



# Supporting Pediatric Patients in Psychiatric Crisis: A Quality Improvement Initiative for Emergency Department Boarding

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## Introduction

- Mental health challenges among youth have increased sharply since 2010
- By 2018, suicide became the leading cause of death for ages 10-24
- In 2021, multiple professional organizations declared a National State of Emergency in Children's Mental Health
- As a result, pediatric mental health boarding in emergency departments (EDs) has increased across the country
- High demand and limited resources often creates wait times upwards of 41 hours prior to a child receiving appropriate disposition, far exceeding the recommended 4 hours
- ED staff have reported insufficient training and resources to provide ongoing psychiatric care, which exacerbates clinical stress and patient symptoms

## Objectives

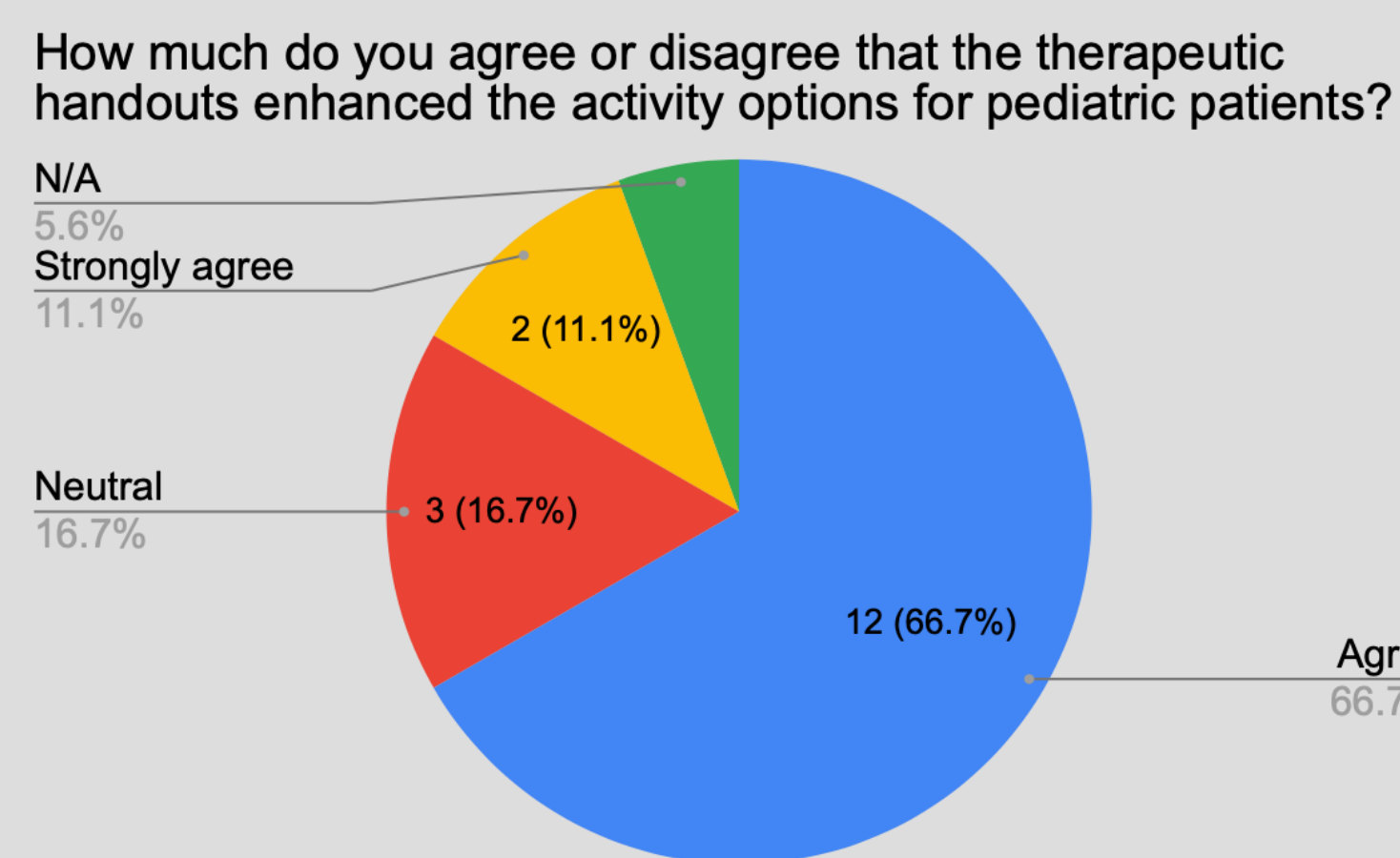
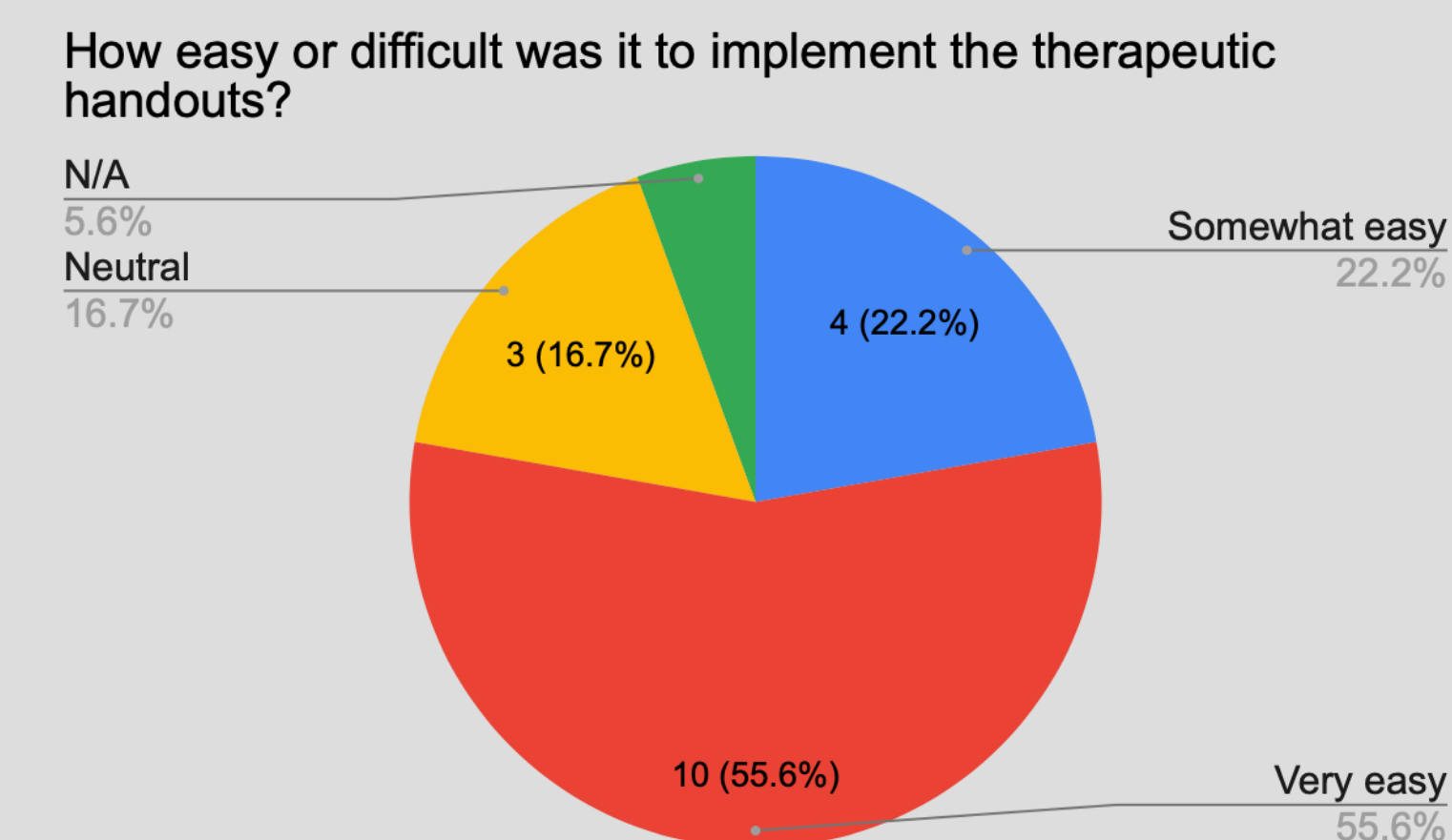
- Pilot a quality improvement study aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of providing tailored, self-directed therapeutic exercises for pediatric patients during psychiatric boarding
- Outcome measure: perceived feasibility and benefit by ED staff, patients, and parents/guardians

## Methods

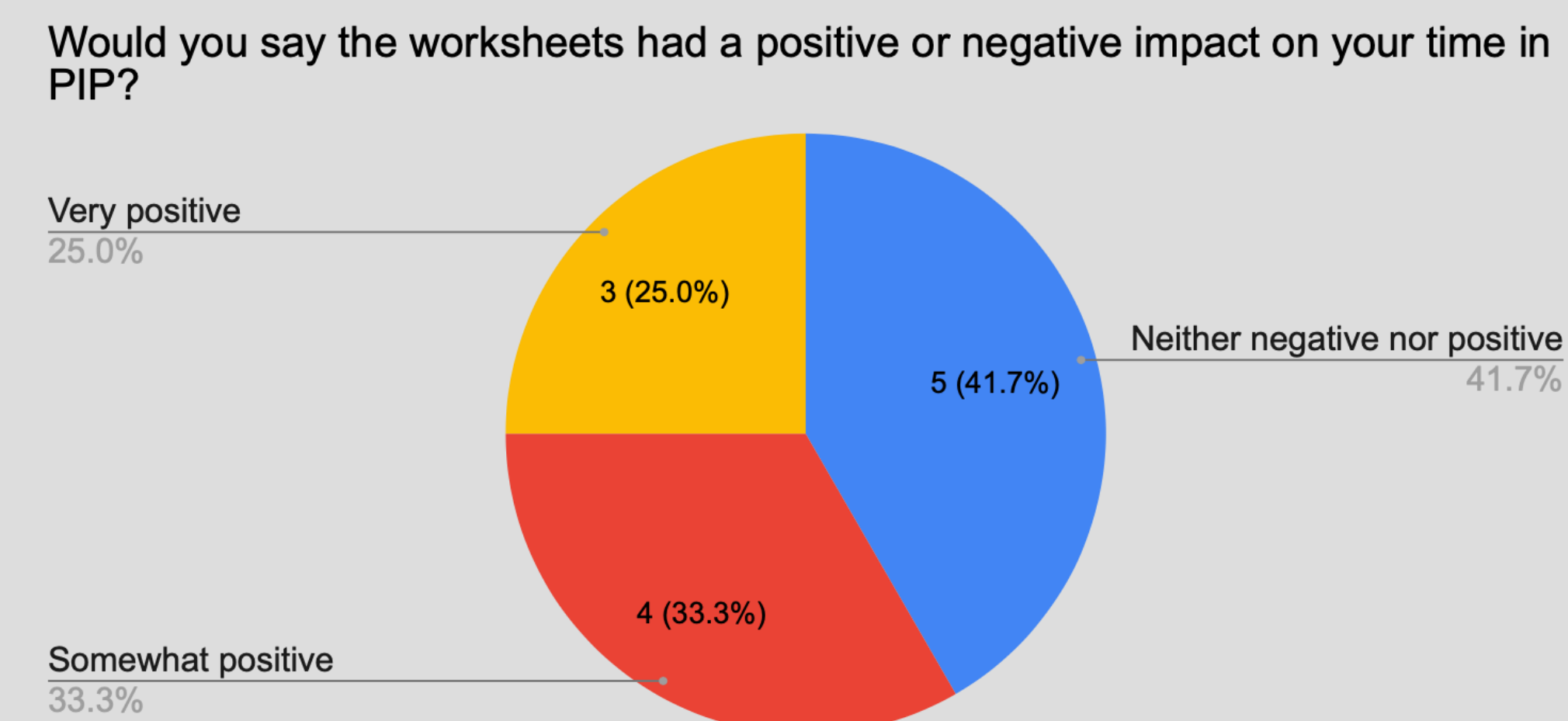
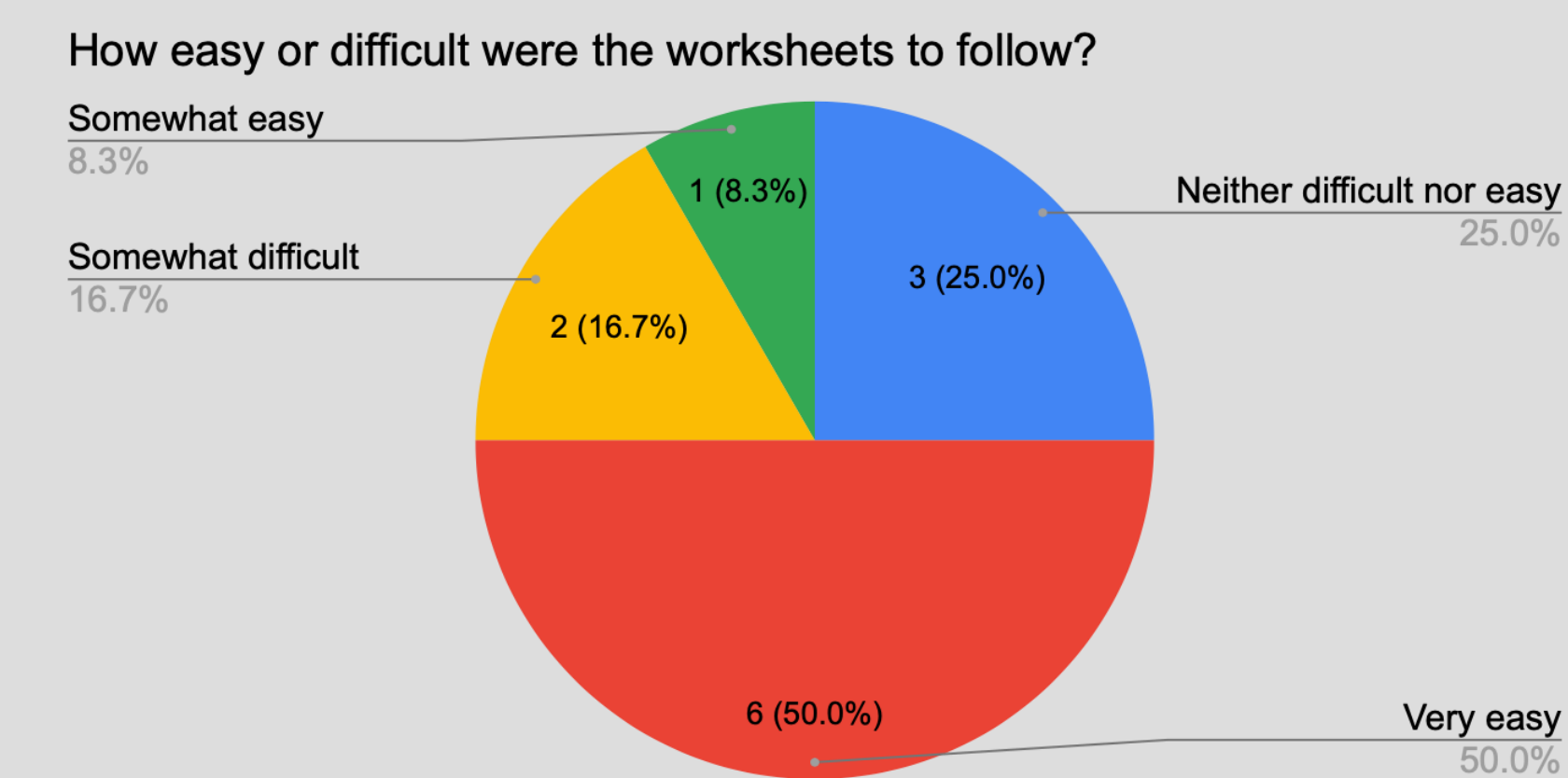
- Plan-Do-Study-Act model
- Utilizing *Therapist Aid* (free, permissively licensed resources), research team developed three categories of therapeutic handouts: depression/anxiety, anger/impulsivity, and self-injury
- Categorized handouts were available at the nurses' station for staff to distribute to pediatric patients
- Pre- and post-intervention survey for staff
- Post-intervention survey for patients and parents/guardians
- All surveys utilized Likert scales

## Post-Intervention Survey Results

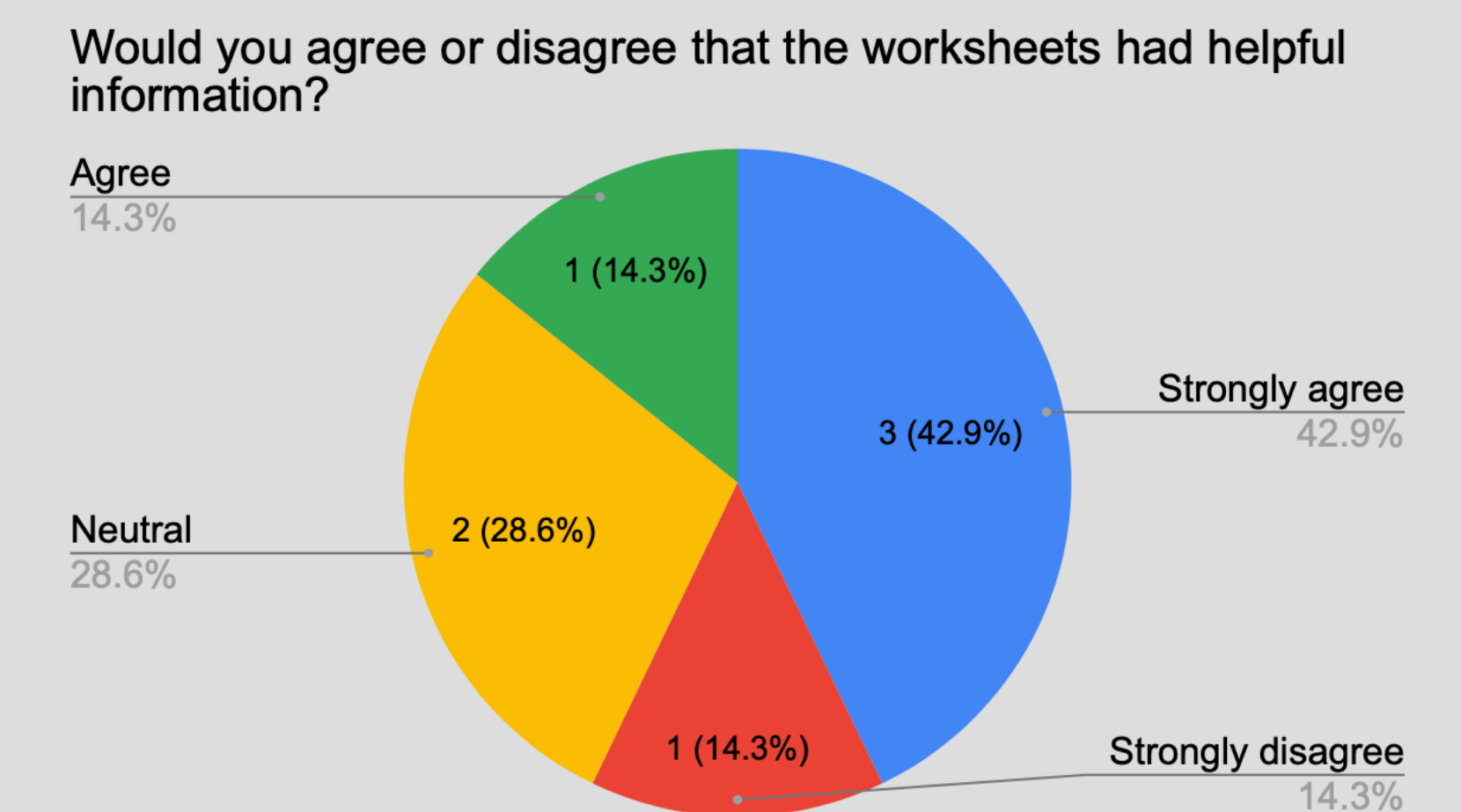
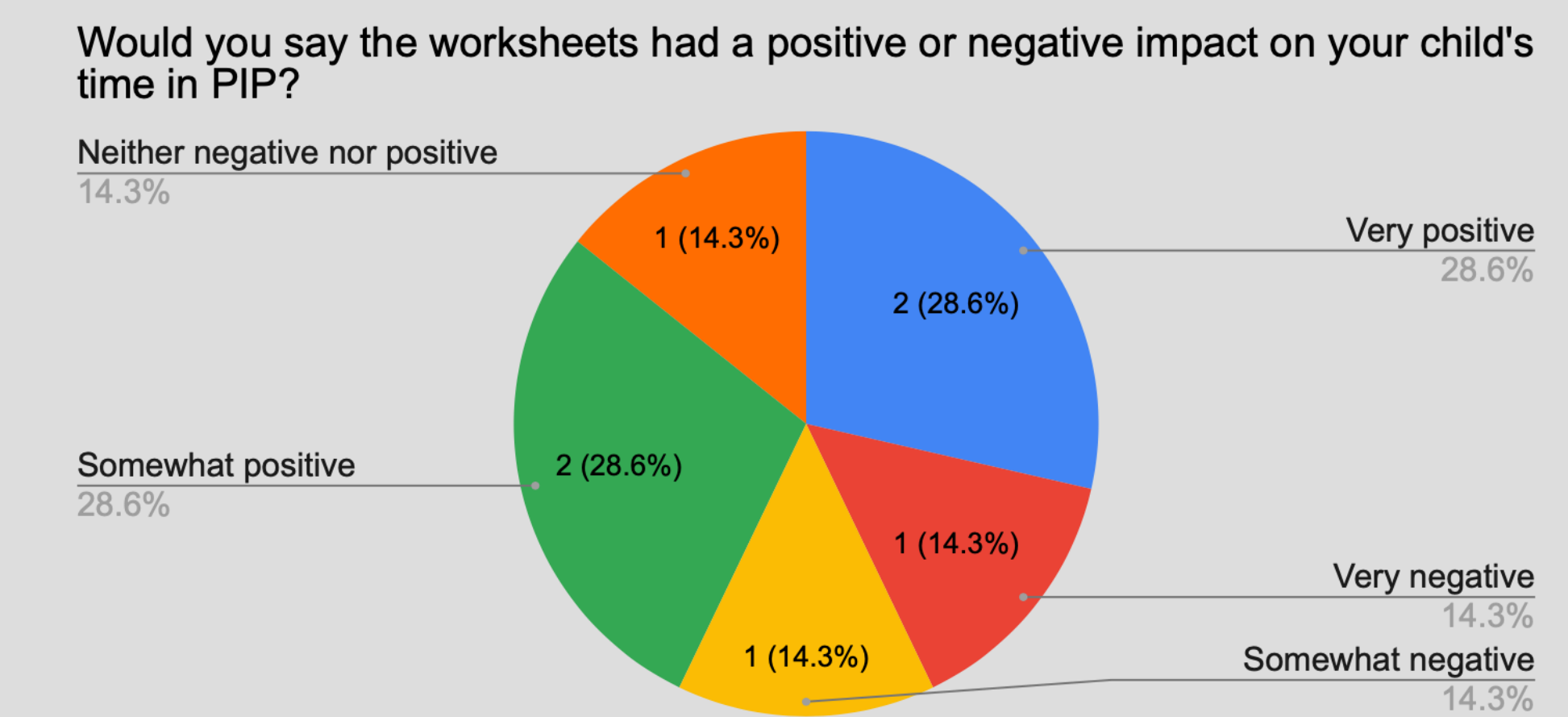
### Staff (n=18)



### Patients (n=12)



### Parents/Guardians (n=7)



## References

1. The Joint Commission. Quick Safety 19: ED boarding of psychiatric patients – a continuing problem. (July 2021). <https://www.jointcommission.org/resources/news-and-multimedia/newsletters/newsletters/quick-safety/quick-safety--issue-19-alleviating-ed-boarding-of-psychiatric-patients/alleviating-ed-boarding-of-psychiatric-patients/>
2. "A Declaration from the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, American Academy of Pediatrics, and Children's Hospital Association ." American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, 19 Oct. 2021.
3. Simon, J.R., Kraus, C.K., Basford, J.B., Clayborne, E.P., Kluesner, N., & Bookman, K. (October, 2019). The Impact of Boarding Psychiatric Patients on the Emergency Department: Scope, Impact and Proposed Solutions. American College of Emergency Physicians. <https://www.acep.org/siteassets/new-pdfs/information-and-resource-papers/the-impact-of-psychiatric-boarders-on-the-emergency-department.pdf>
4. "Therapy Worksheets, Tools, and Handouts." *Therapist Aid*, [www.therapistaid.com/](http://www.therapistaid.com/). Accessed Oct. 2024.

## Conclusion/Discussion

- Staff, patients, and parents/guardians overall felt that the therapeutic handouts were feasible and an effective utilization of time, helping fill a resource and treatment gap for boarding pediatric patients in the psychiatric ED
- Major limitation was low post-intervention surveys by staff, patients, and parents/guardians; responses may reflect overall experience in ED
- In the "Act" phase, we will work to increase awareness and education on the availability of the handouts as well as how to utilize them