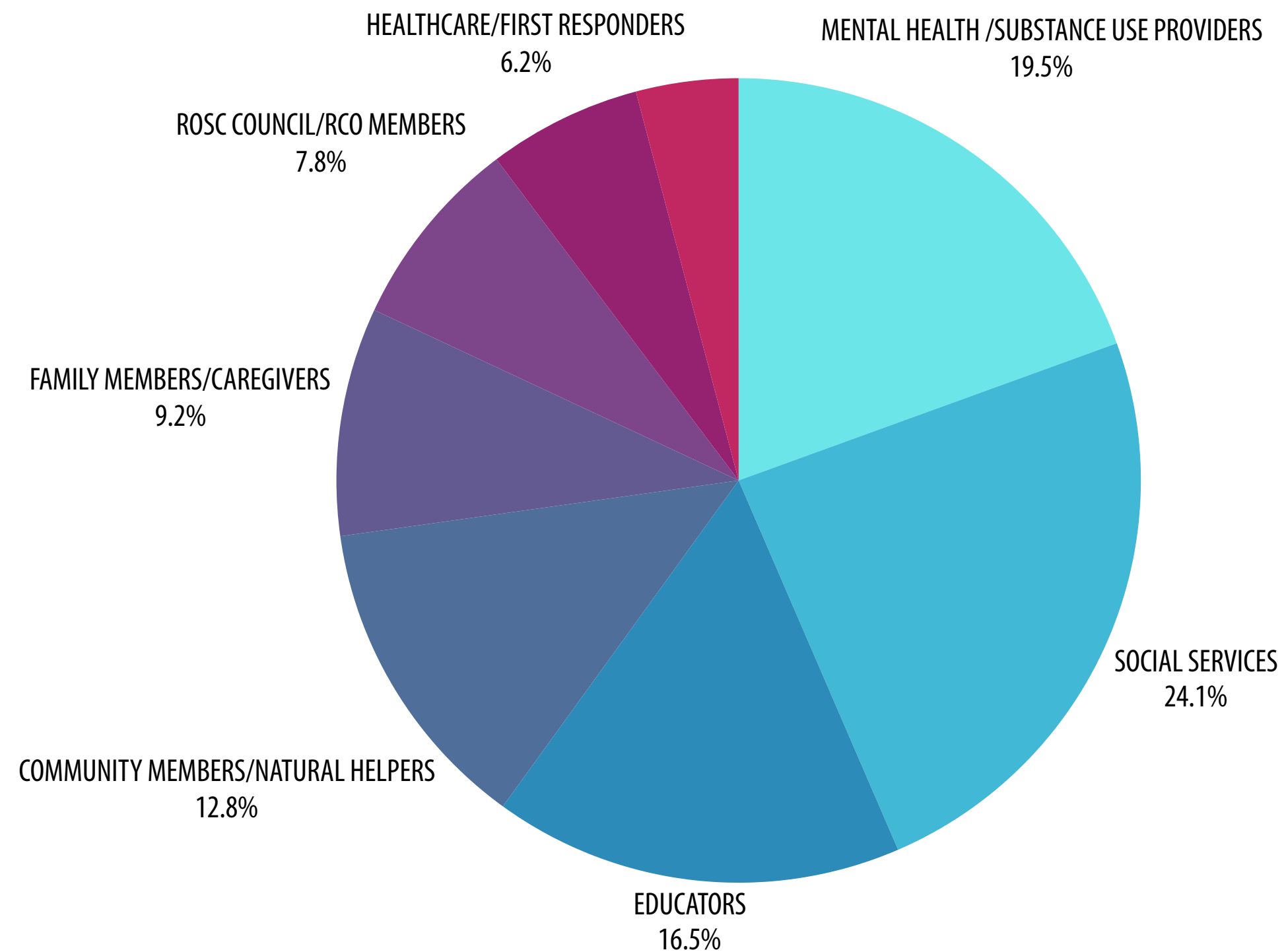
FINISHED PROGRAM
EVALUATIONS

ATTENDANCE BY

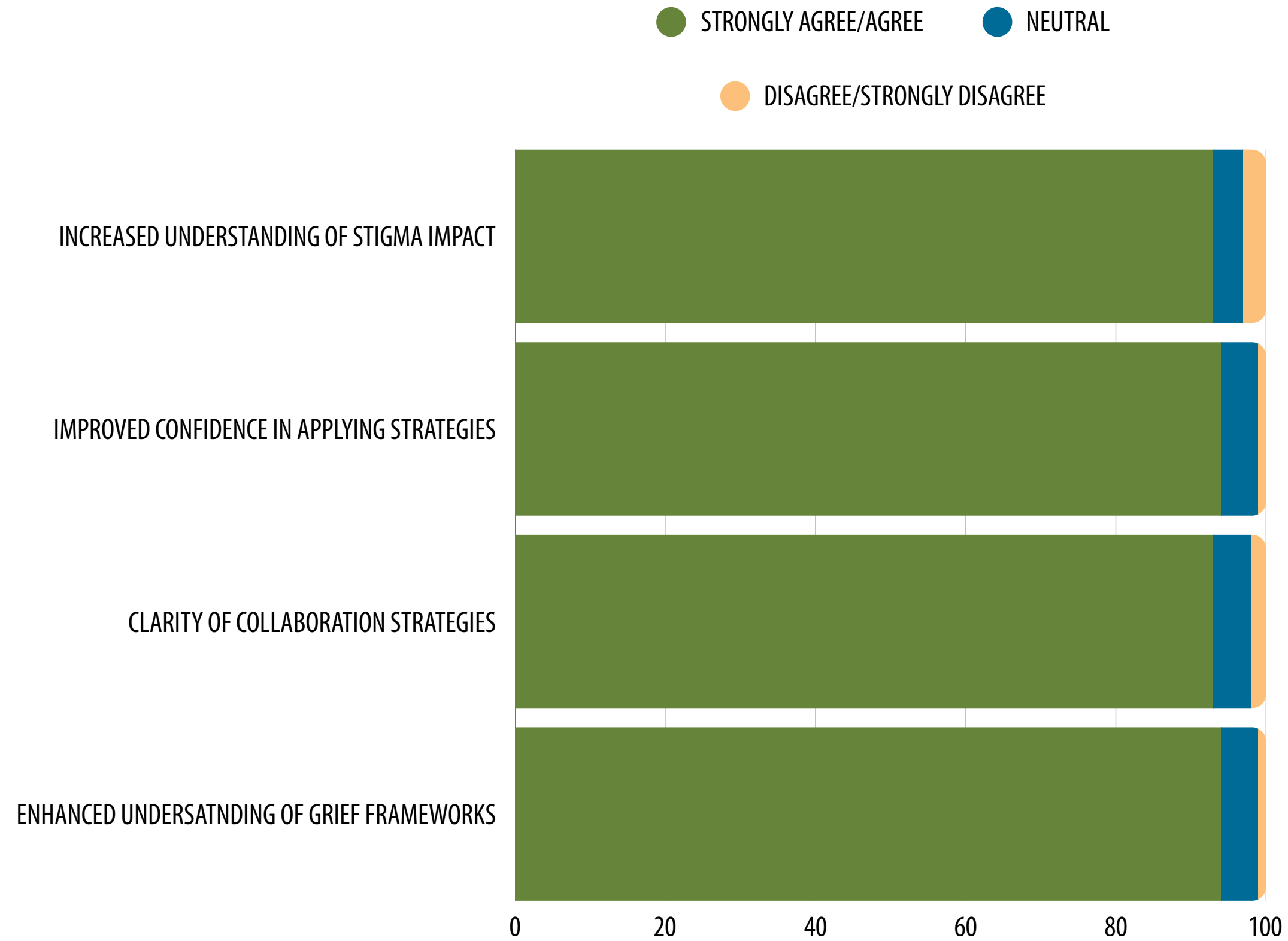
REGIONS



SECTOR



UNDERSTANDING AND KNOWLEDGE



IMMEDIATE KNOWLEDGE AND CONFIDENCE CHANGES



Confidence in supporting children bereaved by substance use-related death

- BEFORE TRAINING: 26-44%
- AFTER TRAINING: 77-91%



Comfort in discussing substance use and grief with young people

- BEFORE TRAINING: 42-68%
- AFTER TRAINING: 71-93%



Comfort and confidence with community collaboration

- 2 REGIONS DEMONSTRATED NOTABLE GAINS 76-81% TO 92-95%
- ONE GROUP REMAINED UNCHANGED SUGGESTING ADDITIONAL SUPPORT OR APPROACH TO ENHANCE COLLABORATION OPPORTUNITIES



H I G H

- **INTERACTIVE FORMAT**
- **PRESENTER QUALITY**
- **PRACTICAL RESOURCES**
- **REAL-LIFE EXAMPLES**
- **COLLABORATIVE LEARNING**

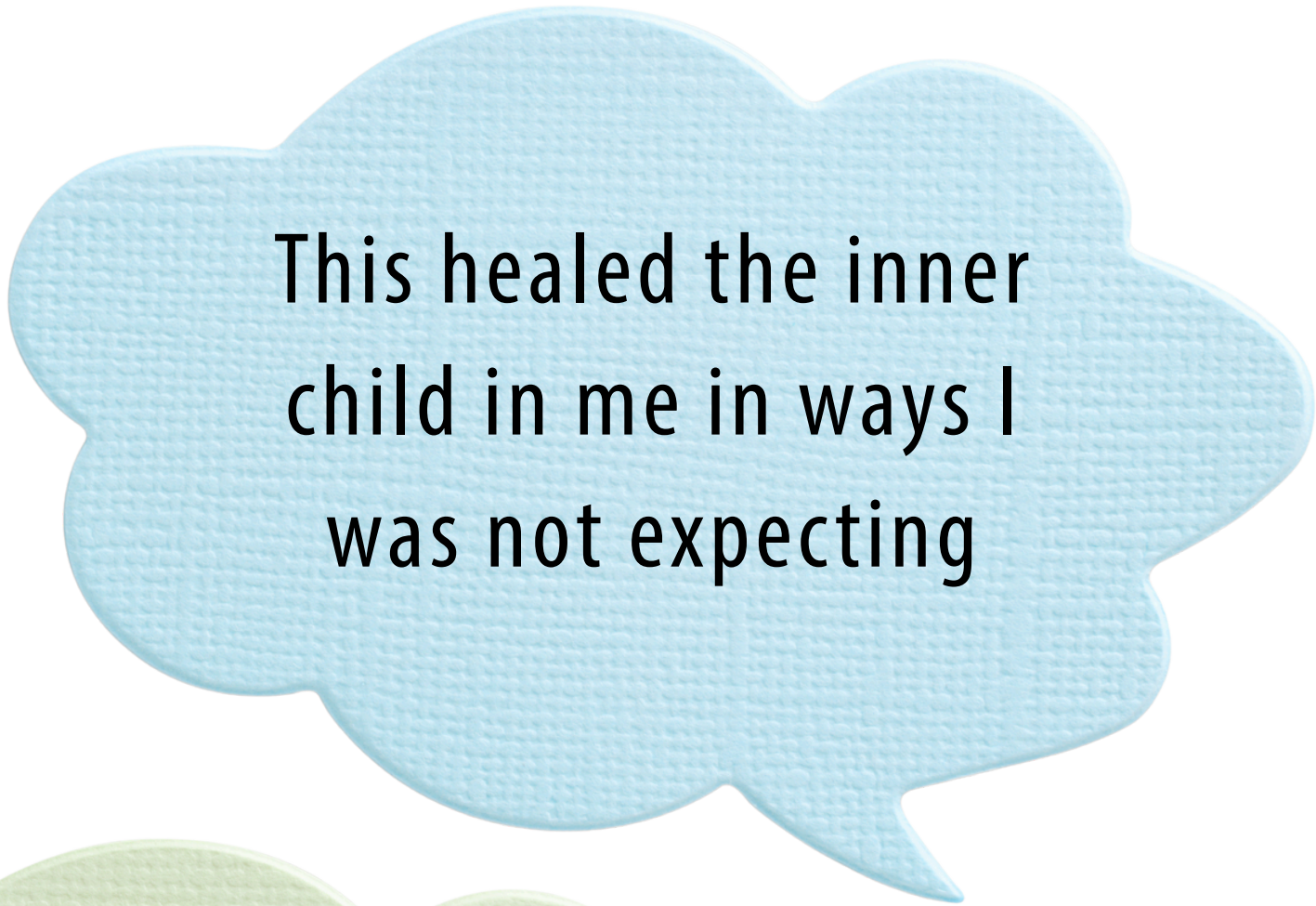
- **STRUCTURE IN BREAKOUT ROOMS**
- **IN-PERSON OPTION**
- **DIFFERING TRACKS**
- **ACCOMPANYING RESOURCES**
- **TECHNICAL ISSUES**

L O W

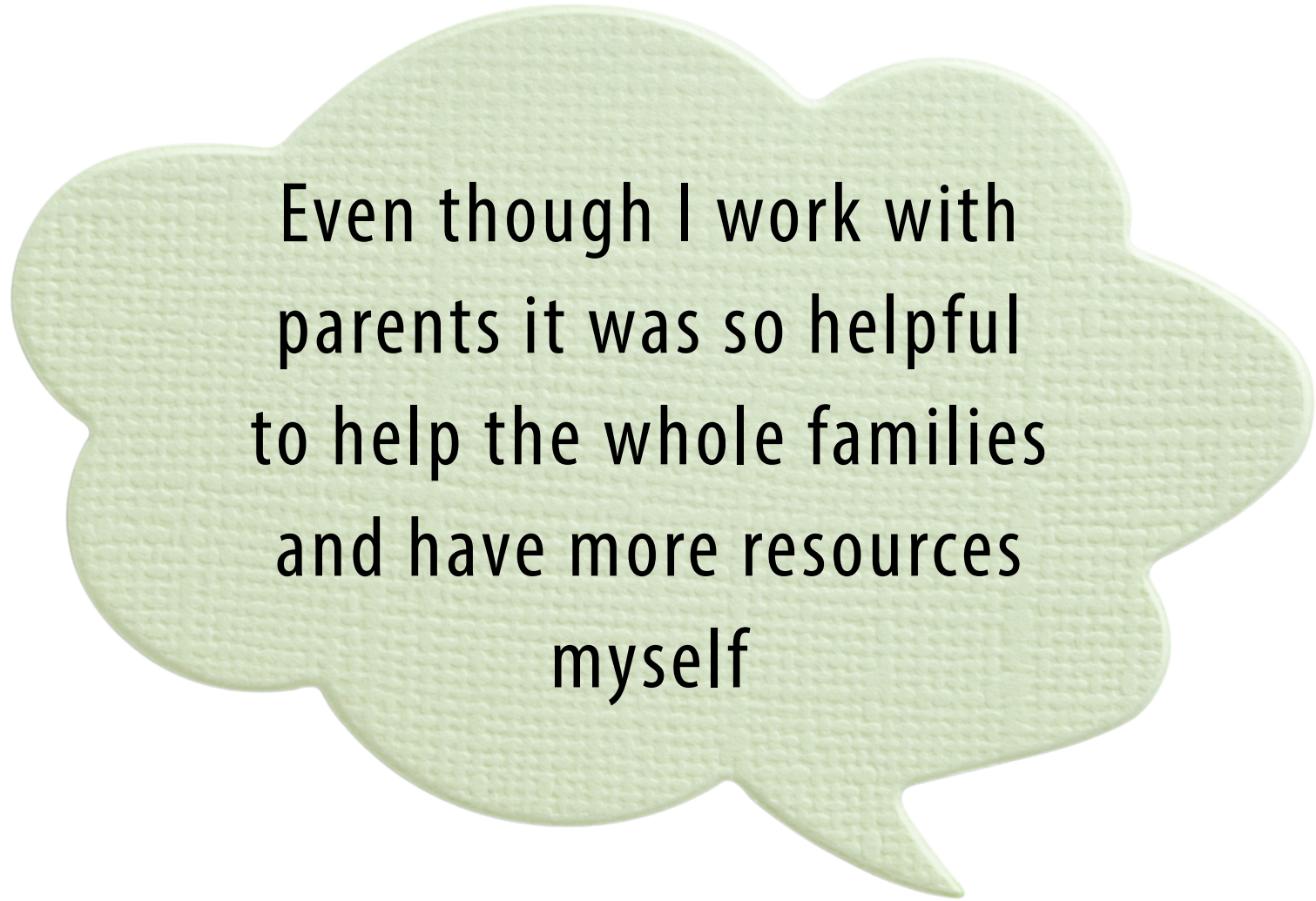


**ONE IN-PERSON SESSION at the
National Alliance for Children's Grief
Symposium**

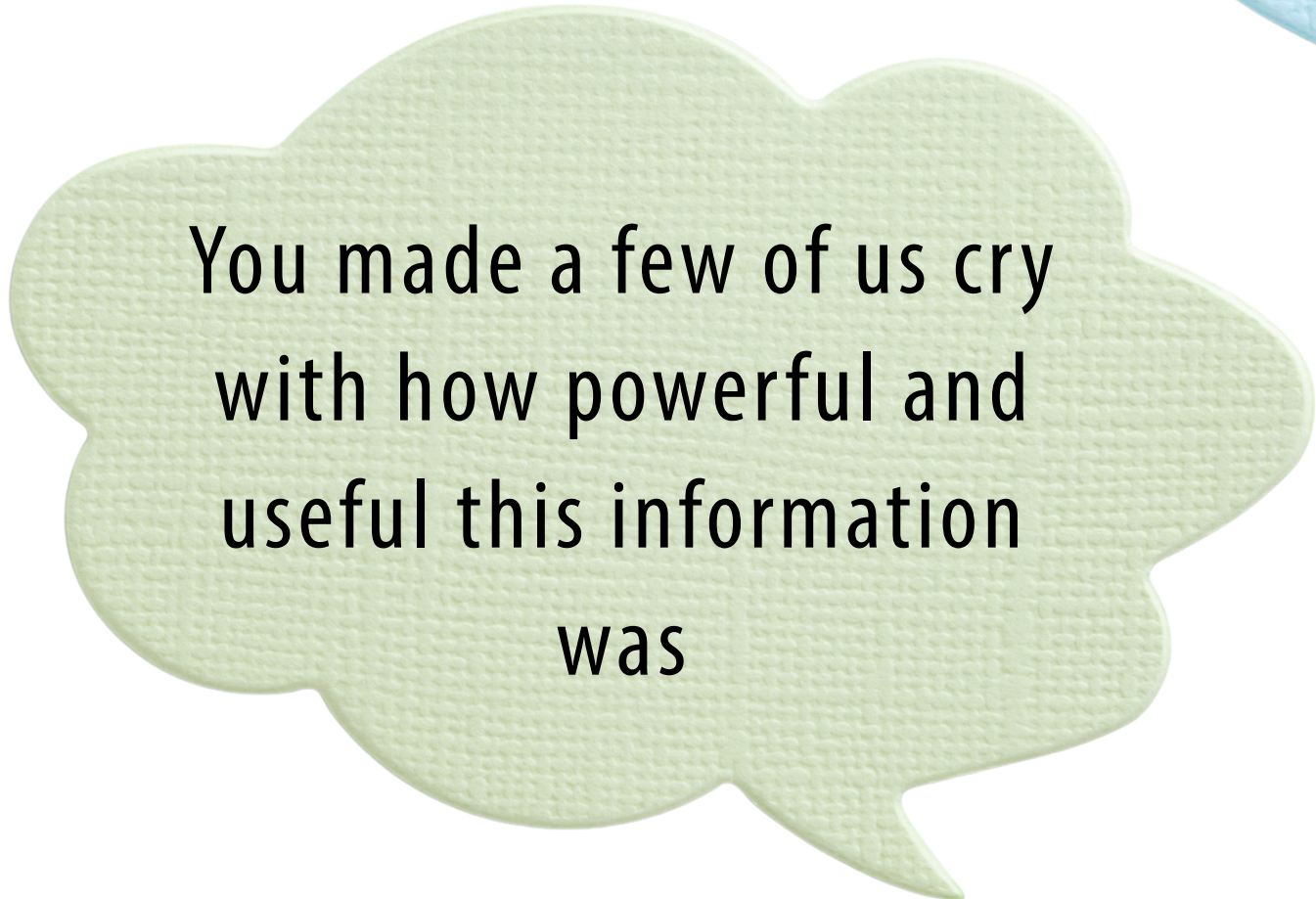
**81 Grief Professionals
1 Therapy Dog**



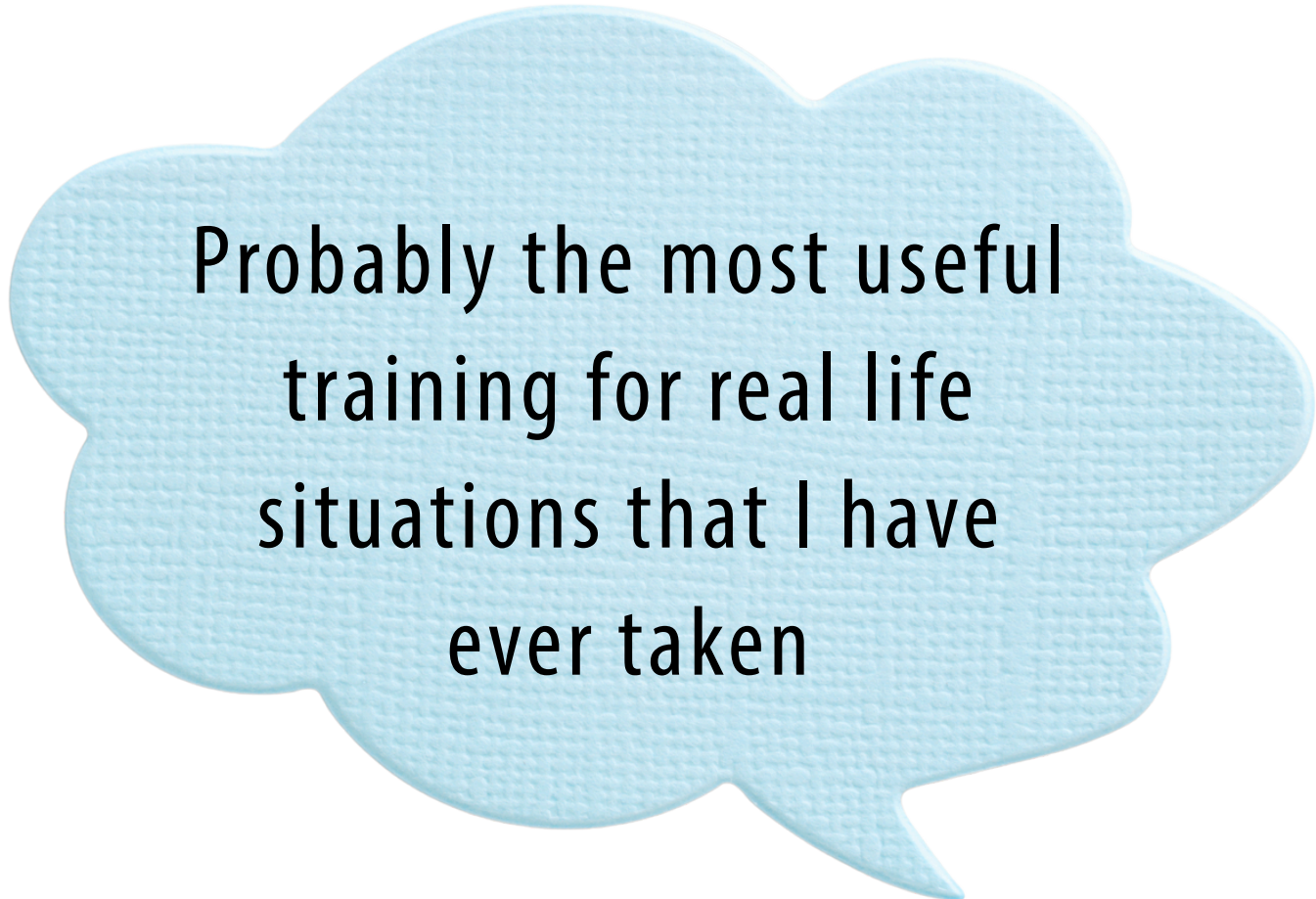
This healed the inner
child in me in ways I
was not expecting



Even though I work with
parents it was so helpful
to help the whole families
and have more resources
myself



You made a few of us cry
with how powerful and
useful this information
was



Probably the most useful
training for real life
situations that I have
ever taken

**UNLESS SOMEONE LIKE YOU CARES A
WHOLE AWFUL LOT, NOTHING IS GOING
TO GET BETTER. IT'S NOT**

- Dr. Seuss, The Lorax



Handle with Care

What it is:

An initiative to support vulnerable children through simple communication, and partnerships between law enforcement and educators



Our Approach

- *Discussion sessions*
- *One-on-One TA support for interested agencies*
- *Resource folder with implementation tools and resources*

How it works:

If law enforcement encounter a child during a call, that child's name and three words "Handle with Care", are forwarded to the school before the school bell rings the next day.

Comfort Bags for Kids

The comfort bags were designed for first responders, community helpers, and professionals to give out to children and teens who:

- have experienced the loss of someone with a substance use disorder
- are living with a loved one who struggles with mental health challenges or SUD
- have experienced something stressful or traumatic the night before school





- ▶ **Transitional items: play a vital role in emotional regulation**
- ▶ **Redirection: giving a child comfort items in a time of crisis, redirects their attention- creating a positive impact of the event**

**THE
Before!**



During!



THE After!



Our Reach

692,374

PEOPLE ENGAGED
THROUGH MARKETING
AND OUTREACH

150+

ONE-ON-ONE MEETINGS
WITH STAKEHOLDERS

40+

GROUP
PRESENTATIONS

21

CONFERENCES
ATTENDED



50+

IDENTIFIED
CAREGIVERS ENGAGED

350

YOUTH DIRECTLY
ENGAGED

163

LUNCH AND LEARN
SESSION ATTENDEES

Our Impact

437

TOH TRAINING
PARTICIPANTS

25%

AVERAGE OF PARTICIPANTS
IDENTIFYING AS NATURAL
HELPERS

125

HWC DISCUSSION
SESSION ATTENDEES

10,431

COMFORT BAGS
DISTRIBUTED AS OF
JUNE 9TH!

Immediate Knowledge
and Confidence Changes:

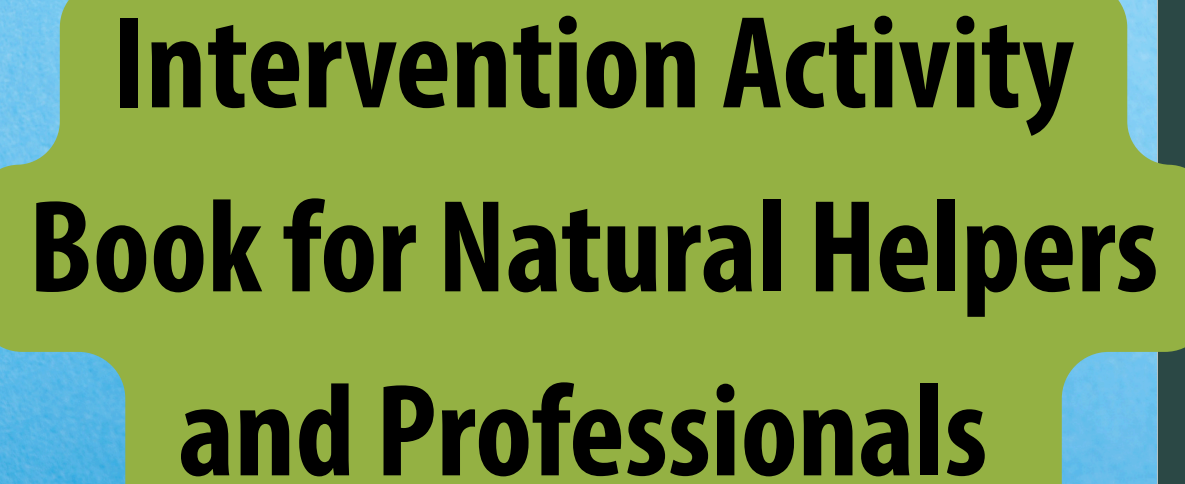
- 93% of participants agreed that the TOH training increased their **understanding of stigma's impact**
- 94% of participants agreed that the TOH training enhanced their **understanding of grief frameworks**
- 97% of participants reported being **very satisfied** with their experience in the TOH training

What We've Learned

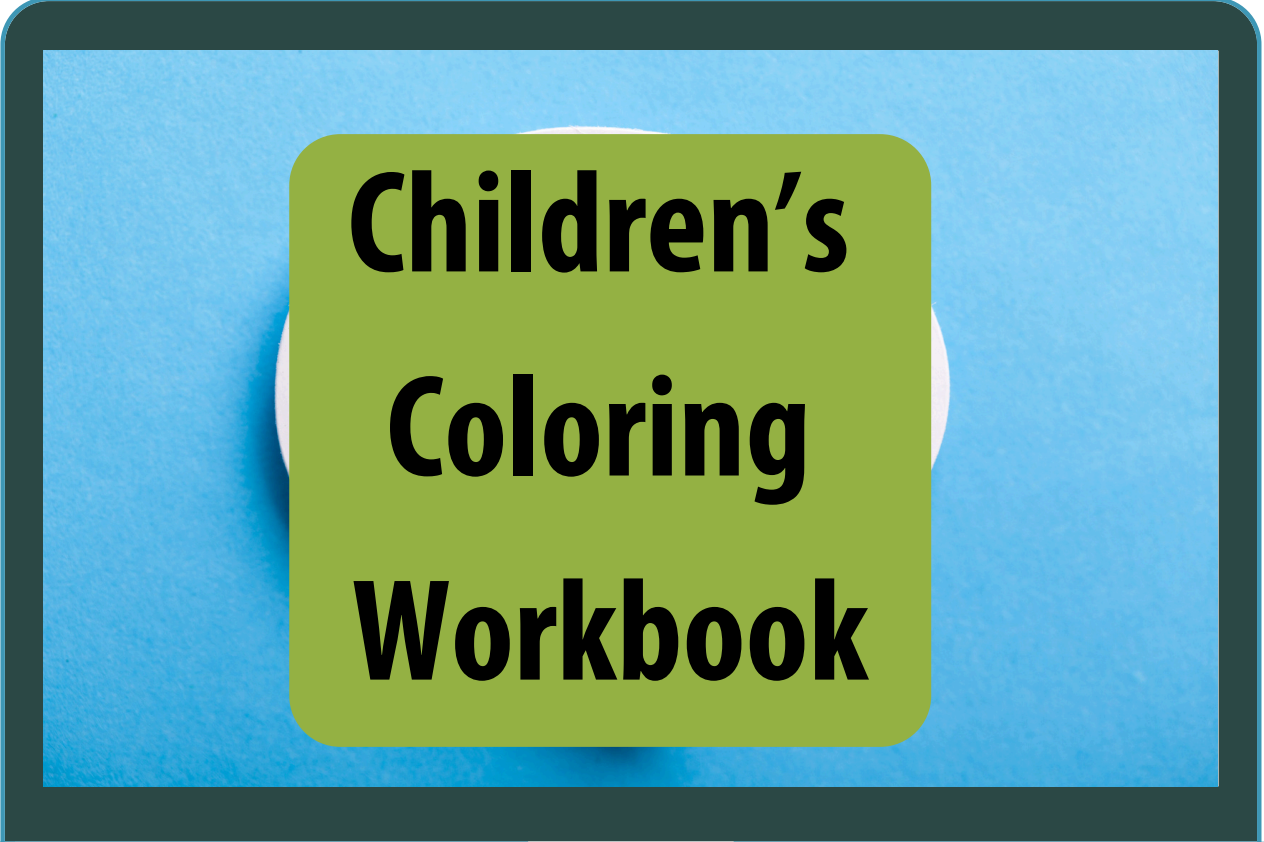
 **The importance of cross-sector collaboration**

 **Continuing to build off all the resources!**

What Is Next?



**Intervention Activity
Book for Natural Helpers
and Professionals**



**Children's
Coloring
Workbook**

What Is Next?

illinoisfamilyresource.org/circleofcare

2 0 2 5

CIRCLE OF CARE

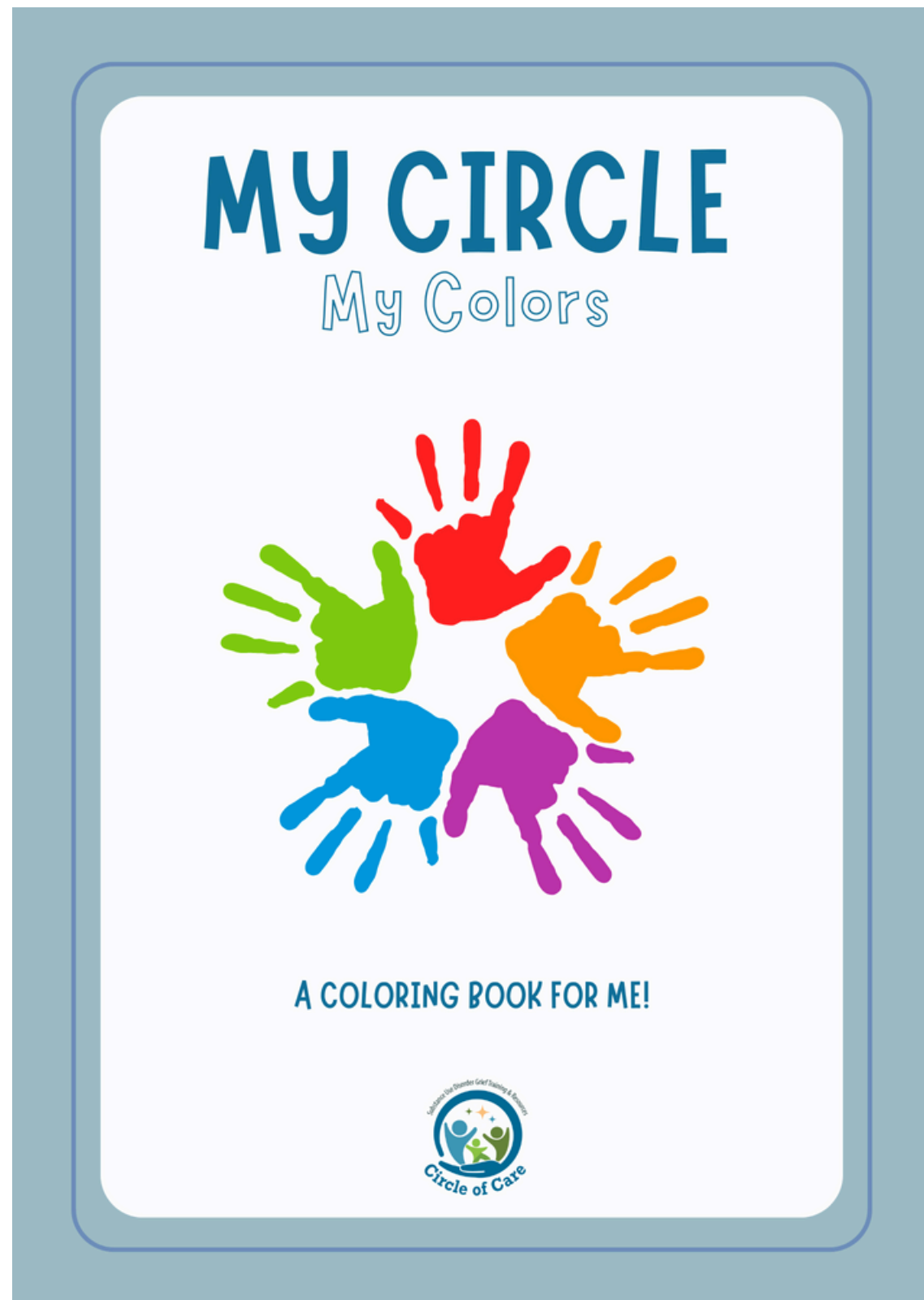
AN INTERACTIVE GUIDE OF ACTIVITIES AND INTERVENTIONS
FOR CAREGIVERS AND PROFESSIONALS SUPPORTING
CHILDREN AND FAMILIES GRIEVING A SUBSTANCE USE LOSS
AND DEATH

*Funding for this program is provided in whole or in part through the
Substance Use Prevention, Treatment, and Recovery Block Grant through the
American Rescue Plan Act.*



**Intervention Activity Book for Natural
Helpers and Professionals**

What Is Next?



Children's Coloring Workbook

Thank you!



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