COVID-19 Impact & Assessment

PLAYBOOK | APRIL 2021

Study conducted by Accenture

What's in
this document?

This playbook captures the prioritized needs of the communities served by Easterseals that were exacerbated by COVID-19 and how Easterseals **plans to address these needs moving forward.**

The content in this document was informed by **six research activities,** outlined on slide 6, and **two workshops,** outlined on slide 7.

Introduction

THE CHALLENGE

To understand both the current and long-term impacts of COVID-19 on the Easterseals Network and its communities.

THE ASK

In the era of disruption, how might Easterseals reimagine its operations, programs, and investments to further its mission most effectively?

Research activities

The needs and opportunities outlined in this document were informed by a mixed methods approach to research, which included the following activities:

1:1 Interviews with Easterseals Affiliate Leaders

Twelve Easterseals Affiliate leaders were interviewed to gain a deeper understanding of the impact COVID-19 has had on Easterseals Affiliates from a qualitative perspective.

Easterseals Community Qualitative Study

Data from **22 Easterseals program participants was collected** through a digital platform called DScout. The participants included parents, young adults with disabilities in transition, adult job seekers with disabilities, seniors, veterans, and people of color.

Easterseals Community Quantitative Survey

An external quantitative survey was done to understand how COVID-19 has impacted the communities served by Easterseals. **557 responses** were collected from across the nation.
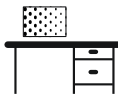
Easterseals Affiliate Survey

An internal quantitative survey was launched to understand how COVID-19 has impacted Affiliate staff. We collected **410 responses from 11 Affiliates.**

Secondary Research

Secondary research was conducted to understand the breadth of the impacts COVID-19 has had and **populations most impacted by COVID-19.**

Market Assessment

A market assessment was done to understand the impact of COVID-19 on **three peer organizations** which serve populations similar to those served by Easterseals.

Co-creation workshops

After the research was synthesized, we conducted two two-hour co-creation workshops with **37 Affiliate Leaders** that focused on identifying the needs and opportunities for Easterseals to address moving forward. Below is an overview of each workshop:

PART 1: RESEARCH IMMERSION

Leveraging the research findings; the goal of this workshop was to **identify the key needs of the core populations that Easterseals serves.**
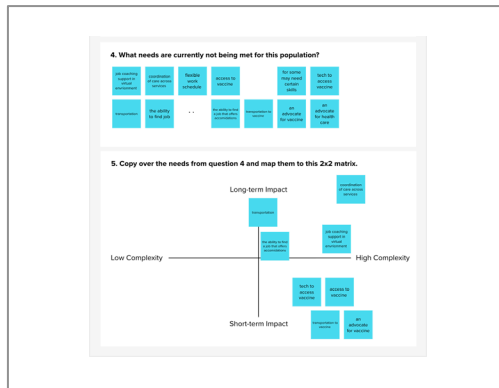

The group reviewed the research findings in-depth and identified the needs for each core population that Easterseals serves.
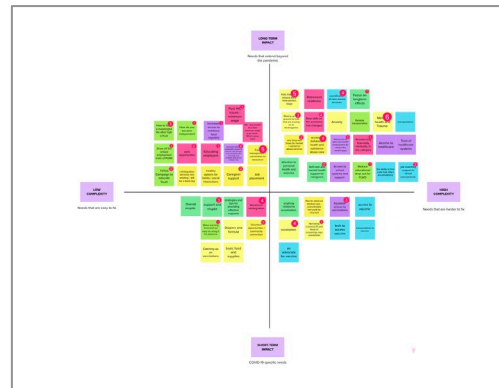
They then identified the top needs, considering how impactful and complex each need would be to solve.

PART 2: STRATEGIC ACTIONS

The goal of this workshop was to **generate ideas for how Easterseals can address the unmet needs of the core populations** that were identified in part 1.
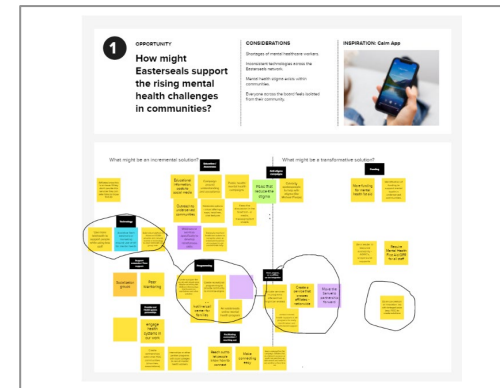
The group saw a synthesized set of prioritized needs, around which they generated ideas.

The last activity focused on identifying the top ideas and continued to evolve them, considering feasibility.

Prioritized needs

These are the prioritized needs that were identified during the co-creation workshops:

HEALTH EQUITY

How might Easterseals promote equitable access and participation in the healthcare system?

WORKFORCE

How might Easterseals help job seekers find work opportunities in the evolving job market?

TECHNOLOGY

How might Easterseals increase access and comfort with technology?

MENTAL HEALTH

How might Easterseals support the rising mental health challenges in communities?

EDUCATION

How might Easterseals identify and mitigate achievement gaps for children?

HOLISTIC CARE

How might Easterseals provide holistic care across Social Determinants of Health?

PEOPLE OF COLOR WITH DISABILITY

How might Easterseals address the inequities that people of color with disability face?

Responding to community needs through
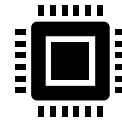# 7 cohorts to drive impact

Strategic plan cohorts will leverage the expertise of the Easterseals Network to solve the complex challenges exacerbated by COVID-19 on the communities served by Easterseals. Below are the areas of impact for each cohort:
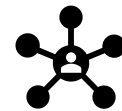
HEALTH EQUITY

WORKFORCE

TECHNOLOGY

MENTAL HEALTH

EDUCATION

PEOPLE OF COLOR WITH DISABILITY

HOLISTIC CARE

Responding to prioritized needs through strategic plan cohorts

To best respond to the prioritized needs, strategic plan cohorts will address the challenges of each prioritized need as it aligns to the Easterseals Network Strategic Plan.

ABOUT STRATEGIC PLAN COHORTS

Strategic plan cohorts were identified as the response to the prioritized needs to incorporate the full voice of the Easterseals Network in creating solutions that cause measurable impacts for the communities they serve.

While many ideas were identified to address prioritized needs during the co-creation workshop, the group recognize the full breadth of Easterseals' expertise and believe the cohorts enable this expertise to enhance the potential prioritized actions provided.

NETWORK ROLES

The cohorts will be made up of a mix of perspectives and expertise:

- The **National Office** will be responsible for assembling members of the cohorts

- Each cohort will have a **sponsor** from the National Office to ensure the tasks align with the Easterseals Network Strategic Plan.

- **Cohort members** decide how to address the prioritized needs. Cohort members might be made up of representatives from different Affiliates, subject matter experts, and partner organizations.

A JUMPING OFF POINT

Even though these were informed by research and experts, there needs to be validation and more thoughtful facilitation of the goals for each cohort.

The thoughts and ideas captured in this section can also be used by individual Affiliates to test.

Needs + Opportunities

What's in this section?

This section covers the prioritized needs and opportunities that were informed by the research activities conducted and the co-creation workshops.

The content in this section is a work in progress and is expected to evolve. It is a hypothesis of how Easterseals will address the prioritized needs of the communities served by Easterseals.

Prioritized needs

The following are the prioritized needs identified during the
co-creation workshops:

HEALTH EQUITY

How might Easterseals promote equitable access and participation in the healthcare system?

WORKFORCE

How might Easterseals help job seekers find employment opportunities in the evolving job market?

TECHNOLOGY

How might Easterseals increase access and comfort with technology?

MENTAL HEALTH

How might Easterseals support the rising mental health challenges in communities?

EDUCATION

How might Easterseals identify and mitigate achievement gaps for children?

HOLISTIC CARE

How might Easterseals provide holistic care across Social Determinants of Health?

PEOPLE OF COLOR WITH DISABILITY

How might Easterseals address the inequities that people of color with disabilities face?

Section contents

Here's the content you can expect to see on the following slides:

INTRODUCTION

Introduces the next prioritized needs with a reminder of the "how might we…" statement that you saw on slide 13.

RESEARCH

This slide contains the research findings that explain the context of the prioritized needs, highlighting the key challenges.

STRATEGIC PLAN COHORT OVERVIEW

This slide captures the overall goals of the Easterseals Network Strategic Plan cohort.

STRATEGIC PLAN COHORT FOCUS AREAS & RESOURCES

This slide covers the focus areas, resources, and considerations that the cohorts can use as a jumping off point.

STRATEGIC PLAN COHORT PEER IDENTIFIED IDEAS

This slide outlines the proposed actions that the cohort might tackle to address the prioritized need.

HEALTHCARE EQUITY

How might Easterseals promote equitable access and participation in the healthcare system?

RESEARCH

Health Equity

Below are the takeaways from research that explain the main challenges of this prioritized need.

PEOPLE OF COLOR HAVE LESS ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE AND DON'T TRUST THE HEALTHCARE SYSTEM

Historically**, people of color have experienced limited access to quality healthcare**. COVID-19 has increased this disparity. In the United States; people of color are more likely to have chronic conditions such as heart disease, diabetes, and lung disease. **These pre-existing conditions increase the risk of contracting COVID-19 and experiencing more severe symptoms**. Additionally, there is a feeling of distrust between people of color and the healthcare system due to systemic racism.

Black participants were **twice as likely** to report that racism contributed negatively to access to care or support during COVID-19 in the Easterseals Community survey.

HEALTH CARE IS OFTEN INACCESSIBLE FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

People with disabilities are 3x more likely to be denied healthcare and 4x as likely to be treated poorly while receiving care.[5] Yet, even with increased needs, people with disabilities historically experience less access to healthcare. There are many factors that contribute to this lack of access:

- **Lack of affordability**: People living with disabilities are disproportionately low-income. This makes the financial impacts of any additional healthcare needs a burden. Also, transport costs are a key factor in cases where medical care is unaffordable.

- **Lack of healthcare professional knowledge**: 80% of U.S. medical students receive no clinical training for treating people with IDD, and 56% report they are not competent to treat these individuals.[5]

- **Lack of communications**: Healthcare information is generally not available in sign language or braille.

PEOPLE LIVING WITH A DISABILITY HAVE BEEN DEPRIORITIZED DURING THE PANDEMIC

Initial vaccine rollouts in most states have focused on age or essential worker status. Limited data on the impact of COVID-19 on individuals living with disabilities consistently impedes efforts to reprioritize their vaccine status.

Furthermore, **care setting is more often a determinant of priority in vaccine rollouts**, adversely affecting individuals receiving in-home care, as well as their caregivers.

Many people living with a disability are not considered high-risk. Data collection efforts focus on morbidity and don't often consider the fact that access to ongoing care or services is critical for people living with disabilities.

OPPORTUNITY

Health Equity

>

This cohort will focus on helping the Network address the health inequities and lack of access faced by people with disabilities, particularly those of color.

>

FROM		TO
People of color have less access to healthcare and don't trust the healthcare system	>	People of color with disabilities receive proper care
Healthcare is often inaccessible for people with disabilities	>	People with disabilities have accessible healthcare
People with disabilities have been deprioritized during the pandemic	>	People with disabilities are prioritized

STRATEGIC PLAN COHORT

Health Equity

This cohort will focus on helping the Network address the health inequities and lack of access faced by people with disabilities, particularly those of color.

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People of color have less access to healthcare and don't trust the healthcare system	>	People of color with disabilities receive proper care
Health care is often inaccessible for people with disabilities	>	People with disabilities have accessible healthcare
People with disabilities have been deprioritized during the pandemic	>	People with disabilities are prioritized

FOCUS AREAS

Community support

- Discrimination is no longer part of the healthcare experience for people living with a disability, particularly those of color
- Communities have better access to resources and health services
- People living with disabilities are seen as people
- Health systems better understand the needs of people living with disabilities, particularly those of color

Brand recognition

- Easterseals is seen as a leader in the disability community

Impact measurement

- The desired impact is defined and continually measured to inform improvements to the Network.

RESOURCES

Core cohort team

- Subject matter experts who are leaders in the healthcare industry
- Community representatives of different abilities, ethnicities, ages, and gender identities

Potential partnerships

- National Black Nurses Association
- Leadership of health systems
- Consumer advocates
- Elected officials
- Alliance with the People of Color with Disabilities Cohort

Similar Easterseals initiatives

- Invest health initiative with foundation - need for collaboration among many groups
- Alzheimer's Association partnership
- Livestrong

CONSIDERATIONS

- How will the initiatives in this cohort get funded?
- How will this cohort prevent partnering with organizations that don't understand disability services?
- Other considerations?

STRATEGIC PLAN COHORT

Health Equity

This cohort will focus on helping the Network address the health inequities and lack of access faced by people with disabilities, particularly those of color.

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POTENTIAL IDEAS

NOW	NEXT	FUTURE
Advocacy through care & case management	Ableism training for healthcare providers and students	Bring healthcare, the business community, education, and residents together for creative solutions in each community
Advocacy with politicians for awareness	Engage health systems in our work	
Engage communities in public policy advocacy	Robust technology-driven case management to ensure SDOH are being met	
Targeted outreach to existing BIPOC participants to provide education on advocacy and access	Develop more reliable transportation services	
Engage in community design around solutions to reduce barriers to access healthcare	Provide culturally responsive training for health care providers	
Engage in community learning around reasons for distrust/skepticism in healthcare systems	Partnering with health systems to ensure high-need patients are monitored and case managed	
Educate participants on financing options for affordable healthcare exchanges in the Affordable Care Act	Increase access to benefits planning and work incentives counseling - focus on wraparound supports and systems navigation	

WORKFORCE

How might Easterseals help job seekers find work opportunities in the evolving job market?

RESEARCH

Workforce

Below are the takeaways from research that explain the main challenges of this prioritized need.

THE JOB MARKET IS EVOLVING, LEAVING SOME BEHIND

Before COVID-19, the job market was transforming. **During the pandemic, this evolution was accelerated** by the adoption of at-home work environments and the shutdown of some in-person manual labor jobs.

Traditional jobs such as salesclerks and line workers are being automated across industries. Emerging jobs require a new skillset. They require more complex skills such as problem solving and critical thinking.

Technology is also now embedded in all jobs. Workers must be comfortable using technology including accessing laptops, navigating the Internet, and using mobile devices for their tasks.

Only **39%** of job seekers report feeling very comfortable using technology for their job, and **18%** are not comfortable at all.

SENIORS ARE STRUGGLING TO STAY RELEVANT IN THE JOB MARKET

Workers over the age of 65 are **less likely than younger age groups to be able to telework** due to the popularity of labor-based jobs. They are less equipped to work from home, leading to reduced optimism and their departure from the workforce.

When asked how Easterseals could better support seniors, **participants most frequently wanted support in learning technology for today's workforce**. Being able to use technology to work not only enables their economic stability but acts as a social opportunity and a sense of purpose to their days.

14% of seniors report that they are unemployed and currently seeking a job, compared to just **8%** of adults.

"I think that a more developed training program involving technology would provide better support in today's job market."
– Senior, Easterseals Communities survey

DECREASE IN OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE TO PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES DUE TO COVID-19

The effects of unemployment on American families cannot be understated. Unemployment spiked to 14.8% in April 2020[3] and **43% of American households report a job loss** or reduction of income during COVID-19.[4] These effects are more dramatic in the disability community.

Compounding the closures of COVID-19, **many employers do not understand the benefits** of hiring people with disabilities or how to assure their success in the workplace.

44% of the Easterseals community is currently unemployed.

OPPORTUNITY

Workforce

>

This cohort will focus on helping the Network develop solutions to help job seekers adapt to the evolving market and get connected to opportunities.

FROM		TO
The job market is evolving, leaving some behind	**>**	Job seekers are set up for future career success
Seniors are struggling to stay relevant in the job market		
Decrease in opportunities available to people with disabilities due to COVID-19	**>**	Job seekers are connected to more opportunities

STRATEGIC PLAN COHORT

Workforce

This cohort will focus on helping the Network develop solutions to help job seekers adapt to the evolving market and get connected to opportunities.

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The job market is evolving, leaving some behind Seniors are struggling to stay relevant in the job market	**>**	Job seekers are set up for future career success
Decrease in opportunities available to people with disabilities due to COVID-19	**>**	Job seekers are connected to more opportunities

FOCUS AREAS

Network alignment
- Reduced unconscious bias and core services are offered across Affiliates

Service quality
- Increased participation in current services

Community support
- Communities have better access to transportation
- Increased diversity within companies
- Communities can adapt to the evolving post-COVID-19 employment landscape

Advocacy
- Improved education about strengths and unique skills of people living with disabilities

Brand recognition
- Seen as the leading provider of this service

Impact measurement
- The desired impact is defined and continually measured to inform improvements to the Network

RESOURCES

Core cohort team
- Subject matter experts who are leaders in human resources, career coaching, etc.
- Community representatives of different abilities, ethnicities, ages, and gender identities

Potential partnerships
- Technology certification programs
- Local Agencies like Vocational Rehabilitation, employer networks

Similar Easterseals initiatives
- Other transportation work

CONSIDERATIONS

- How will the initiatives in this cohort get funded?
- Perceived costs to employers in making accommodations
- Concerted effort across affiliates to make this worthwhile
- Other considerations?

STRATEGIC PLAN COHORT

Workforce

This cohort will focus on helping the Network develop solutions to help job seekers adapt to the evolving market and get connected to opportunities.

FROM **TO**

The job market is evolving, leaving some behind

> Job seekers are set up for future career success

Seniors are struggling to stay relevant in the job market

Decrease in opportunities available to people with disabilities due to COVID-19

> Job seekers are connected to more opportunities

POTENTIAL IDEAS

NOW	NEXT	FUTURE
Partner with Elder Services Agency for computer, tablet work-centered training modules	Trainings or workshops to employers about benefits of hiring people with disabilities and importance of modifying interview techniques. Include case studies	Easterseals co-working space that provides access and training to technology
Social media groups to link employers with prospective employees -- a meet and greet with employer describing opportunities	Create second career support networks	Senior internship programs
Develop and offer more connections to computer training and technical skills training	Create new ways of sourcing candidates so our partners can place them in jobs	Regional job developers shared among Affiliates
Greater participation in Ticket to Work program	Become more active in the employer space	Employment bank matching remote workforce with jobs across geographic areas
Financial education integrated into job readiness curriculum and programs	Develop strong employer relationships that are committed to Easterseals	Provide a one-stop shop for assistive technology and employment needs (training and the workforce)
	Increase access to benefits planning and work incentives counseling to obtain needed services and supports	App that helps people with disabilities access building and public transportation
	Develop videos with narration and closed captions to ensure accessibility	

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TECHNOLOGY

How might Easterseals increase access and comfort with technology?

RESEARCH

Technology

Below are takeaways from research that explain the main challenges of this prioritized need.

COMFORT WITH USING TECHNOLOGY IS MISSING IN CRITICAL AREAS

The need to stay home during COVID-19 has led to an **increase in tech savviness for many**. Most people expressed being comfortable video chatting with friends and family as well as with finding information online. However, they are **still uncomfortable using these digital tools for critical tasks** such as accessing healthcare or information about insurance and other benefits.

Easterseals participants were more likely to report feeling very comfortable using technology for communication rather than for necessary daily tasks.

- **28%** - purchasing groceries
- **32%** - accessing healthcare
- **45%** - video chatting with friends and family

THE DIGITAL DIVIDE HAS BEEN EXACERBATED BY COVID-19

Inability to access the Internet is prevalent in rural populations. While 94% of urban residents can access broadband speeds acceptable for moderate usage by the FCC, only 52% of rural households can.[8]

Disparity in access to the Internet is also influenced by income. 35% of low-income households with school-aged children do not have high speed Internet, compared to 6% of middle- and high-income households.[9]

During COVID, **online services have become compulsory** for work, school, communications, and securing basic needs. Without solving the underlying problem of Internet access inequality, the digital divide will remain a pressing barrier to relief.

8% of Easterseals participants do not have access to the Internet with an additional **7%** reporting poor quality.

9% of Easterseals participants do not have access to a device that can connect to the Internet.

QUALITY OF SERVICE IS INCONSISTENT ACROSS THE NETWORK

Although the Easterseals Network has a wealth of expertise in mental health, **the breadth and quality of service differs from Affiliate to Affiliate**. Especially given the context of COVID-19, **Affiliates were in reaction mode** as they set up telehealth, having limited time to plan and consider quality of service. For example, there are various levels of implementation of telehealth technology ranging from Zoom calls to robust case management tracking platforms.

OPPORTUNITY

Technology

This cohort will focus on helping the Network increase the comfort of both internal and external audiences with technology, advocate and partner to close the digital divide, and raise the quality of technology-driven services across the Network.

FROM		TO
Comfort with using technology is missing in critical areas	>	Support our constituents in using technology to meet critical needs
The digital divide has been exacerbated by COVID-19	>	Advocate and partner to close the digital divide
Quality of service is inconsistent across the Network	>	Elevate quality of technology-driven services across the Network

STRATEGIC PLAN COHORT

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FOCUS AREAS

Network alignment
- Set standards for virtual and telehealth technology-driven services including assistive technology
- Create a strategy to deliver technical support to participants

Service quality
- Exchange of leading practices related to virtual services and telehealth
- Education and support for constituents on using technologies to meet basic needs

Community support
- Partner with organizations to close the digital divide (Comcast, federal agencies, Apple)
- Partner with school systems to provide access to the Internet and technology

Staff hiring, education, and training
- Provide training on developed standards for technology-driven services

Advocacy
- Lobby for greater access to Internet services and technology to improve health equity, particularly in rural communities

Brand recognition
- Position Easterseals as a leader in assistive technology consulting and deployment

Impact measurement
- The desired impact is defined and continually measured to inform improvements to the Network

RESOURCES

Core cohort team
- Subject matter experts who are leaders in Information Technology, assistive technology, virtual learning, telecom, healthcare providers, and payors
- Include diverse representation of mental and physical abilities, ethnicity, age, and gender identity

Potential partnerships
- Comcast
- Device providers
- Managed Care Organizations
- Non-Medicaid Payors

Similar Easterseals initiatives
- Comcast (Internet Essentials)
- Assistive Technology and IT/Data Affinity Groups

CONSIDERATIONS

- How will these initiatives be funded?
- With whom can we partner to advocate on closing the digital divide?
- Other considerations?

STRATEGIC PLAN COHORT

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POTENTIAL IDEAS

NOW

Advocacy campaign to build awareness for assistive technology

Technology solution for sharing best practices

Through IT/Data and Assistive Technology Affinity Groups, develop standard practices for virtual and telehealth

Develop video series on the effective use of technology

Assess participants' digital savviness, access to technology and devices to develop individual training plans

NEXT

Secure sustainable funding for device purchase programs and Internet subsidies

Develop partnerships with healthcare tech companies to leverage technology to improve access and coordination of care

Use UCLA students to assess and understand healthcare technology landscape and applications that promote and enhance health equity

FUTURE

In partnership with a big tech company, devise an app for a wearable device specifically to meet the needs of PWD and find a billing opportunity

Partner with University of Chicago to devise healthcare technology strategy

Develop Easterseals proprietary virtually delivered program

MENTAL HEALTH

How might Easterseals support the increasing mental health challenges in communities?

RESEARCH

Mental Health

Below are takeaways from research that explain the main challenges of this prioritized need.

INCREASED STRESSES CAUSED BY NEW COVID-19 PRESSURES

COVID-19 has brought many new stressors and responsibilities while simultaneously reducing access to many individuals' coping mechanisms, such as going to the gym or meeting up with friends. Before COVID-19, 11% of adults reported symptoms of anxiety or depression disorder. **During COVID-19, this rose to 41%.**[1]

Within the Easterseals community, **35% of people with disabilities have reported feeling stressed often** during COVID-19 compared to 25% of those without disabilities. **Isolation, access to care, and finances** were most often reported as contributing to stress.

COVID-19 HAS EMPHASIZED THE SHORTAGE OF HEALTHCARE WORKERS

Even before the pandemic, there was a **deficit in the direct care workforce**. However, COVID-19 emphasized the effect and size of this gap. With everyone staying home more due to closures, direct care workers had to shift their coverage from afternoons/nights when their participants are home from day services or work to provide 24/7 care.

This shortage is increased due to **staff no longer being able to move between locations** of service for health safety reasons.

The increase in service needs coincides with a **decrease in availability of workers** due to fear, testing positive for COVID-19, and increased personal responsibilities.

We were already in a staffing crisis prior to COVID so when COVID came about, our staffing crisis doubled. – Affiliate, Easterseals Affiliate survey

QUALITY OF SERVICE IS INCONSISTENT ACROSS THE NETWORK

Although the Easterseals Network has a wealth of expertise in mental health, **the breadth and quality of service differs from Affiliate to Affiliate**. Especially given the context of COVID-19, **Affiliates were in reaction mode** as they set up telehealth, with limited time to plan and consider quality of service. For example, there are various levels of implementation of telehealth technology ranging from Zoom calls to robust case management tracking platforms.

Additionally, **stress levels are notably different across regions**, which further highlights the inconsistency of impact mental health programming is having nationwide.

Percentage of high stress by region:

Northeast: **38%**, Great Lakes: **33%**, West: **27%**, Southeast: **26%**, Midwest: **16%**

OPPORTUNITY

Mental Health

>

This cohort will focus on helping the Network strengthen its impact on mental health and expand its reach to better support the mental health challenges that communities are experiencing as a result of the pandemic.

FROM		TO
Increased stresses caused by new COVID-19 pressures	>	Better stress management within communities
COVID-19 has emphasized the shortage of healthcare workers	>	Thriving mental health care workforce
Quality of service is inconsistent across the Network	>	Elevated quality of service across the Network

STRATEGIC PLAN COHORT

Mental Health

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FOCUS AREAS

Network alignment
- Internal alignment on the approach to supporting the mental health of communities that Easterseals serves
- Affiliates across the Network know where to go to access best practices for mental health
- Internal alignment on which communities to prioritize in supporting their mental health

Service quality
- Improved quality of technology and delivery of mental health services to communities, across the Network

Community support
- Community members feel confident and safe socializing
- Increased awareness of mental health issues and how to access support for both Affiliate staff and communities

Staff hiring, education, and training
- Easterseals creates recruitment, hiring, training, and retention programming including culturally responsive training that measurably increases the number of healthcare workers available to the Network

Impact measurement
- The desired impact is defined and continually measured to inform improvements to the Network

RESOURCES

Core cohort team
- Subject matter experts who are leaders in the mental health field including psychologists, counselors, social workers, etc.
- Community representatives of different abilities, ethnicities, ages, and gender identities

Potential partnerships
- Existing behavioral healthcare companies
- Affiliates with strong healthcare programming
- SANVELLO
- United Healthcare

Similar Easterseals initiatives
- Partnership with SANVELLO and United Health Care

CONSIDERATIONS

- What are the mental health issues that are currently not understood?
- How do we find funding for the mental health cohort initiatives?
- How do we serve all the populations who need mental health support?
- How do we create safe spaces for communities?
- How do we collaborate across Affiliates?
- Other considerations?

STRATEGIC PLAN COHORT

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POTENTIAL IDEAS

NOW	NEXT	FUTURE
Incentivize staff to engage in mental health services to increase awareness of the benefits	Help Affiliates plan for delivering quality services post-pandemic, considering hybrid solutions	Identify a way to integrate mental health awareness into all programming
Train employees on how to identify and support participants in crisis	Create wrap-around support services	Recruit, hire, train, and retain programming including culturally responsive training
Create a mental health awareness campaign, focused on reducing stigma in underserved communities	Educate providers about the needs of populations served by Easterseals	Require Mental Health First Aid training for all Affiliate staff
Identify funding sources to support mental health in underserved communities		Create an internal platform for Affiliates to match participants with mental health resources
Create a safe space for communities to express and manage stress		

EDUCATION

How might Easterseals identify and mitigate achievement gaps for children?

RESEARCH

Education

Below are takeaways from research that explain the main challenges of this prioritized need.

MOST CHILDREN ARE NOT ACHIEVING THEIR MILESTONES DURING COVID-19

Most children are **not progressing at their pre-pandemic rate**. Studies show that students enrolled in online education struggle compared to their in-person peers. For example, in one study, online students were up to a year behind their peers in math.[2] Between this decreased achievement and quickly adapting to virtual learning, **it is expected that student gains will be lower due to the COVID-19 pandemic.**

71% of parents and caregivers of children 0-3 and **84%** of parents and caregivers of children 4-17 report that they are not hitting their milestones.

"OT has still went [sic] above and beyond but home is a distraction, and he isn't pushed as hard and can't focus as much on the task at hand." – Parent, Community qualitative study

CHILDREN 0-3 YRS HAVE LIVED MOST OF THEIR LIVES IN THE PANDEMIC WITH LIMITED DEVELOPMENTAL OPPORTUNITIES

The first few years of a child's life are critical to the development of the child, and parents are worried about the long-term affects the pandemic might have on their future development. Children are **not able to develop social skills** through play and some are **struggling with access to developmental screening and therapy** due to service shutdowns or reductions. With uncertainty ahead, parents want their children to live normal lives.

Parents and caregivers of children 0-3 were the most likely to report, while they had received support during COVID-19, they needed more support.

"I hope my daughters are able to live normal lives because they've both pretty much lived their whole lives in the pandemic." – Parent, Community qualitative study

THERE IS A DECREASE IN EARLY IDENTIFICATION AND INTERVENTION OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

Without in-person interactions, **teachers are less likely to identify children who qualify for disability screening**. Since most children are not achieving their milestones due to the pandemic, teachers are finding it difficult to determine if the cause of low performance is because of the pandemic or because the child might have a disability.

"We are hearing that there are many children who have a disability that are not getting diagnosed during the pandemic. This is because their teachers would normally catch that, but they aren't able to observe their progress as well in a virtual setting." – Affiliate, interviews

OPPORTUNITY

Education

> This cohort will focus on helping the Network address the challenge of children not meeting their milestones as a result of COVID-19 and identify solutions that help fill in the gaps in education.

FROM		TO
Most children are not achieving their milestones during COVID-19	**>**	Children make academic progress and achieve their milestones
Children 0-3 years have lived most of their lives in the pandemic with limited developmental opportunities		
There is a decrease in early identification and intervention of children with disabilities	**>**	Children with disabilities are properly identified and connected to support

STRATEGIC PLAN COHORT

Education

This cohort will focus on helping the Network address the challenge of children not meeting their milestones as a result of COVID-19 and identify solutions that help fill in the gaps in education.

FROM	TO
Most children are not achieving their milestones during COVID-19 Children 0-3 years have lived most of their lives in the pandemic with limited developmental opportunities	**>** Children make academic progress and achieve their milestones
There is a decrease in early identification and intervention of children with disabilities	**>** Children with disabilities are properly identified and connected to support

FOCUS AREAS

Service quality
- Easterseals creates evidence-based programming to help children meet their milestones
- Easterseals creates services for children to develop socialization skills

Community support
- Children are routinely screened for disabilities during school
- Parents are more engaged in supporting their child's learning
- Parents are educated about the importance of play in learning
- Staff are trained to provide equitable education
- Communities are aware of the gaps in education
- Parents are educated on the importance of children learning to socialize

Staff hiring, education, and training
- Staff are trained to support socialization in their services

Impact measurement
- The desired impact is defined and continually measured to inform improvements to the Network

RESOURCES

Core cohort team
- Subject matter experts who are leaders in the education and youth development field including principals, teachers, etc.
- Community representatives and parents of different abilities, ethnicities, ages, and gender identities

Potential partnerships
- Colleges and universities
- School districts
- Foundations focused on education

Similar Easterseals initiatives
- IDEA program

CONSIDERATIONS

- How will the initiatives in this cohort get funded?
- What data is needed to collect?
- Does Easterseals need to be accredited to offer evidence-based programming?
- How does assistive technology play a role in solutions?
- Other considerations?

STRATEGIC PLAN COHORT

Education

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There is a decrease in early identification and intervention of children with disabilities   **>**   Children with disabilities are properly identified and connected to support

POTENTIAL IDEAS

NOW	NEXT	FUTURE
Summer schools, camps, and afterschool programming take time to focus on education gaps	Training to educators on identifying gaps in education and related mitigation strategies	Easterseals "micro school" that involves smaller classrooms and more tailored support for children with disabilities
Easterseals offers more tutoring opportunities	Training of teachers on inclusive education	Create a video game that encompasses the best of Easterseals knowledge with what kids enjoy
Afterschool programming is available for children and their parents	Social skills camps	Create an educational app for school-age children
Public health campaign is developed to raise awareness around early detection of a disability	Partner with public schools to support kids staying in school rather than referring them out to other programs	
Campaign is developed to raise awareness of assistive technology	Online network for families to encourage socializing	
Easterseals creates playdate kits to encourage children to learn from each other and encourages parent or caregiver involvement		
Easterseals YouTube channel content tailored to address gaps in education		

PEOPLE OF COLOR WITH DISABILITY

How might Easterseals address the inequities that people of color with disability face?

RESEARCH

People of Color with Disability

Below are takeaways from research that explain the main challenges of this prioritized need.*

COVID-19 DISPROPORTIONALLY AFFECTS PEOPLE OF COLOR

People of color have lower social determinants of health. With **social determinants of health contributing to 80% of COVID-19 impacts**, this group is disproportionately affected.[6]

In the United States, people of color are more likely to have chronic conditions such as heart disease, diabetes, and lung disease. These pre-existing conditions increase the risk of contracting COVID-19 and experiencing more severe symptoms. As a result, Black Americans are **3 times more likely to know someone who has died** from COVID-19 than their white peers.[7]

People of color also have decreased access to care. Historically, people of color have experienced limited access to quality healthcare. Additionally, there is a **feeling of distrust** between people of color and the healthcare system due to systemic racism. COVID-19 has exacerbated these conditions.

BLACK PARTICIPANTS WERE EMOTIONALLY IMPACTED BY THE SOCIAL JUSTICE MOVEMENT

There is a collective feeling of a loss of safety, belonging, and wellbeing within Black communities. This is especially true for children of color who have developed anxiety, depression, and fear in response to the social justice movement. With social media aiding the spread of these movements, both adults and children are exposed to more visuals and examples of racism.

41% of people of color report that racism negatively affected them during COVID-19.

Multiple Ethnicity, Black, and Hispanic participants were more likely to report racism negatively affecting them.

PEOPLE OF COLOR EXPERIENCED MORE FINANCIAL LOSS THAN OTHER RACES

One indicator of financial loss during COVID-19 has been loss of employment. **Hispanic workers were more likely to experience job loss during COVID-19 than other groups.[8,9]** People of color in general mentioned wanting more access to financial planning.

49% of Hispanic participants reported that their financial situation had declined compared to just **25% of** their white and Black peers.

People of color were more likely to report needing support for employment and financial literacy in the future.

*The statistics on this slide refer to people of color and not specifically to those with disabilities in order to highlight the impact of layered inequities. Due to under-reporting on people with disabilities, few studies have formally investigated the compounded impacts for people with disabilities of color.

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OPPORTUNITY

People of Color with Disability

This cohort will focus on helping the Network address the unique needs of people of color with disability in dealing with the exacerbated impact of COVID-19, racial injustice, and financial loss.

FROM		TO
COVID-19 disproportionally affects people of color.	>	Recover from the impacts of COVID-19 and have a path forward to improved wellbeing
Black participants were emotionally impacted by the social justice movement.	>	Black participants have coping mechanisms to deal with racial injustice and allies have a list of supportive actions.
People of color experienced more financial loss than other races.	>	People of color understand the services, supports, and resources available to them to move toward employment and financial stability.

STRATEGIC PLAN COHORT

People of Color with Disability

This cohort will focus on helping the Network address the unique needs of people of color with disability in dealing with the exacerbated impact of COVID-19, racial injustice, and financial loss.

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COVID-19 disproportionally affects people of color.	Recover from the impact of COVID-19 and have a path forward to improved wellbeing.
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People of color experienced more financial loss than other races.	People of color understand the services, supports, and resources available to them to move toward employment and financial stability.

FOCUS AREAS

Network alignment
- The Network is educated on the disproportionate effects of COVID-19 and racial injustice
- Affiliates have DEI included in their strategic plans and share experiences, success stories, and best practices

Service quality
- Tailor services to the unique needs of people of color with disability to mitigate distrust in healthcare system, lack of access, and lack of knowledge

Community support
- Communities (e.g., first responders, police, etc.) are educated about bias and the needs and perspective of people of color with disability
- Relationships are developed with organizations that specifically focus on people of color

Staff hiring, education, and training
- Affiliate staff are educated about bias and the needs and perspective of people of color with disability
- Staffing represents demographics of communities served, from front line to leadership

Advocacy
- Advocate to close the technology divide
- Advocate for affordable healthcare

Brand recognition
- Continued focus on the Black Child Fund and its impact

Impact measurement
- The desired impact is defined and continually measured to inform improvements to the Network

RESOURCES

Core cohort team
- Subject matter experts who are leaders in diversity and inclusion; health equity; mental health; financial literacy; and human behavior
- Community representatives of different abilities, ethnicities, ages, and gender identities who are people of color

Potential partnerships
- National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
- Access to Healthcare cohort

Similar Easterseals initiatives
- Abbott/Black Child Fund Ages & Stages Questionnaires® Screening in Black children

CONSIDERATIONS

- How will the initiatives get funded?
- How will this group prioritize topics?
- How do we get more diverse staff involved?
- Other considerations?

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People of Color with Disability

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People of color experienced more financial loss than other races.	>	People of color understand the services, supports, and resources available to them to move toward employment and financial stability.

POTENTIAL IDEAS

NOW	NEXT	FUTURE
Vaccine education campaigns	Develop safe spaces (virtual and in-person) for conversation and action related to issues of racial justice	Partner with local community organizations (e.g., church, activist and community organizers, health systems, and schools) to devise community-based solutions
Increase the percentage of screening for children of color	Educate employers about bias in hiring processes	Find an external partner to review internal practices for implicit bias across all Affiliates
Financial education tailored to post-COVID recovery	Provide access to technology and Wi-Fi in partnership with corporate sponsors	Funded accessible supportive behavioral health services are more widely available and accepted
Employment training and placement in future-forward jobs	Target funders specifically for people of color	
Advocate to close the technology divide	Develop patient advocacy practices tailored toward people of color with disability	
Provide assistance to meet basic needs (food insecurity, education assistance, etc.) and screen for additional benefit eligibility	Educate schools on bias in assessing behavior disorders	
Help Black and brown parents secure educational and medical resources		

HOLISTIC CARE

How might Easterseals provide holistic care across social determinants of health?

RESEARCH

Holistic Care

Below are takeaways from research that explain the main challenges of this prioritized need.

COVID-19 HAS REDUCED SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH FOR MANY GROUPS

COVID-19 has impacted every area of the social determinants of health (SDoH): healthcare, education, economic stability, social and community, and neighborhood and built environment. Between school closings, job losses, and social isolation for safety, **everyone has seen reduced health in at least one area of SDoH.**

This is **particularly true for people with disabilities, especially those of color** who were already at a disadvantage in the social determinants of health due to historical systematic discrimination.

INDIVIDUAL NEEDS ARE INTERCONNECTED, BUT TREATED IN ISOLATION

Many times, needs are interconnected such as lack of employment leading to lack of healthcare. In order to remedy these needs, **the onus is on the individual to identify what support they need** and then find the resources that can support them. This may cause them to misdiagnosis problems and fail to identify underlying causes.

This becomes a larger problem because workers are often specialized in a particular service line. If workers are not specifically trained about the interconnectivity of needs, **it can be harder to mitigate issues and address the core issues impacting individuals**.

During COVID-19, there has been a sudden degradation of SDoH leading to more multifaceted community needs. This has highlighted the need for holistic case management.

OPPORTUNITY

Holistic Care

This cohort will focus on helping the Network improve their approach to providing holistic care and address the challenges that communities have experienced in each aspect of the social determinants of health that were exacerbated by COVID-19.

FROM		TO
COVID-19 has reduced social determinants of health for many groups	**>**	People with disabilities, particularly those of color see an increase in their social determinants of health
Individual needs are interconnected but treated in isolation	**>**	Individuals are taken care of holistically

Holistic care

This cohort will focus on helping the Network improve their approach to providing holistic care and address the challenges that communities have experienced in each aspect of the social determinants of health that were exacerbated by COVID-19.

FROM		TO
COVID-19 has reduced social determinants of health for many groups	>	People with disabilities, particularly those of color see an increase in their social determinants of health
Individual needs are interconnected but treated in isolation	>	Individuals are taken care of holistically

FOCUS AREAS

Network alignment
- Easterseals has a clear strategy for improving the social determinants of health for the communities they serve
- Best practices are collected and disseminated for how to do targeted case management
- A solution is available to Affiliates to help with case management

Service quality
- There is a formalized structure in place to coordinate services within and across Affiliates to help participants navigate the challenges they are experiencing

Community support
- Communities that Easterseals serves are educated on the social determinants of health
- Communities that Easterseals serves are connected to resources and know where to get support for their needs
- Participants in rural areas have access to services that support them in the social determinants of health

Staff hiring, education, and training
- Line staff are educated on the social determinants of health

Impact measurement
- The desired impact is defined and continually measured to inform improvements to the Network

RESOURCES

Core cohort team
- Subject matter experts who are leaders in different areas of the social determinants of health
- Community representatives of different abilities, ethnicities, ages, and gender identities

Potential partnerships
- Existing children's services
- Existing mental health services
- Hospitals

Similar Easterseals initiatives
- Mental health networks
- Cincinnati children's 'common child's file'
- Affiliates in larger metros who serve a broader portfolio of services

CONSIDERATIONS

- How can Affiliates manage cross-agency information in an easy way?
- How can technology support without Affiliate having to be reliant on it?
- If considering a cross-agency solution, who is accountable for this? How do you manage the different billing structures by Affiliate, State and service population?
- Other considerations?

Holistic care

This cohort will focus on helping the Network improve their approach to providing holistic care and address the challenges that communities have experienced in each aspect of the social determinants of health that were exacerbated by COVID-19.

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COVID-19 has reduced social determinants of health for many groups	**>**	People with disabilities, particularly those of color see an increase in their social determinants of health
Individual needs are interconnected but treated in isolation	**>**	Individuals are taken care of holistically

POTENTIAL IDEAS

NOW	NEXT	FUTURE
Training for all Affiliates on the spectrum of needs in the SDoH Easterseals develops a financial services screening tool to help participants understand current available resources and plan for long-term financial support	Easterseals-led call center in each state integrating multi-agency services for people Easterseals coach who connects individuals and families to services Partner with primary care providers Look at the options of Targeted Case Management Create a structure for Affiliates to support each other in the areas they are currently serving	Technology-delivered case management Geo-location app that identifies accessible SDoH resources. For example, healthy food, green space, fitness centers, etc. Partnering with a café or coffee shop that connects participants to Easterseals services Flip the payment model to give incentives for SDoH outcomes Create a 'life navigator' solution that connects participants with resources that relate to their needs and life stages Create partnerships around credit counseling and consolidation, and long-term financial planning (trusts, medical power of attorney, etc.)

Thank you

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Strategic Planning Workshop

Facilitate a two-day workshop with 15-20 local representatives (including the local Mayor, school district representative, congress representative, and community members) and the cohort team to identify focus areas and an action plan for a specific strategic plan cohort.

Day 1: Strategic goals (5 hours)

1. **Welcome & Introduction** (45 min)
   Share background and how this work came about. Include an icebreaker and introductions to build relationships with the group.

2. **Research immersion** (30 min)
   Share the research findings and how the research informed the strategic plan cohorts.

3. **Empathy exercise** (60 min)
   Digest the research findings and consider the consequences that might happen if they continue to be unaddressed.

4. **Identify and prioritize strategic goals** (90 min)
   Building off of the empathy exercise, brainstorm and prioritize potential strategic goals for this cohort to tackle.

5. **Wrap up** (15 min)

Day 2: Action plan (4 hours)

1. **Welcome & recap** (30 min)
   Recap day 1 and share day 2 agenda. Consider facilitating an icebreaker to energize the group.

2. **Align on strategic goals** (30 min)
   Review the strategic goals from the previous day and agree on the top ones for the cohort to focus on moving forward.

3. **Generate actions** (60 min)
   Split into breakout groups and brainstorm actions that this cohort can do to achieve the strategic goal.

4. **Prioritize and map actions** (45 min)
   Review brainstormed actions and prioritize the most important ones. Then, map the prioritized actions on a roadmap that includes a timeline.

5. **Next steps and adjourn** (15 min)

Both days include an extra 60 minutes for lunch and breaks throughout the session.
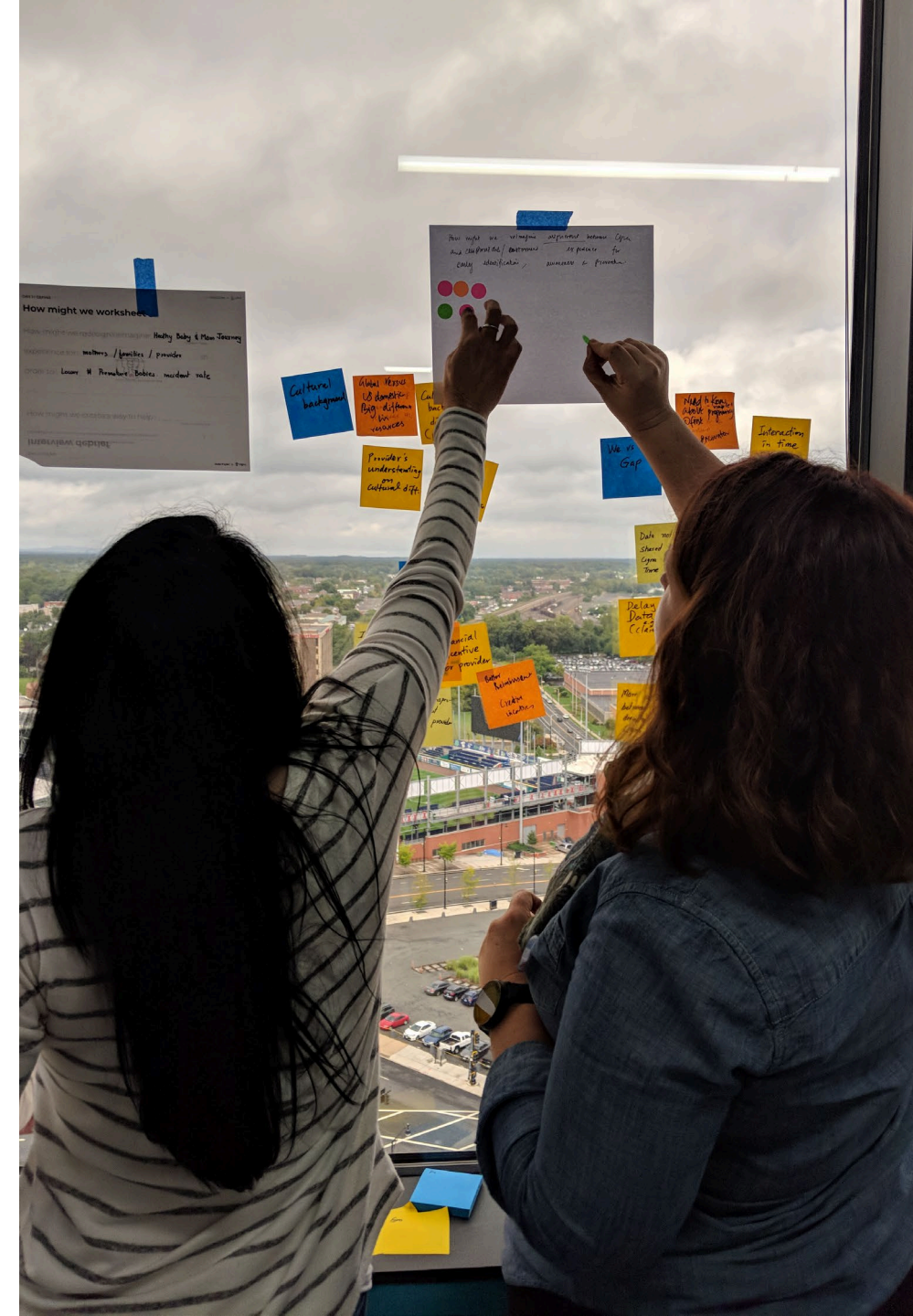
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