

# Giving Context for Equity in the Courts:

Where Lived Expertise, Trauma-Informed Care, and Belonging Intersect

## **Gabrielle Cranor**

Family Recovery Court Caseworker  
Mason County Superior Court

## **Meghan R Fitzgerald**

WA FTC Training Coordinator  
Family & Youth Justice Programs, Washington  
Courts

## **Ivy Thompson**

Family Recovery Support Specialist  
King County Family Treatment Court

## **Jill Murphy**

Program Supervisor  
King County Family Treatment  
Court



**Date:** May 23, 2023

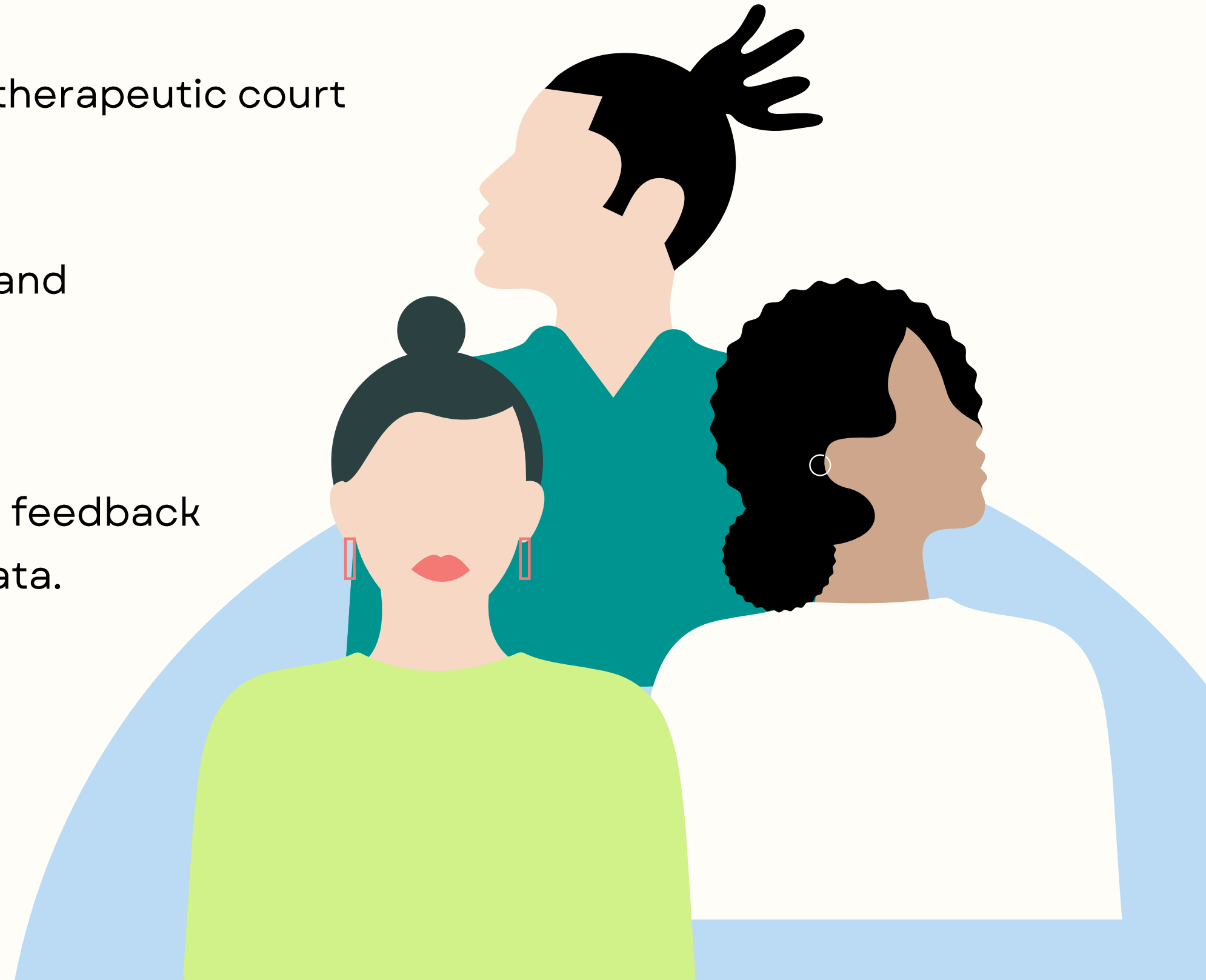
**Time:** 1:30 pm

slides and resources available on  
[www.wacita.org](http://www.wacita.org)

# Objectives

## What do we hope to share today?

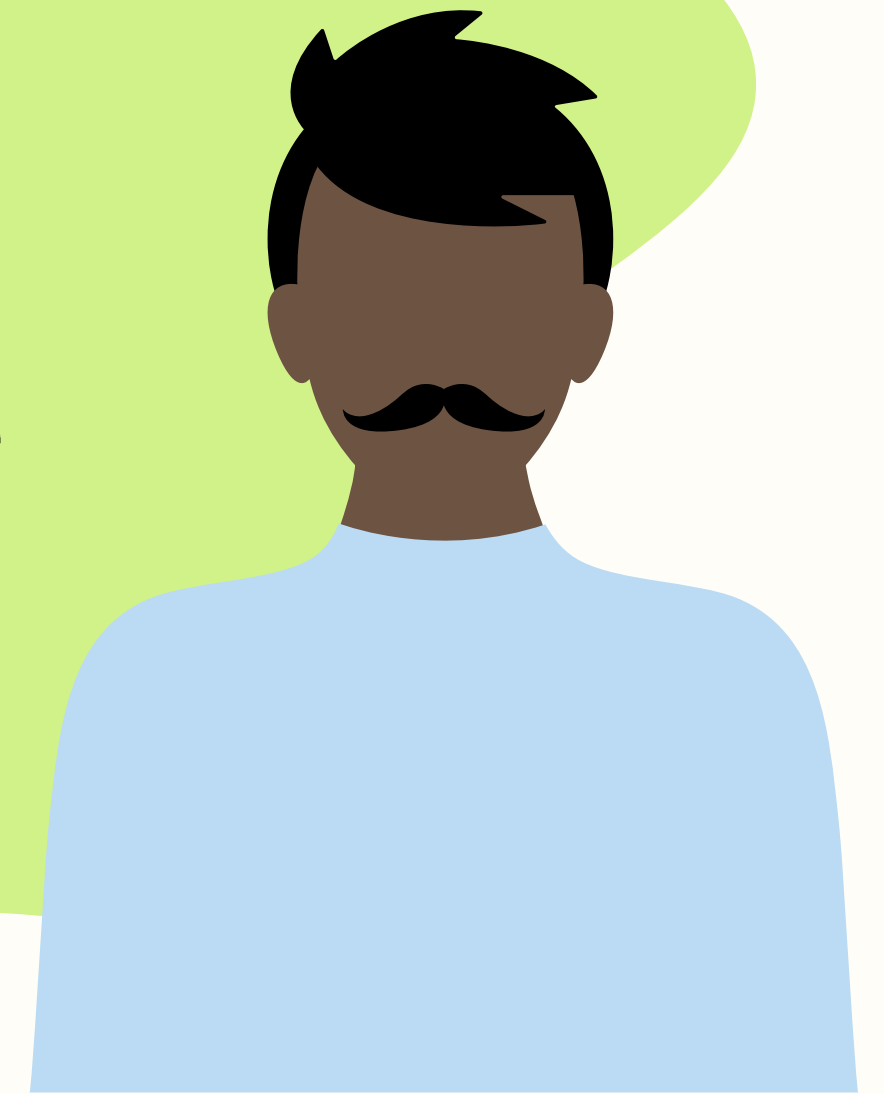
- 1 Understand the value of lived expertise in a therapeutic court
- 2 Insight on how to make changes using data and expertise
- 3 Examples of changes made because of peer feedback and consistent reflection on the outcome data.
- 4 Discussion about opportunities for change



# Context<sub>defined</sub>

“the action of weaving, connection, coherence,  
ordered scheme, structure”

As we introduce ourselves, we  
bring our history and our  
present selves.



# Introduce Yourself

What is the context that brings you here today?

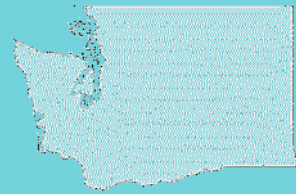
# What is your lived expertise?

What in your life brought you to this room, this conference, this work?

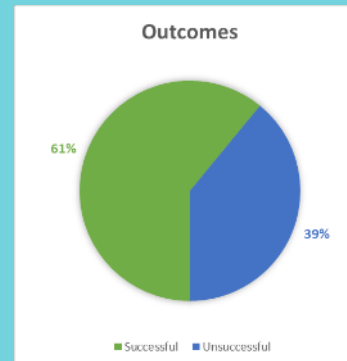
# Family Therapeutic Courts Overview



317 FTCs  
Nationally in  
2020



20 FTCs in  
Washington  
State & 2 Tribes  
with Family  
H2W Courts



Outcomes  
and Data  
Measures in  
WA FTCs



Early  
Childhood  
and ICWA  
courts



Problems  
with disparity





# The Family Therapeutic Court Goals

Reduce Substance Use in  
Participants – Recovery  
from SUD

Reduce Number of  
Removals/Dependencies  
for children

Provide a high-  
accountability, non-  
adversarial, collaborative  
team to work with  
complex family needs



# Best Practices in FTCs

Team is diverse in expertise\* and can address families' needs\* to have a successful case outcome

Clear, documented, organizational structure and goals for participant success

Participants' treatment services are integrated with case processing

High accountability

Evidence Based Practices

Trauma and Culturally Informed Practices





# Some Unique Challenges for members of Historically Marginalized Groups considering entry to high contact courts

- Historic Trauma
- Systemic injustice
- Systemic racism
- Generational or direct justice system involvement







# Some Unique Challenges for Court Professionals trying to change gender and racial disparities in therapeutic courts

- Lack of diversity in professionals
- Expertise that is locally relevant is scarce, over-requested, or under-developed
- Data collection
- Availability of funding
- Urgent needs prevail



# Understanding the Context of Our Participants

- Data Collection (particularly at drop off points)
- Integrating the expertise of graduates, peer support specialists, and community members





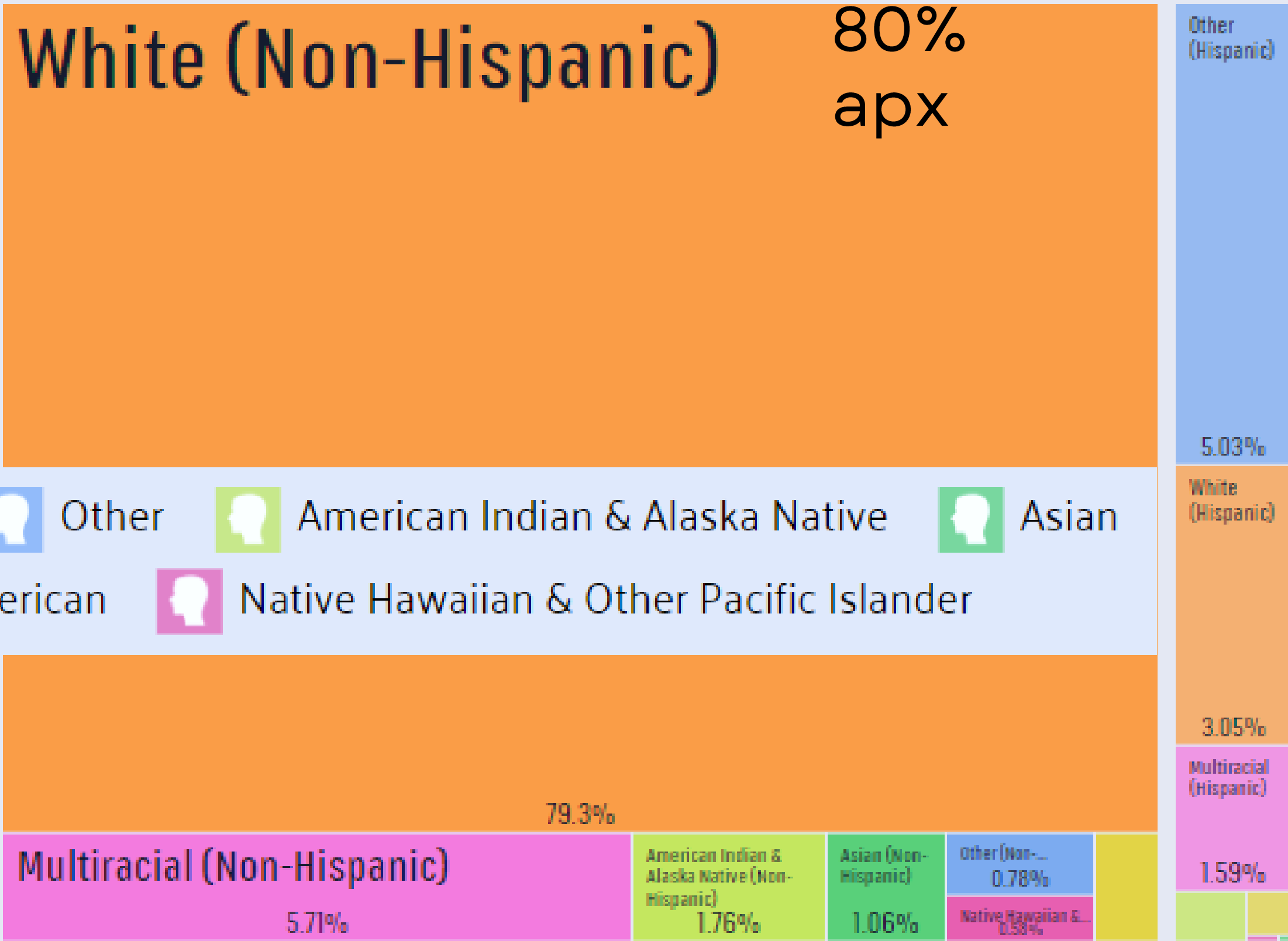
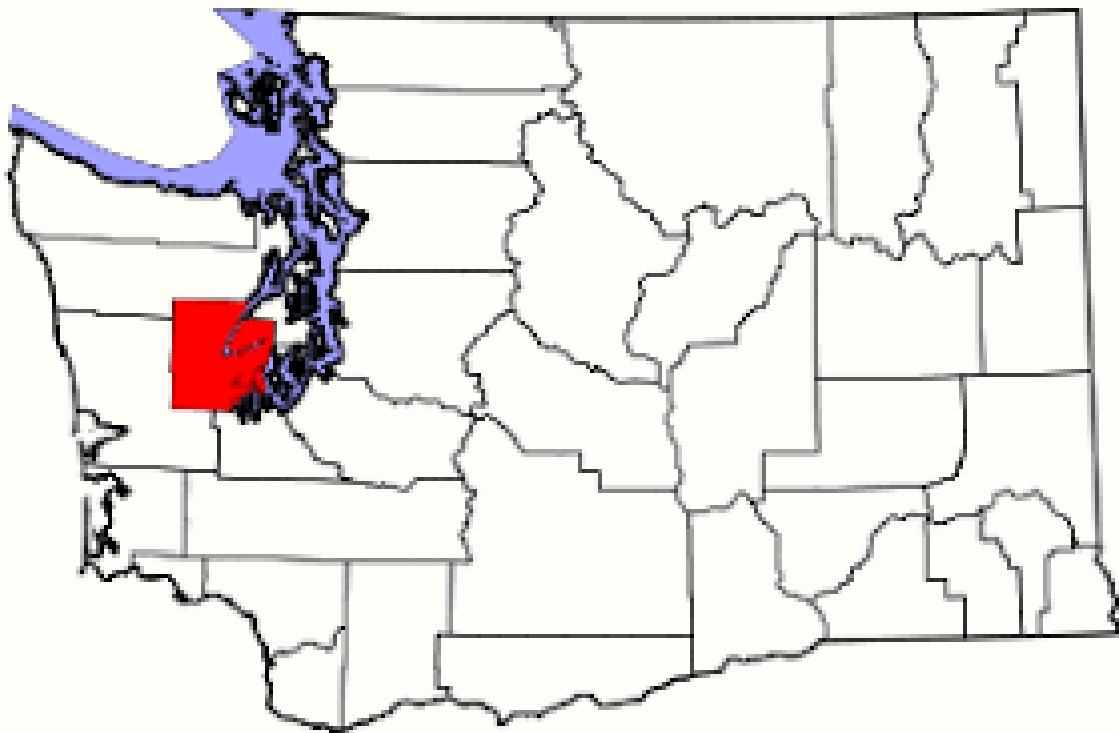
# Gabbi: Family Recovery Court Caseworker

Mason County Superior Court



# Mason County

Population estimate (2020) 68,000 people



- White
- Multiracial
- Other
- American Indian & Alaska Native
- Asian
- Black or African American
- Native Hawaiian & Other Pacific Islander

[US Census Bureau](#)  
[Data USA](#)



# Mason County Families & Children in 2022

12,500

Children in Mason County

48

Total Dependency Filings

\*WA Total 2,589

22

Total Termination Filings

\*WA Total 955

74

Cases Dismissed

257

Total Active Cases

47%

Removals are related to  
Substance Abuse

13%

Removals are related to  
Inadequate Housing

# Mason County Family Recovery Court (FRC)



- Total families & kids
- First meet & engage with parent(s) during shelter care
- Parents do an intake interview to assess needs and history
- Court hearings:
  - Early on: every week
  - As they progress: every other week and alternate with life skills classes
- Meet with a peer once a week (during week of court), decreases with progress in program
  - Other communication depends on needs at least couple of times a week



# Rural Community Challenges



- Services & Transportation
- Personal Connection to other community members
- Harder to feel belonging in a less diverse community

Every day community  
interactions set an  
example of successful  
recovery

# Peer Connection and Advocacy



- Hope for families & for FRC professionals
- Sharing ideas, concerns & advocating for families
- Developing a place where families belong





# From Small to Large Communities



Ensuring Racial and Ethnic Proportionality in Family Drug Treatment Courts

# Spotlight on Efforts in King County, Washington

Jill Murphy, LICSW  
Family Treatment Court  
Program Manager





# King County FTC Primary Goals

- Children have safe and permanent homes within permanency planning guidelines;
- Families of color have outcomes from dependency cases similar to families not of color;
- Parents are better able to care for themselves and their children and seek resources to do so; and
- The cost to society of dependency cases involving substances is reduced.



# Eligibility Criteria for KCFTC

KCFTC is a voluntary program for parent(s) who, with attorney permission:

- Admit to the court that his/her child is dependent or have an existing dependency finding
- Have a moderate or severe SUD and willing to go to treatment;
- Are at least 18 years of age;
- Sign a Consent to Release Confidential Information Form to share tx information w/team;
- Have no felony child abuse or sexual abuse guilty findings;

# KCFTC Entry Process

## Prior to Court:

- Referral Received
- Attorney Permission
- Screening Appt Scheduled
- Records Request
- Collateral Contacts
- Summary of screening information sent out to the team prior to Acceptance Staffing

## In Court:

- **Acceptance Staffing:**
  - Team reviews eligibility criteria in policy
  - Team reviews areas of concern such as extensive felony history, developmental delays, psychosis, etc...that might impact the parent's ability to participate in the program.
  - Judge decides if case is appropriate for KCFTC and sets an Acceptance Hearing date.
- **Acceptance Hearing:**
  - Parent signs KCFTC Acceptance Order listing conditions of participation.
  - First official KCFTC hearing.

# KCFTC Program Model



- KCFTC uses an integrated model of Family Treatment Drug Court.
- Case Social Workers dedicated to the FTC with reduced caseloads (13:1) and a Court-Appointed Special Advocate is dedicated to each KCFTC family.
- Formal Wraparound Process for approx 1/3 of families (15 at a time)
- Treatment Specialist who recruits and screens parents for entry in FTC as well as assists and monitors parent's entry and progress in SUD and MH treatment upon program acceptance.
- Case review hearings every week until frequency can be stepped down.
- Cross-disciplinary pre-hearing staffings to present a unified approach at hearings.



# Working on Proportionality - 2013

## What's been done?

- Quarterly review of statistics
- Advertising of job postings to recruit a more diverse staff
- Hiring of a Treatment Specialist  
Teaming with Parent Allies
- Cultural Competence Team Training
- KCFTC Policy Manual Changes
- Community Engagement (culturally specific referrals, tribal involvement, feedback)

## What are the challenges?

- Reliance on stakeholders for referral information and timing
- Funding for another Treatment Specialist or Peer Specialist to help with engagement prior to entry
- No control over KCFTC partners' hiring practices
- Accurate and consistent data from DCYF
- Tracking race/ethnicity on each referral and reasons for not entering KCFTC

# Working on Proportionality - 2023

## 2013 challenges?

- Reliance on stakeholders for referral information and timing and one treatment specialist position
- Funding for another Treatment Specialist or Peer Specialist to help with engagement prior to entry
- No control over KCFTC partners' hiring practices
- Accurate and consistent data from DCYF
- Tracking race/ethnicity on each referral and reasons for not entering KCFTC

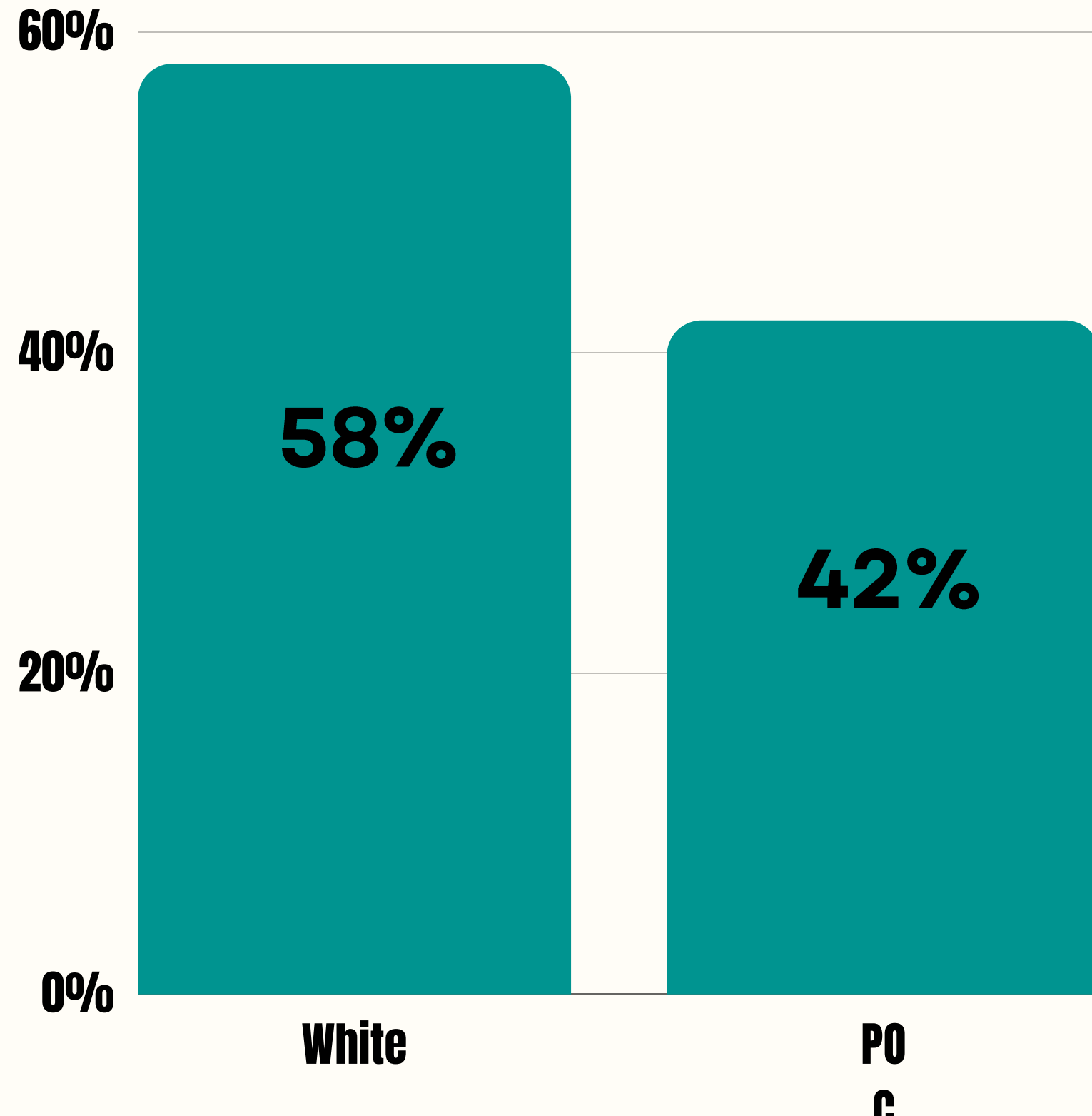
## What's been done since?

- Applied for SAMSHA grant, obtained local funding for two FRSS positions
- Data Dashboard created at State Level
- Partnered on each other's interview panels
- New database and updated forms to capture more nuanced information on referrals
- Annual Drop Off Analysis with Steering Committee Review

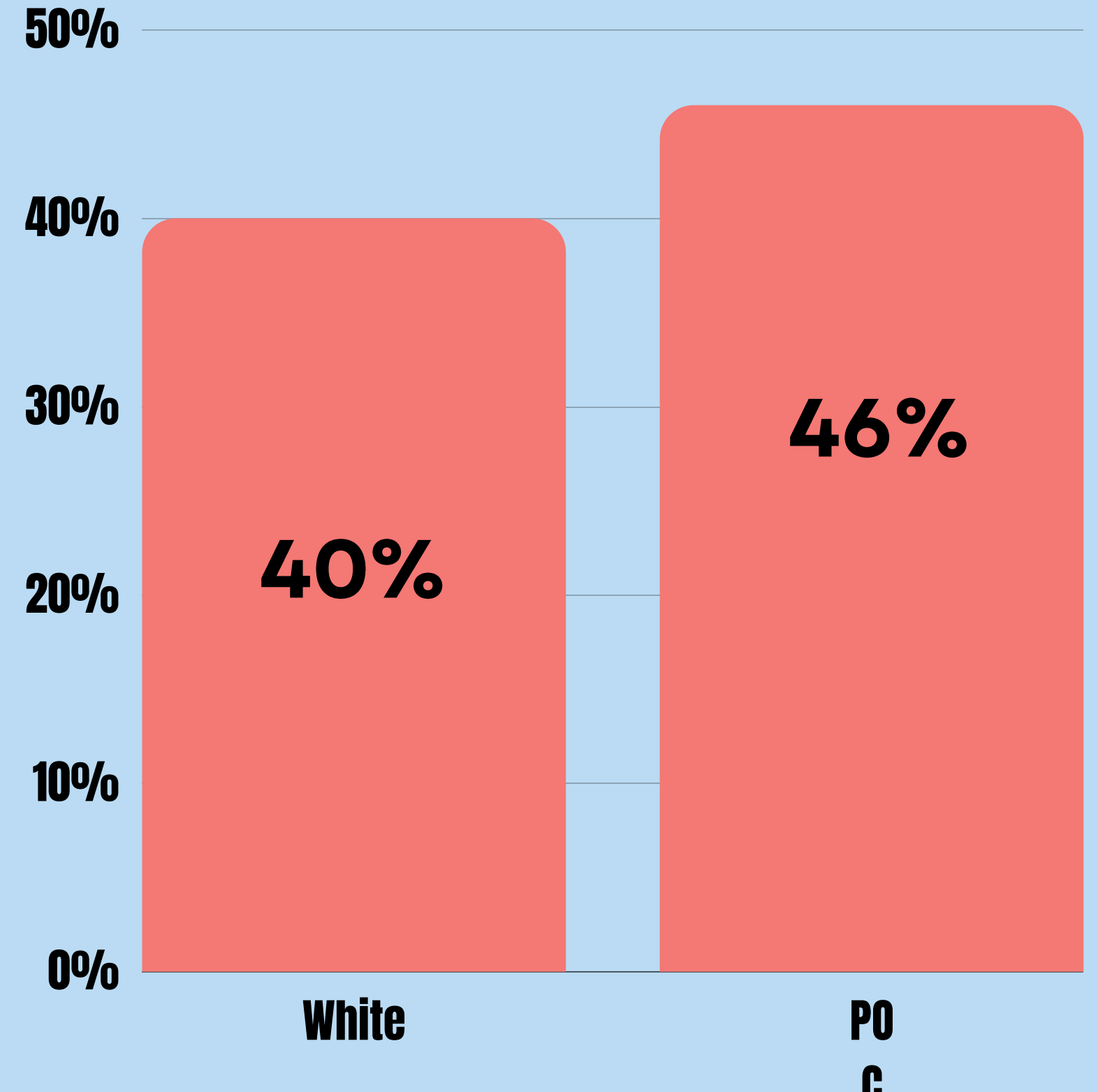
# Drop Off Analysis

2013 - 2022

## Referral Percent



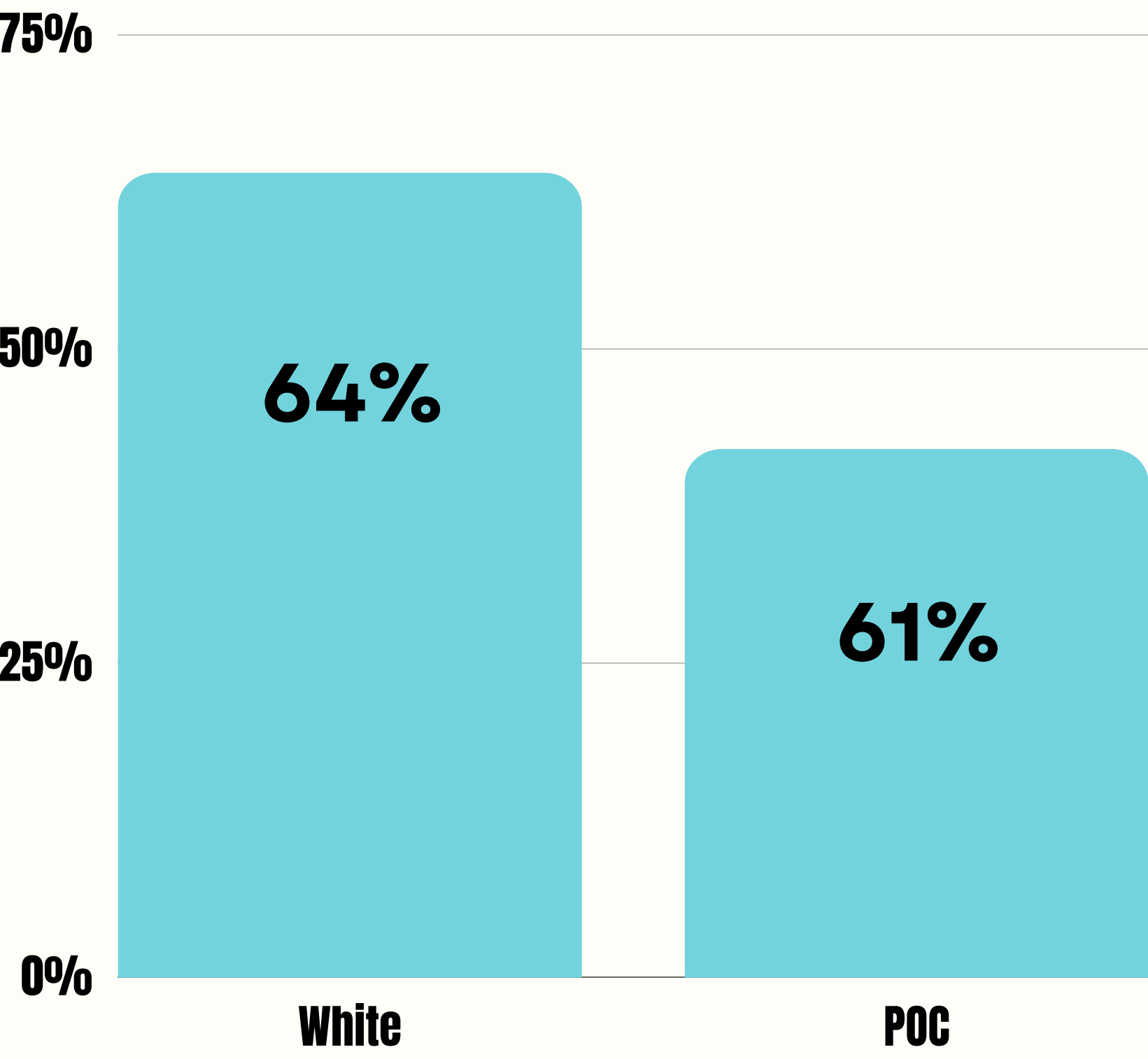
## Intake Percent



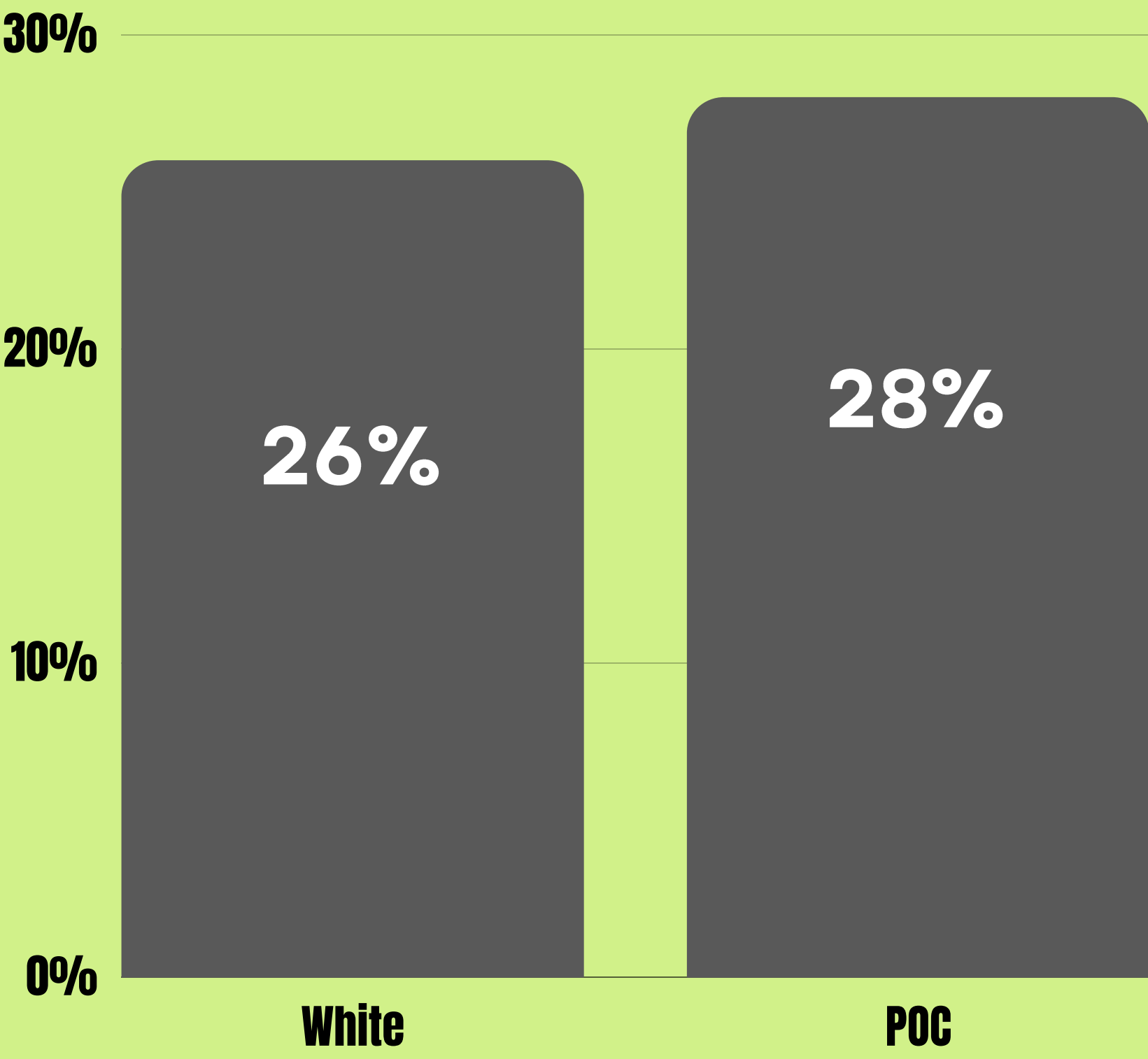


# Staffing Rates

Staffing Percent Incremental

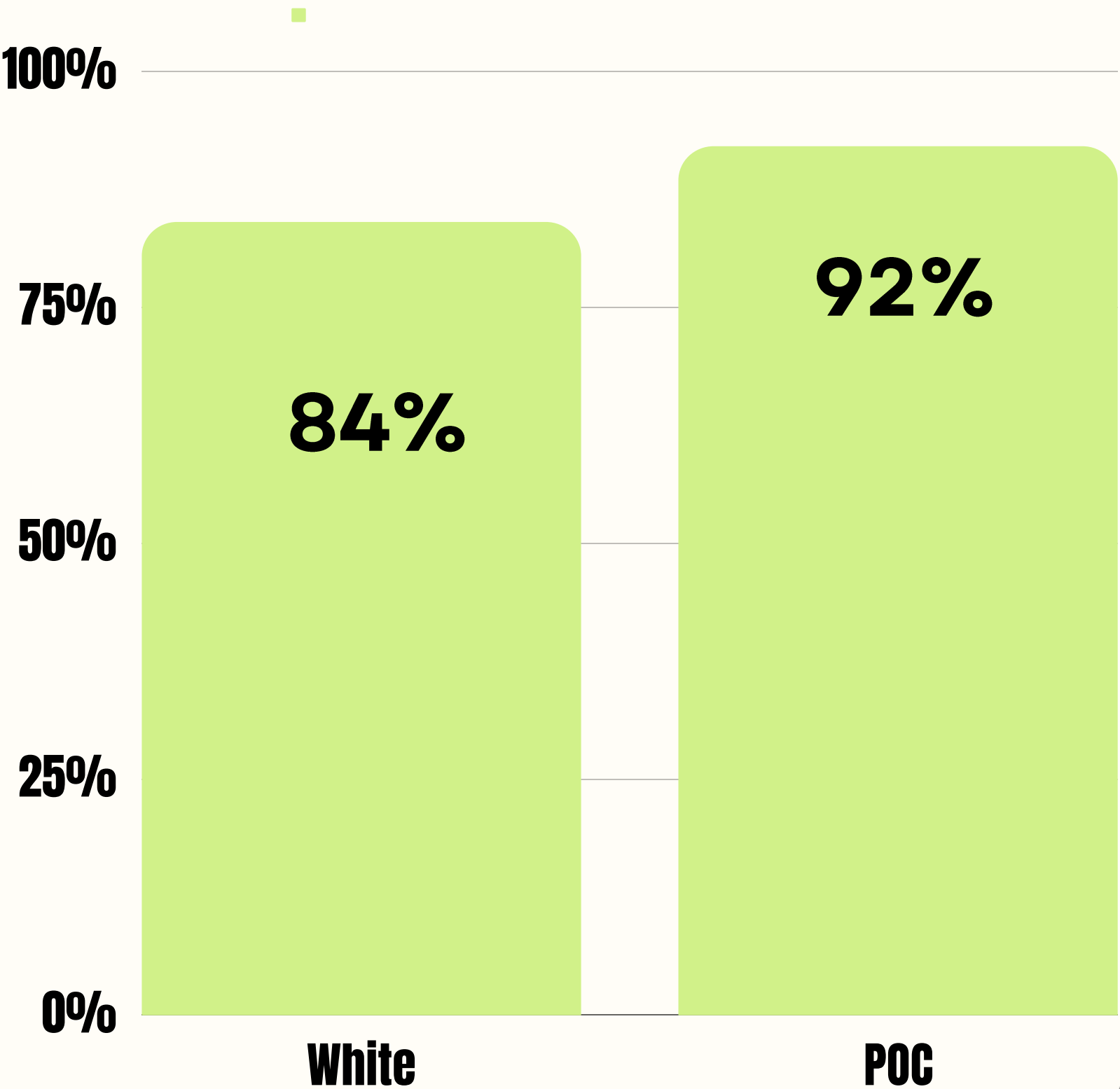


Staffing Percent Cumulative

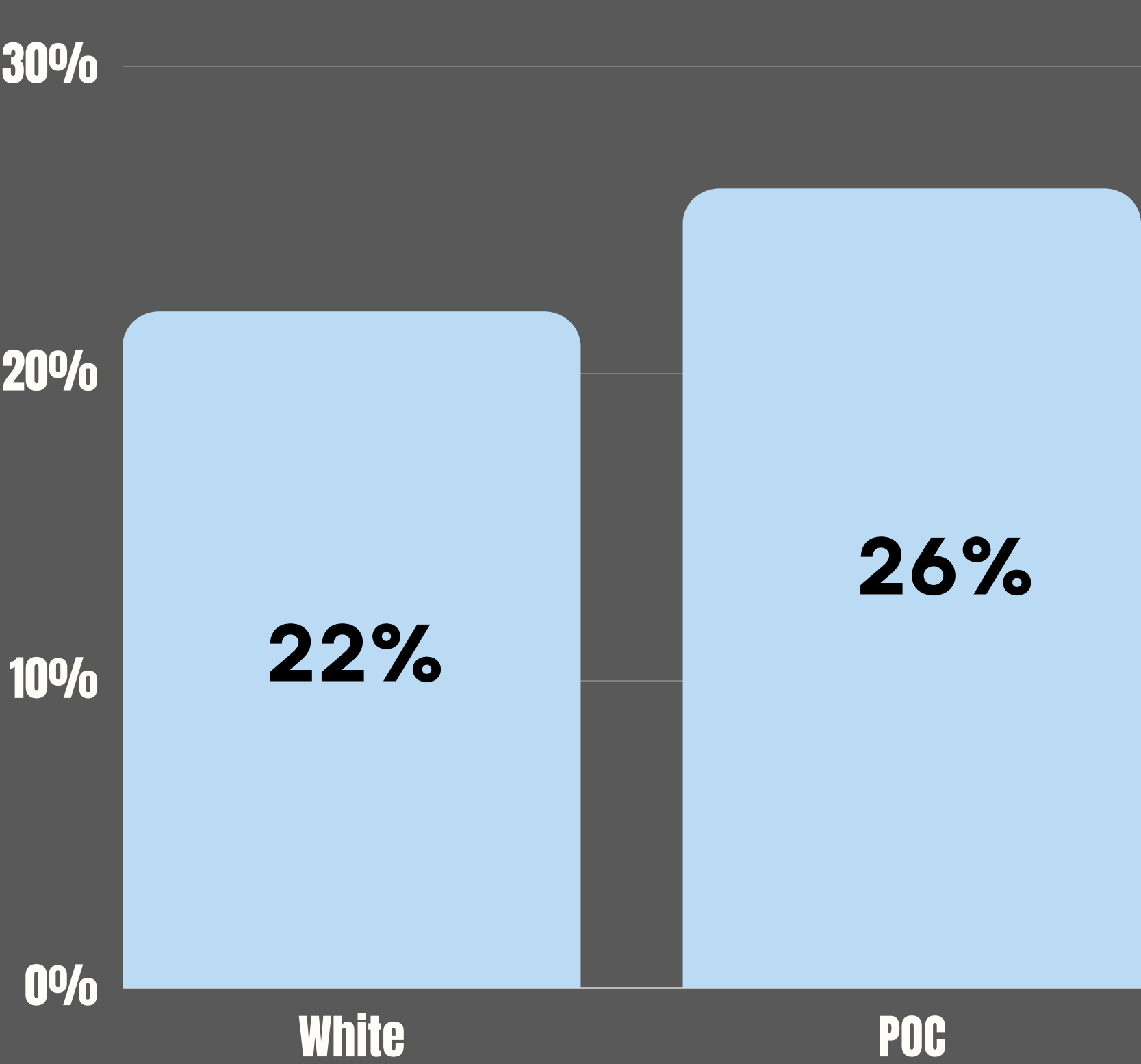


# Acceptance Rates

Accepted Percent Incremental

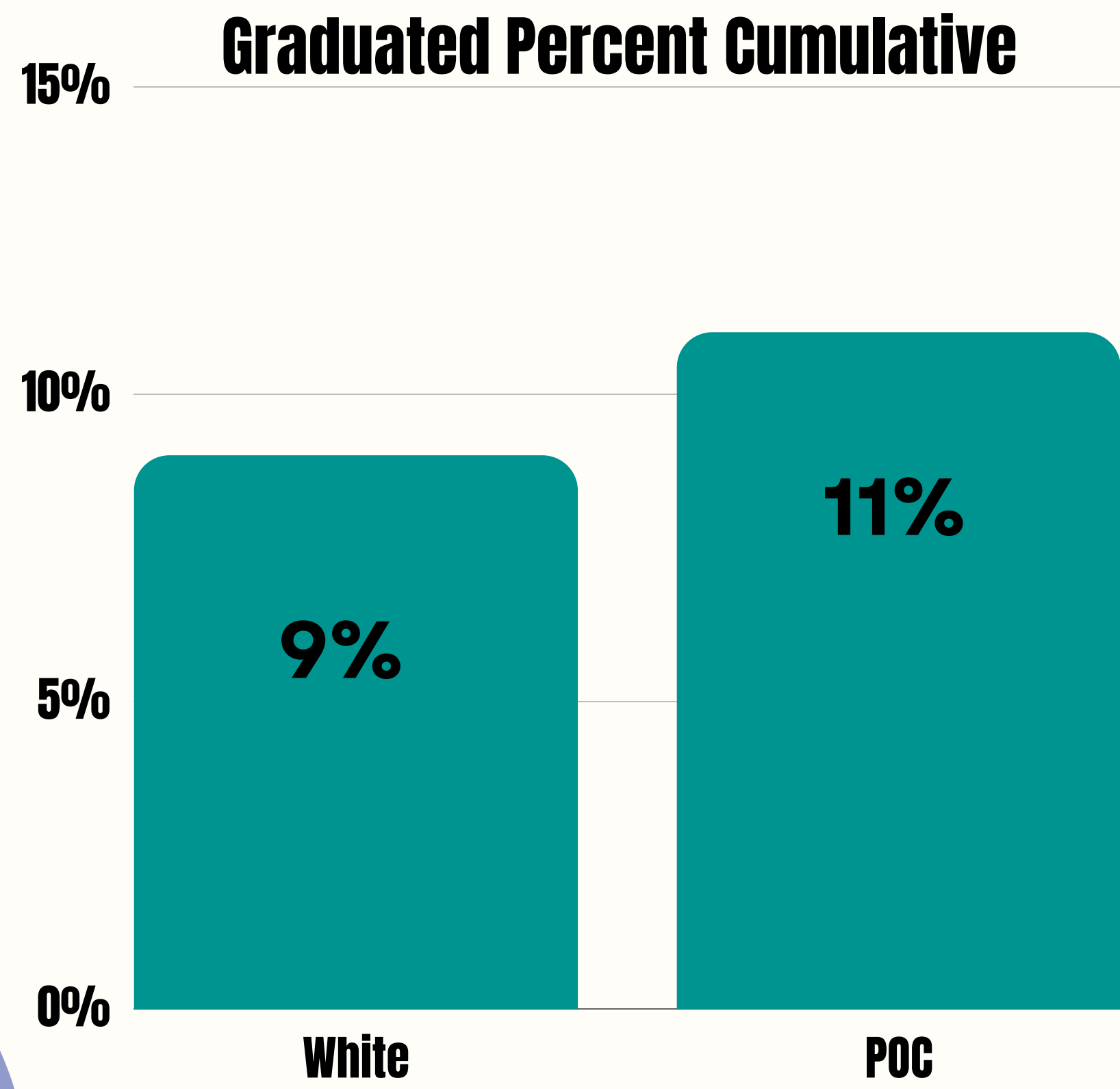
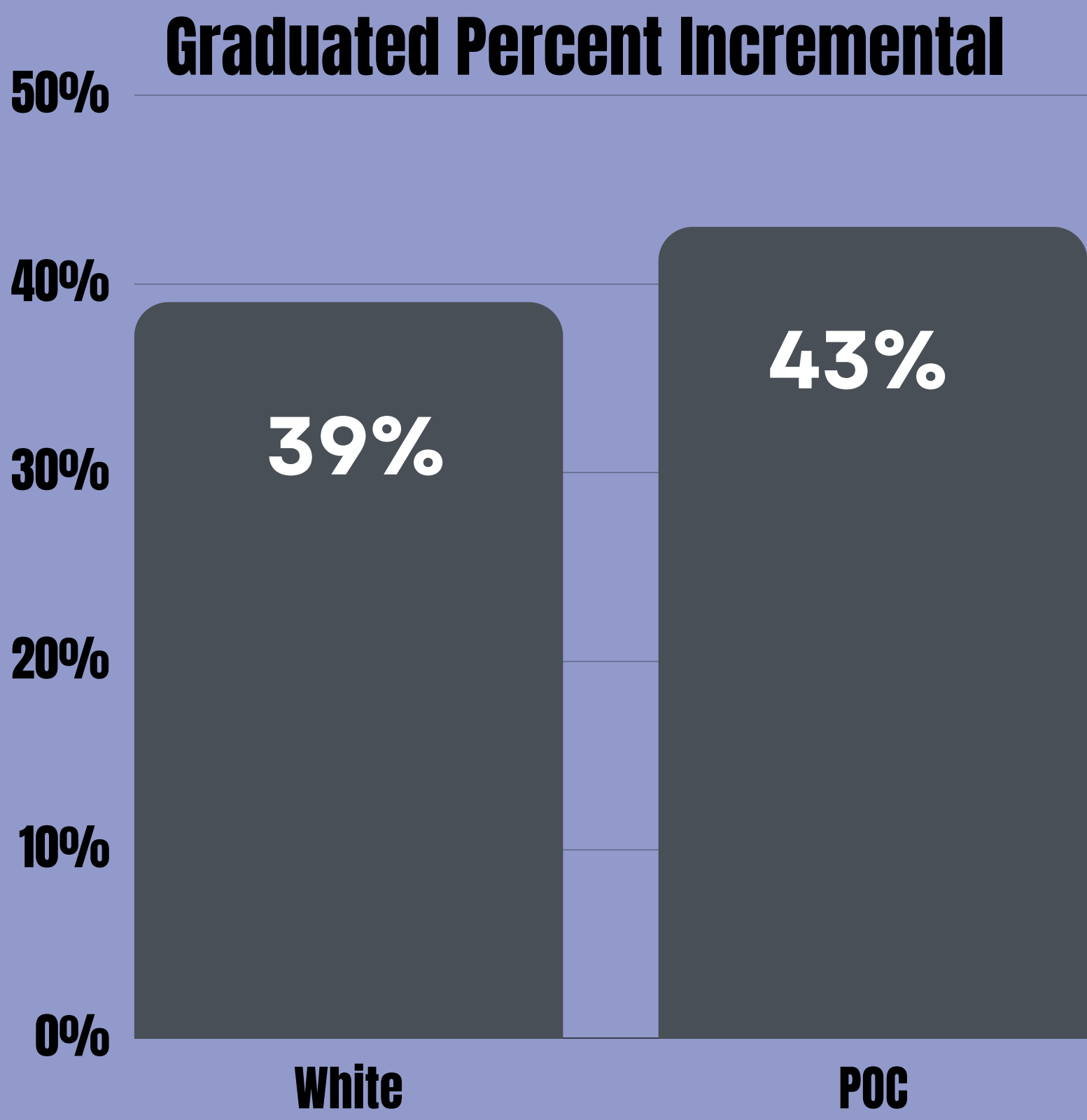


Accepted Percent Cumulative





# Graduation Rates



# Reasons for Not Entering FTC

2013-2022

Reason Given	n (%)	
	POC	White
Not interested	81 (17.3)	158 (24.6)
Could not locate/Didn't Show for Intake	155 (33.8)	158 (24.6)
Referral more than 6 months after petition	37 (8.0)	32 (5.0)
Attorney	41 (8.9)	54 (8.4)
Serious mental health issues	25 (5.4)	46 (7.2)
Criminal History	24 (5.2)	21 (3.3)
Pending	28 (6.1)	69 (11.0)
Other <sup>1</sup>	41 (8.9)	57 (8.9)



# What's Next for King County FTC?

- \* Did the intervention have the desired effect? What else might be needed?
- \* What were the outliers in the cohort experience? Drilling down deeper...
- \* Continual review of policies at all levels of decision making are necessary to root out any institutionally racism practices.
- \* Clear process for policy change that includes all levels within the program
- \* Formal evaluation to assess success with program goals.

# Program Goal Comparison

## 2011 Evaluation

- Parents entered treatment faster, stayed in treatment longer and were more successful in treatment
- Children were 70% more likely to be returned home to their parents
- Families exited the child welfare system sooner
- Results roughly equivalent across for families of color and white families in FTC

## 2019 Evaluation

- There were fewer days between intake assessments and enrollment
- More parents enrolled in SUD treatment
- Children achieved permanency faster
- More participants graduated or had their dependency dismissed
- No differences in program outcomes for white families and families of color, but white families did reunify earlier.





**You're only as good  
as your data!**

- Decide what to track
- Review for accuracy of entry
- Mark points in time for system changes
- Use internal and external reviews

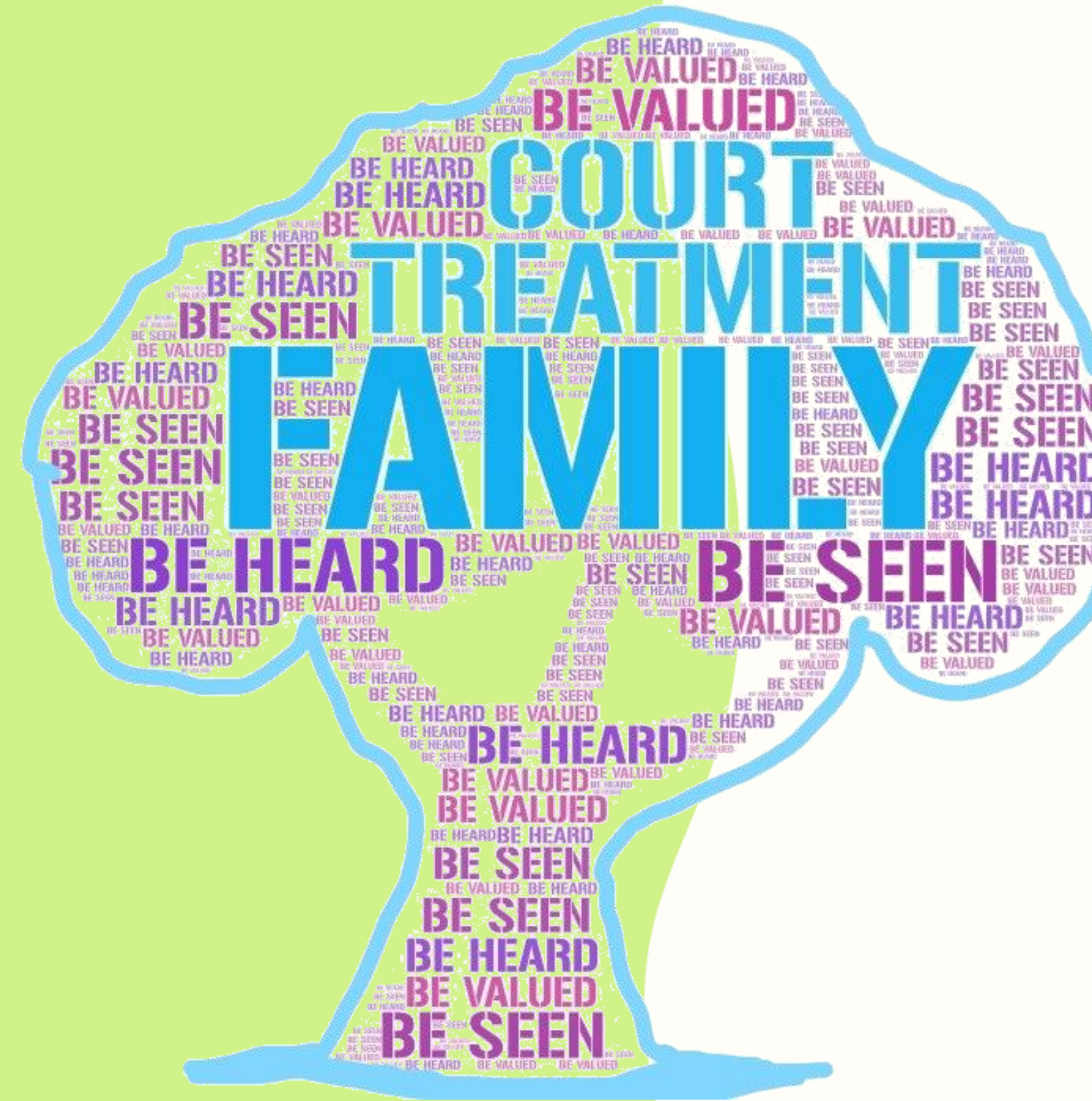


# Ivy Thompson

King County Family  
Treatment Court  
Graduate

&

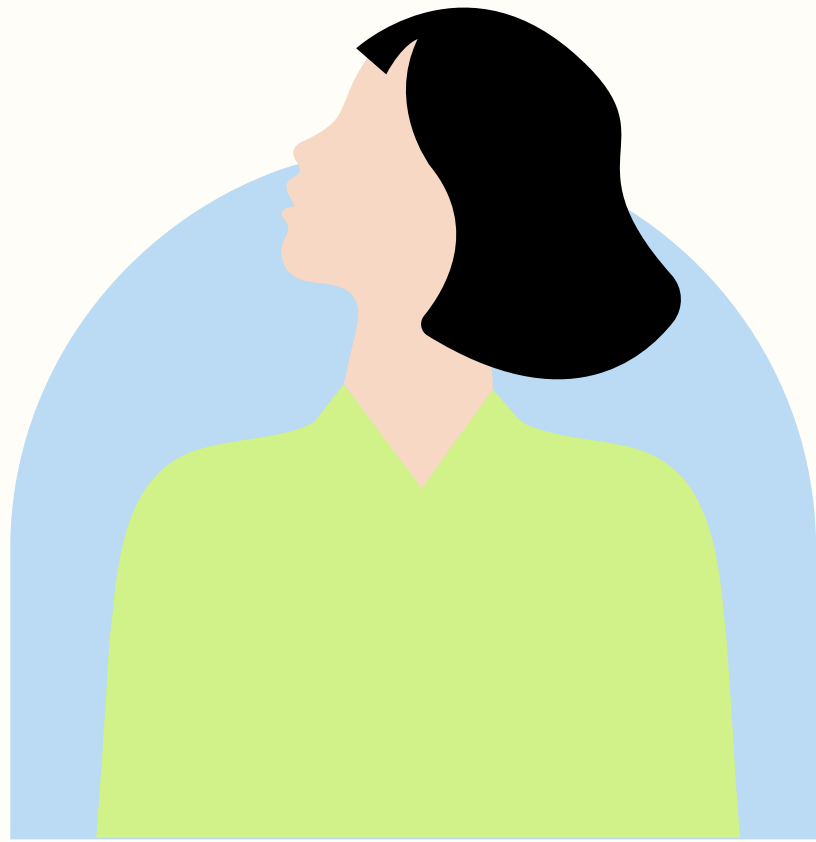
Family Recovery  
Support Specialist





# KCFTC: Entry to Exit Perspectives

- Joining FTC as a participant
- How I experienced the Screening process
- How it felt on my Acceptance Hearing court day (ie first day in family treatment court)
- My experience in FTC court program
- Graduation from FTC
- Working for the Court



# Belonging & the Family Recovery Support Specialist Role

Mirroring the Language of the Team and the Participants

Race & Equity

Safety, Hope, and Experiences of Success





# Context<sub>defined</sub>

“the action of weaving, connection, coherence,  
ordered scheme, structure”

# Small Changes with big impacts

Share with a partner:  
a change that could help your court  
be more understanding of the context  
of a diverse group of participants





# Thank you!

We appreciate you joining us &  
learning more together about how  
to bring equity to the courts



# What questions can we answer?



## Ivy Thompson

Family Recovery Support Specialist  
King County Family Treatment Court  
[ithompson@kingcounty.gov](mailto:ithompson@kingcounty.gov)



## Gabrielle Cranor

Family Recovery Court Caseworker  
Mason County Superior Court  
[GCranor@co.mason.wa.us](mailto:GCranor@co.mason.wa.us)



## Jill Murphy, LICSW

Family Treatment Court Program Manager  
King County Superior Court  
[Jill.Murphy@kingcounty.gov](mailto:Jill.Murphy@kingcounty.gov)



## Meghan Fitzgerald, PhD

FTCTraining Coordinator  
Family and Youth Justice Programs  
Administrative Office of the Courts  
[meghan.fitzgerald@courts.wa.gov](mailto:meghan.fitzgerald@courts.wa.gov)  
[www.wacita.org](http://www.wacita.org)



Center for Children and Family Futures  
Strengthening Partnerships, Improving Family Outcomes



Washington State Department of  
**CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILIES**



**WASHINGTON  
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