

DC Office of the
Ombudsman
for Public Education



Monthly Look:
August –September 2018

This document presents the data from cases the office opened between August 15, 2018, through September 30, 2018. This is the first monthly look for School Year 2018-19.



202.741.0886



educationombudsman.dc.gov



ombudsman@dc.gov





om-buds-man

/ˈämbədzmən/

noun

An “entrusted person” or “grievance representative”

The DC Office of the Ombudsman for Public Education is an impartial, independent, and neutral office that uses mediation and conflict resolution to resolve complaints and concerns for parents and families regarding public education in the District of Columbia. The Office uses an “Activist Ombudsman” approach. We believe it is our responsibility to speak out against the systemic inequities that hurt our city’s children.



Role of the Education Ombudsman

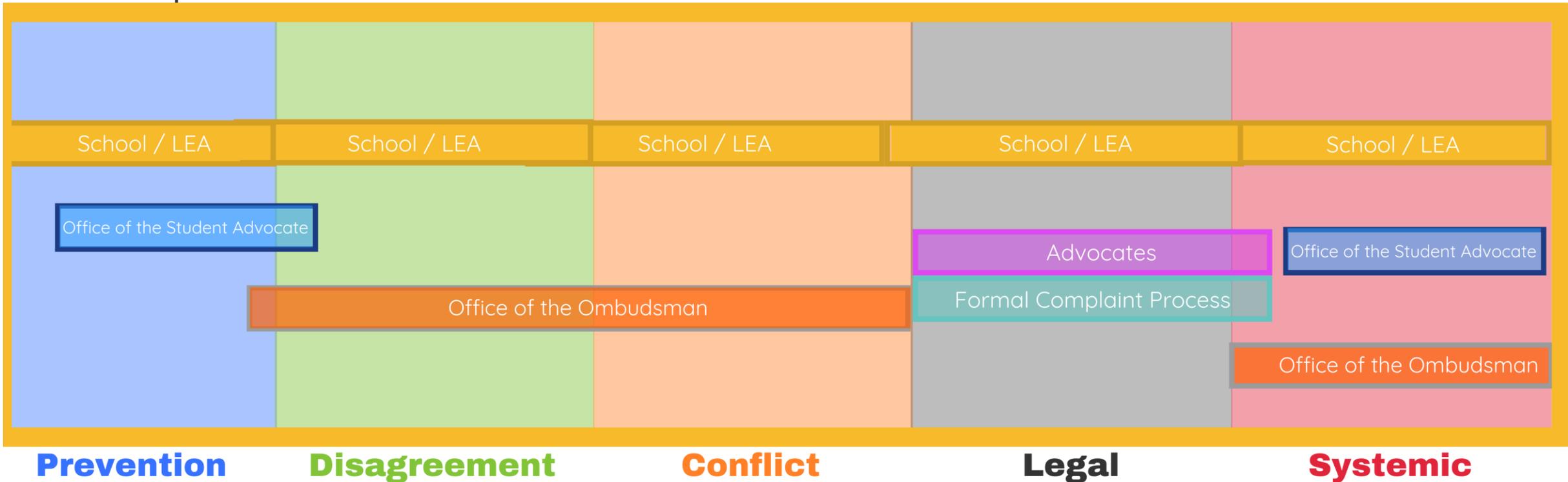
- Respond to complaints and concerns, and serve as an informational resource to families and students.
- De-escalate and repair relationships through creative problem-solving and conflict resolution techniques.
- Provide technical assistance to community organizations, LEAs, and education stakeholders on public education issues.
- Act as an early warning system of new, emerging issues and trends to school leaders, education stakeholders, and elected/appointed officials.
- Leverage case trends to contribute to city-wide conversations regarding cross-sector education systems to effect systemic change.



Complaint Avenues

Parent has an Issue, Complaint, or Concern

DC Dispute Resolution Continuum*



This shows how the Office of the Ombudsman primarily works with disputes during the disagreement and conflict stages of the DC Dispute Resolution Continuum*. It is in these stages where we complete our one-on-one case management. We use the data from those cases to form recommendations to create systemic change in hopes of preventing similar disputes in the future.

*Based on the CADRE Continuum Framework

Our Core Values

Ensure Access

- Our office aims to ensure access to equitable public education for all students, regardless of race, class, income, disability status or ward of residence.

Address Issues

- We address issues that are brought to our attention by providing direct intervention for students and families;
- We also address these same issues on the systemic level through our engagement with local, state, and national education leaders.

Amplify Student and Family Voice

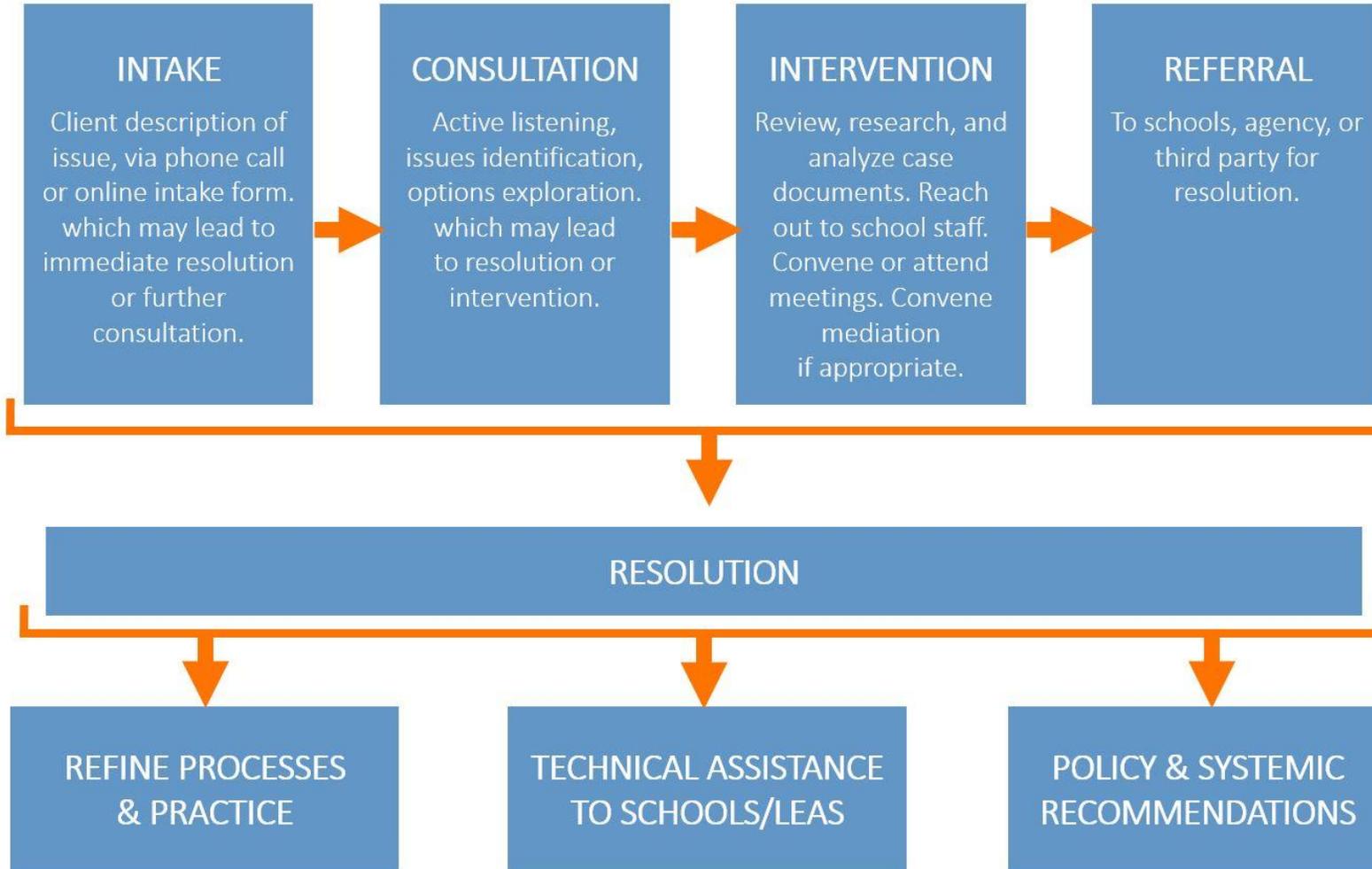
- Our office serves as a venue for families to have voice in directly addressing the issues their student is facing and the school level.
- In many instances such issues are systemic inequities that are causing our children, particularly children of color and students with disabilities, to fail.

Reduce Systemic Inequities

- We believe it is our responsibility to speak out against the systemic inequities that hurt our city's children.
- We believe that through our work, and in our partnership with families and schools, we are creating a barrier-free system in which education equity is the primary focus. Such a system will allow students and families to benefit fully from their public school systems.



How We Serve: Our Process



During intake, we ask a series of questions to determine the scope of the callers concerns and to determine if further consultation and actions are required.

During consultation, we work to understand the caller's perspective and help identify additional issues and contributing factors.

During the Intervention stage we work as an impartial third party to help reach a resolution.

We understand that sometimes there are other partners who can better address the issues- in those cases we make a referral.

Our process is designed to allow for a resolution at any point. We use the data we collect from cases to :

- Refine or processes and practice
- Develop and provide technical assistance to schools and local education agencies
- Create police and systemic recommendations.

Adapted from the Washington State Office of the Education Ombudsman (2011). *Ombudsman Resource Manual*.



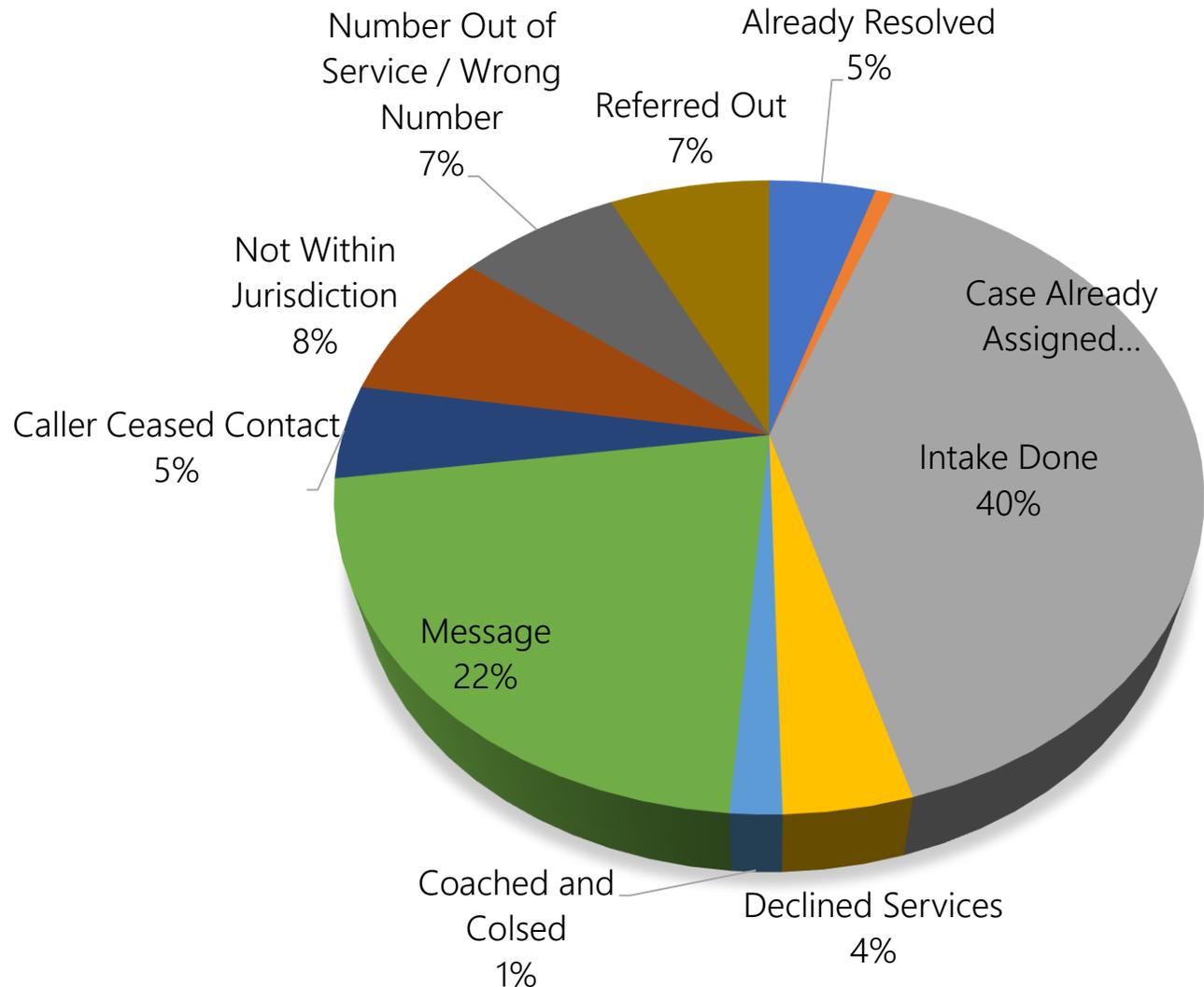
Contact Summary – August and September

This shows the total number of contacts our office received in August and September and what type of action was taken in response.

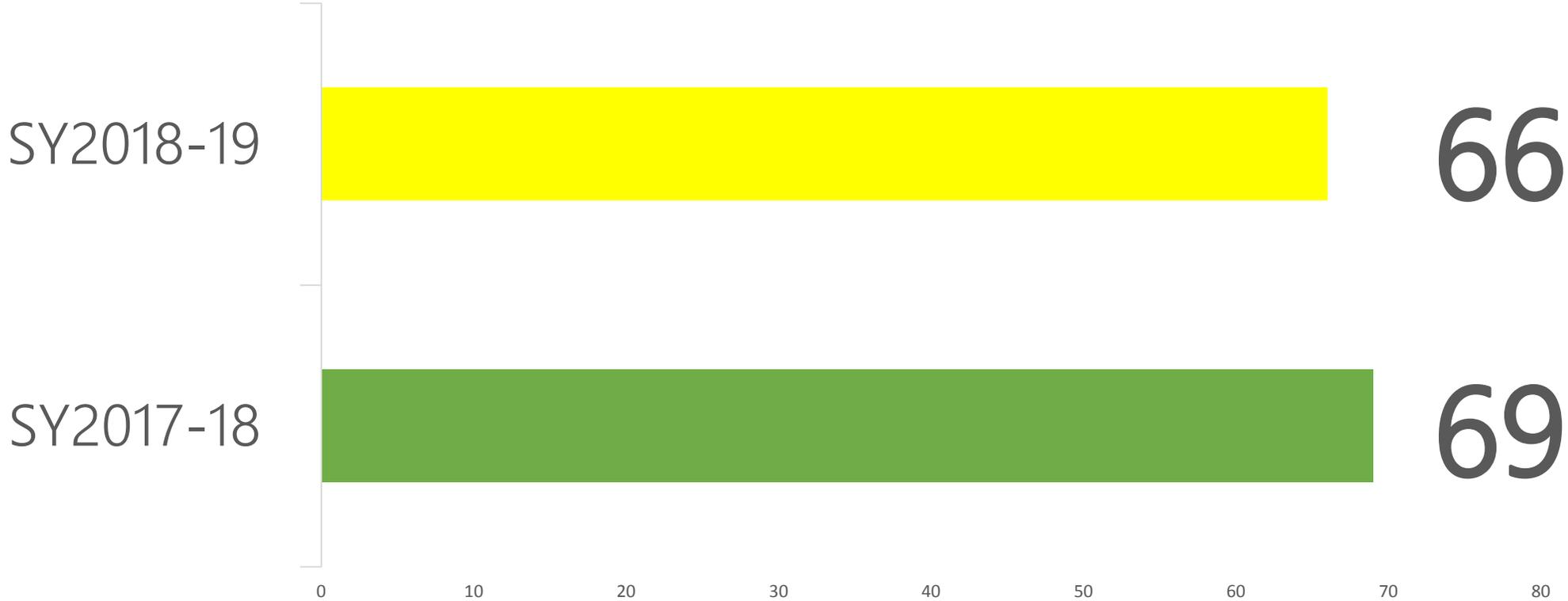
It also shows how many of those contacts (emails, calls, referrals) became cases that our staff actively worked to resolve.

Total Contacts	133
Total Converted to Cases	66

A contact becomes a case when we determine that our direct intervention is necessary to most appropriately address issue.

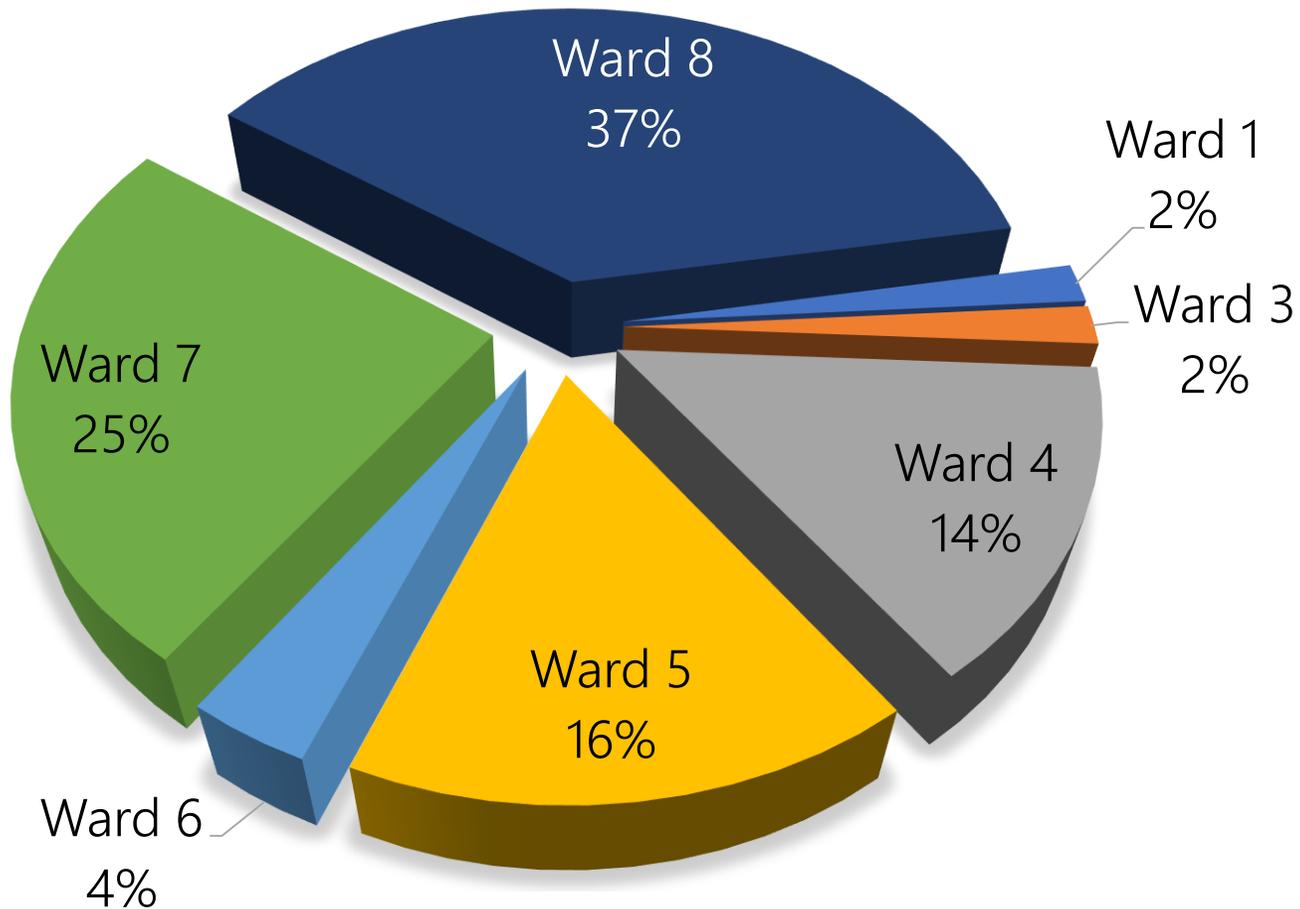


Total Cases for August and September 2018



Cases by Student Ward of Residence

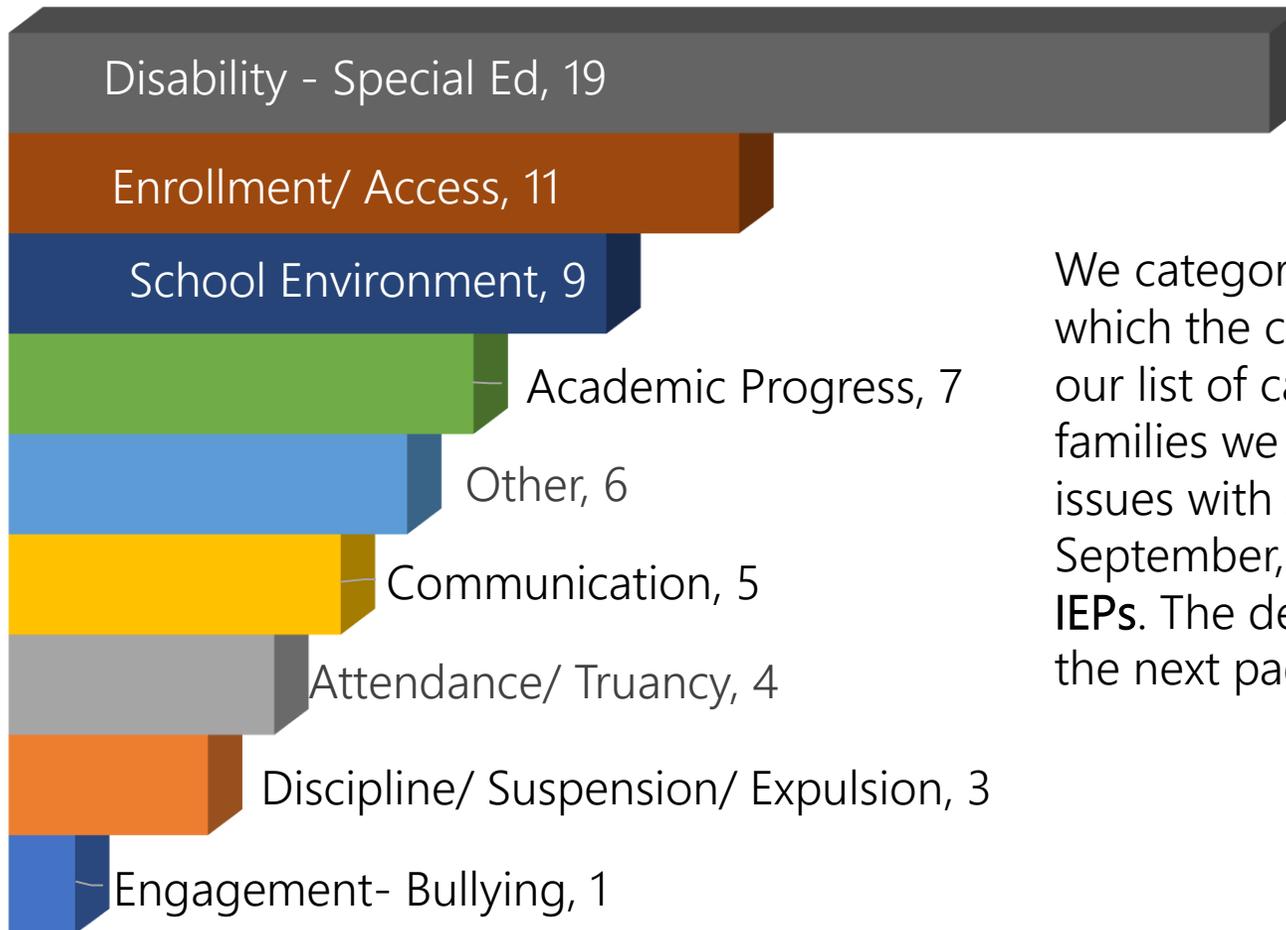
This chart represents all cases collected between August 15, 2018 and September 30, 2018.



For the past five years, we have received the most calls from families who live in Wards 5, 7, and 8. This chart does not address where the school is located with which these families experience issues.

Cases by Category of Issue

This chart represents all cases collected between August 15, 2018 and September 30, 2018.



We categorize all of our cases based on the central issue on which the cases is based. Over the years, we have refined our list of categories based on the experiences of the families we serve. The vast majority of our cases involve issues with special education. From August through September, **79%** of the Special Education cases involved **IEPs**. The definitions of our top categories are provided on the next page.

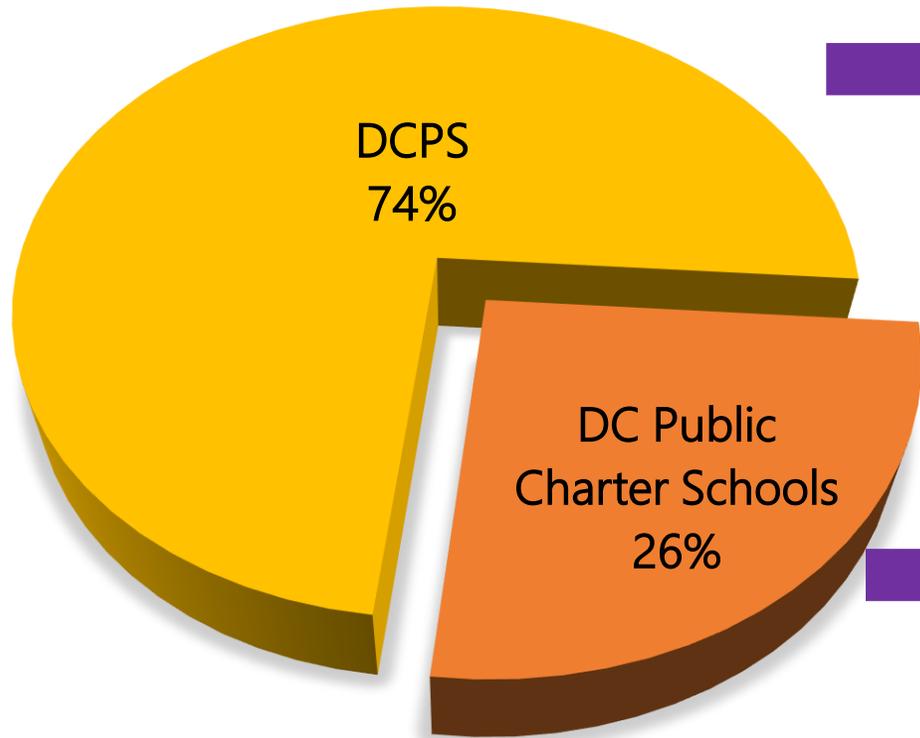
Category Definitions

This list provides definitions for the categories shown on the previous slide.

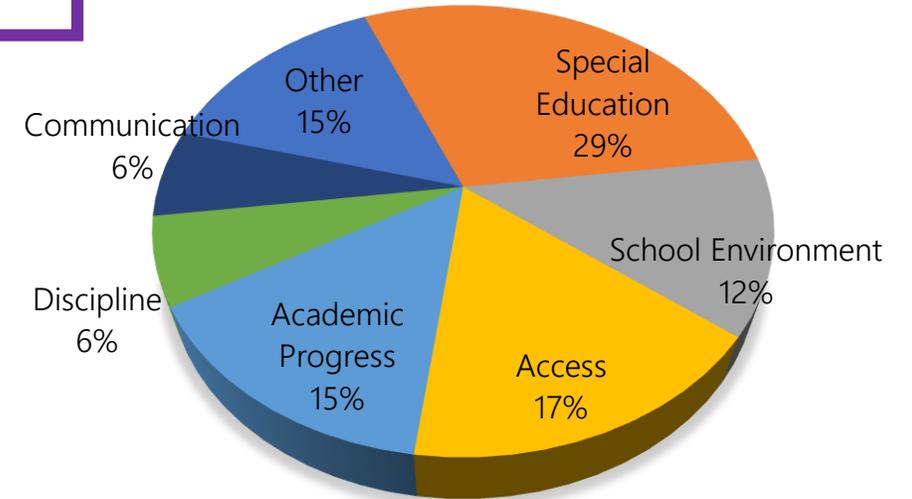
- Academic Progress: Issues preventing a student from accessing their education related to grades, credits, transcripts, and curriculum that impact learning or perception of learning.
- Access: Issues preventing a student from accessing their education unrelated to the curriculum, or due to procedural difficulties or gaps
- Communication: Issues preventing a student from accessing their education due to real or perceived breakdowns in productive communication.
- Special Education: Issues preventing a student from accessing their education due to a student's diagnosed or suspected disability.
- School Environment: Issues preventing a student from accessing their education due to the safety, behavior, and environment issues, or actions of students or staff against the student that signal a need for intervention or support from the school. This category also includes bullying and corporal punishment.
- Bullying: School Environment issues in which a member of the school community is bullying a student. This includes the legal definition, a family member's impressions, and sexual assault.
- Discipline - Expulsion/Suspension: Issues regarding a student who has been temporarily or permanently placed out of school due to a behavior or disciplinary infraction.
- Other: Issues preventing a student from accessing their education due to issues unrelated to any of the other issues.

Cases by School Type

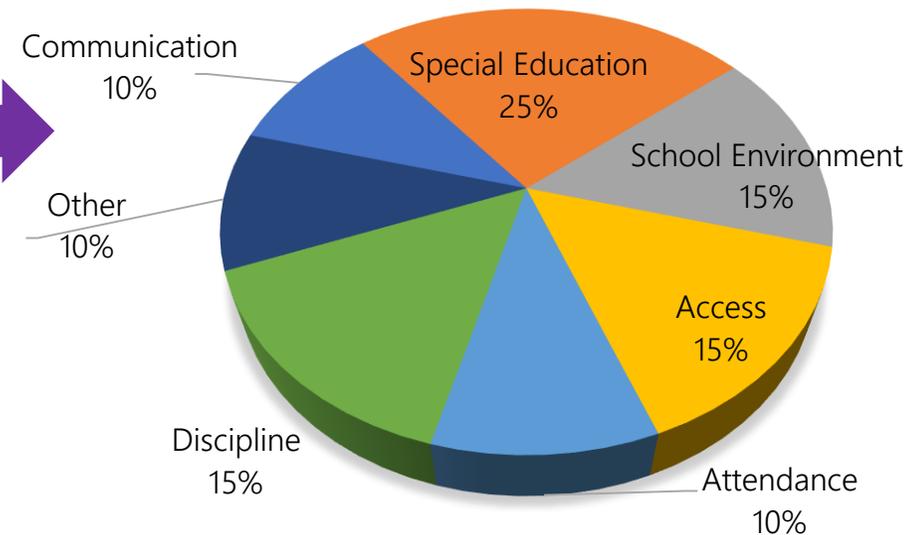
This chart represents all cases collected between August 15, 2018 and September 30, 2018.



Top Categories for cases from DCPS

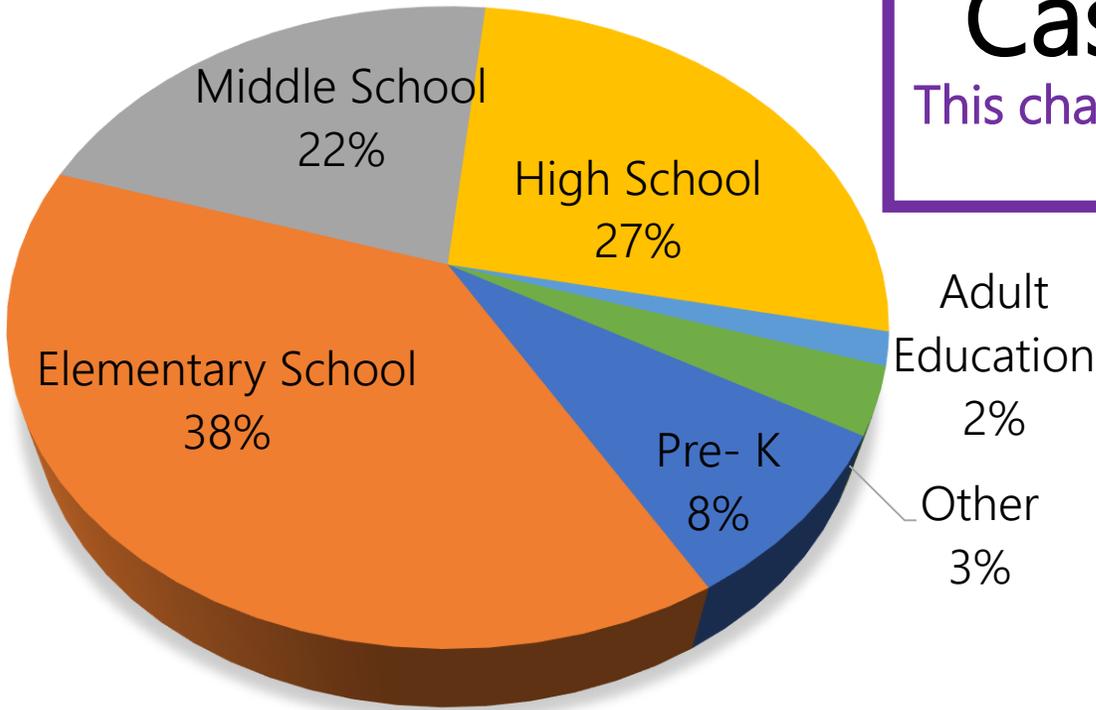


Top Categories for cases from DC Charter Schools

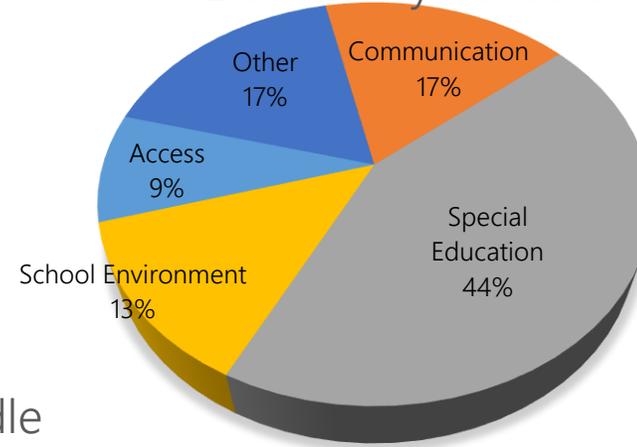


Cases by Grade Band of Student

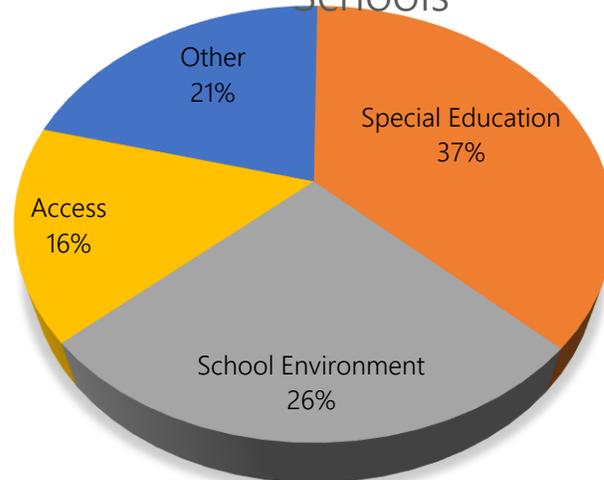
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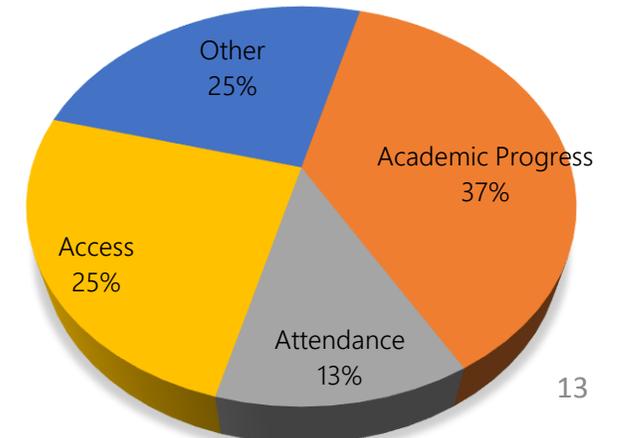
Top Categories for cases from Elementary Schools



Top Categories for cases from Middle Schools

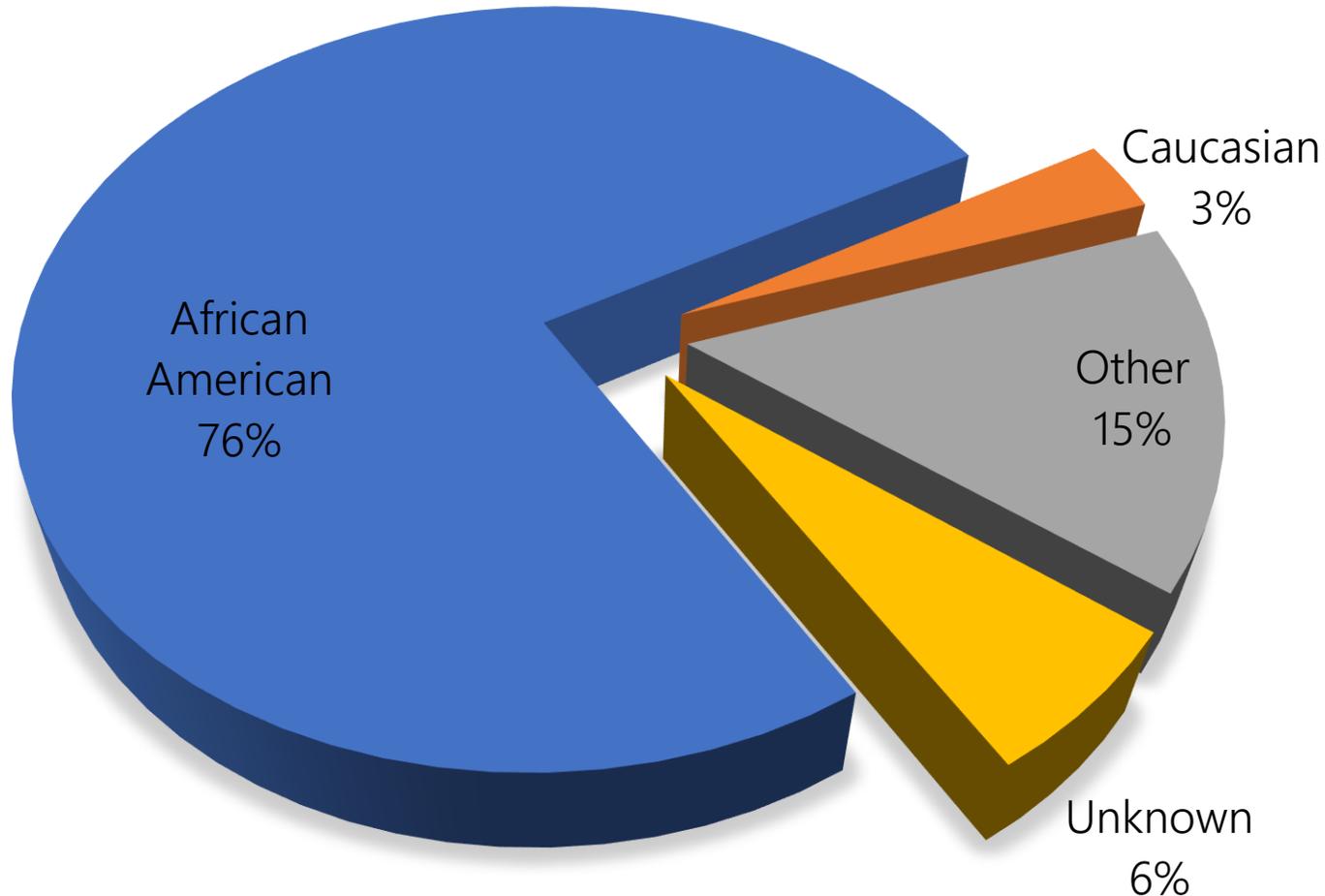


Top Categories for cases from High Schools



Cases by Race/Ethnicity of Student

This chart represents all cases collected between August 15, 2018 and September 30, 2018.



The majority of the students that our office supports is African American. Because most of the students in public schools in the District or students of color and the vast majority of the families we serve identify as African American or Black, it is important that we include a racial lens as we address systemic inequities.

Looking Forward: Our Recommendations

- Partner with Local Non-Profits to Provide Technical Support to Schools and LEAs on the Implementation of McKinney -Vento
- Explore the Feasibility of a Citywide Response to Intervention Framework
- Strengthen Relationships with Families and LEAs to Provide a Wider Impact to Families and Students
- Address Persistent Achievement and Opportunity Gaps Through Coordination, Collaboration, and/or Policy and Procedural Changes



We look forward to **partnering** with **you!**



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