



unitaf

we are the village

# Activity Report 2020–2021

## Challenges in Liminal Children Education

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COVID-19 has taught us a lesson in impermanence – the wave is temporary, the quarantine is temporary, normalcy, as well as the crisis, is temporary. We have learned to deal with it, to take a deep breath, to wait, not to make plans, so as not to be disappointed. To others, as well as ourselves, we say: “It will eventually pass”.

Here, in Unitaf, the lesson in impermanence is an important one since it is the lesson that has made it possible for us to become more familiar with the family life of the status-less child growing up in Israel.

There are close to 8,000 immigrant and asylum-seeking children growing up in Israel. Life in the shadow of “status-lessness” colors the daily lives of parents and their children. As a matter of fact, society as a whole pays the price as well. Their rights are obtained through the courts. The political interests of a few policy-makers in the country continue to make it difficult for the government’s position to change. In the name of national declarations, they continue to deny the children any rights, claiming to “be preserving the character” [of the country].

During the second year of the pandemic, the harm done became deeper, as did their misery. While the government took steps to support citizens whose income had been afflicted, our status-less children found themselves in homes that were becoming poorer by the day.



In response to the claim that Israeli nationals, especially the poor among them, had been hard hit during the pandemic, they were provided with benefits and assistance which, to a certain extent, helped them through difficult times. This basket of benefits – a safety net provided by Israeli society – does not only consist of providing monthly National Insurance stipends, child support or unemployment payments. The citizens enjoyed a number of other benefits and easements: exemptions and discounts on payments, additional tax points, rent assistance, grants, etc. However, these were only provided to those who met the basic conditions of being needy, and first and foremost on the list of conditions – an ID number. This only served to reinforce the despair of the population that is considered on the basis of its status, a situation whose existence has demanded the highest price.

This year, the Unitaf staff found itself enlisting to provide services for the children and their families and was able, even if only a little bit, to become familiar with the misery in which they live. This closer contact with the misery in which the Unitaf children live opened our eyes with regard to the challenges they face because of their temporary status.

The findings in this report are the fruit of the dedicated work by the wonderful Unitaf workers whose desire to do something is wholehearted and done in the spirit of giving and hope.

This report is dedicated to them.

# Unitaf, Thinking of Tomorrow



During the year that preceded the Corona epidemic, we at Unitaf deliberated whether to expand what is given to the children or to establish “Unitaf”s in more regions in the country, regions which also have children’s warehouses, in an attempt to prevent the occurrence of damage that we have come across within Tel Aviv. It is only now that the epidemic seems to be reaching its end that we will be able to turn to reconsidering the priorities of the organization.

During the past year, we learned that the wave of movement from Tel Aviv to additional regions increased and we found ourselves having to deal with this vulnerable population in a way that we had not known before. The strategy of ignoring which the country follows does not meet the local needs and the authorities pay a heavy price for that: over the years, the children who are “graduates” of the children’s warehouses join the kindergartens and school and exhibit impaired cognitive skills.

The inability to meet minimal standards creates turmoil in the school, health and welfare systems within the local authorities. This creates a stratum of people who are unable to function. Without a solid strategy, every local authority stands alone against the complex challenges of integrating the children and providing them with support of the therapeutic structures.

As a result of the success of our model in Rehovot, other authorities have recognized the need for an early solution for infants that will make it possible to create a solid foundation for dealing with the disparities and the hardships.

Our cumulative experience in Unitaf teaches that something can be done. Authorities that adopts the alternative model that we propose will be able to bridge the disparities and enable a reasonable existence for those who lack an alternative to life in Israel.

We claim that there is a place for unique and concentrated protection of these children within a conflictive reality. Society’s attitude toward the children is a measure of the morality and values of society as a whole. We believe that establishing the status-less children’s status is the correct and proper way for the State to act towards all children living within its borders.

# Emotional Observation of Adversities Arising from Liminality

When we meet a child with emotional-behavioral problems in one of our frameworks, we notice signs of emotional distress in the child's behavior that stem from events the child might have experienced. We try to understand what lies behind the undesirable behavior. We help the child deal with the emotional condition in which he/she finds him/herself, and do not simply get rid of the symptomatic behavior which is not suitable to the conventions of the framework.

In such cases, we will divide interventions into two levels of action:

Within the frameworks: we will instruct the teacher to deal with the child with empathy, to try to understand the child's needs that he/she expresses through violent or aggressive behavior. Usually, what is needed is an expression security, certainty, warmth and closeness, and developing the knowledge that the framework is a safe place for the child and that he/she is loved and wanted.

We select educational tools that furnish the need: creating a stable and permanent daily schedule, assigning duties and highlighting the child's visibility in accordance with the child's developmental ability, placing empathetic and consistent limits, enabling personal time with the teacher, etc. This is done through the use of emotional tools such as identifying and naming their feelings, connecting these feelings to the child's behavior, teaching the child to use more effective expressions of feeling, connecting with and becoming closer to significant figures, such as the teacher, the different assistants and other people in this environment.



Within the family: we will work with the parents and other adults in the child's life, reinforce the dyadic connection, provide parental guidance, make services available for implementing additional solutions and create a connection of trust and empowerment. The cases that challenge us the most are those where we can see a parent's refusal to try to find solutions for the child's needs and difficulties.

There are many such cases since the parents within the community have to deal with many complex physical, health and emotional hardships and are fighting to survive. Here, in UnitaF, our objective is to support them and continue to inform them of the child's needs and distress. As part of this supportive dialogue, we very slowly, little by little, introduce the child's point of view.

## **A Qualitative and Stable Educational Framework Develops Resiliency**

Particularly during a time when reality is constantly changing, it is an opportunity to analyze the uncertainty around us and to focus upon how it would be possible to create quality frameworks. During this past year, we initiated and began a process of introducing quality curricula for infants. From a planning aspect, the teams constructed an organized educational program for each framework, planning a focused educational program that contains attainable goals and objectives with clear advantages, in order to improve therapeutic quality.



In addition, we found that focusing upon planning which requires looking to the future that is beyond the present crisis in the classroom also serves as an empowering factor for the teams, as action which requires looking at the strengths and taking positive action within the classrooms, as well as having an optimistic outlook upon the future. The educational emphases during this period were, first of all, support and strengthening the educational teams, with the idea in mind that in order for the teachers to be able to be available and open to the children, someone had to be there for them.

We emphasized empowering the team, holding staff meetings where an emphasis was placed upon cooperation and analyzing the difficult feelings that come with uncertainty, maintaining contact with members of the team who were in quarantine, as well as providing remedial activity for the staff within the framework of the limitations of COVID-19, in efforts to increase the feeling of belonging and “groupness”.

Along with developing the resilience of the teachers, emphasis was placed upon developing the children’s resilience in face of the chaotic reality. Emphasis was placed upon encouraging independence, and upon facilitating the acquisition of regulatory skills. Within the classroom, emphasis was placed upon as much order and routine as possible as part of the effort to create certainty in all of the uncertainty in the world that is outside of the educational framework. In addition, emphasis was placed upon play as a way to develop skills to reduce tensions and provide a relief from distress. With the help of a group of volunteers which was established this year, we managed to dramatically enrich the pedagogic contents within the classroom, using the pedagogic accessories prepared by this group of dedicated volunteers.

In the photo: The dear volunteers of "Coffee and Scissors Club", preparing story and illustration sets for all the kindergarten children with creativity and love.



# Data and Insights

1,320  
Children

1,029  
Families in Unitaf

176  
Children receive welfare  
services

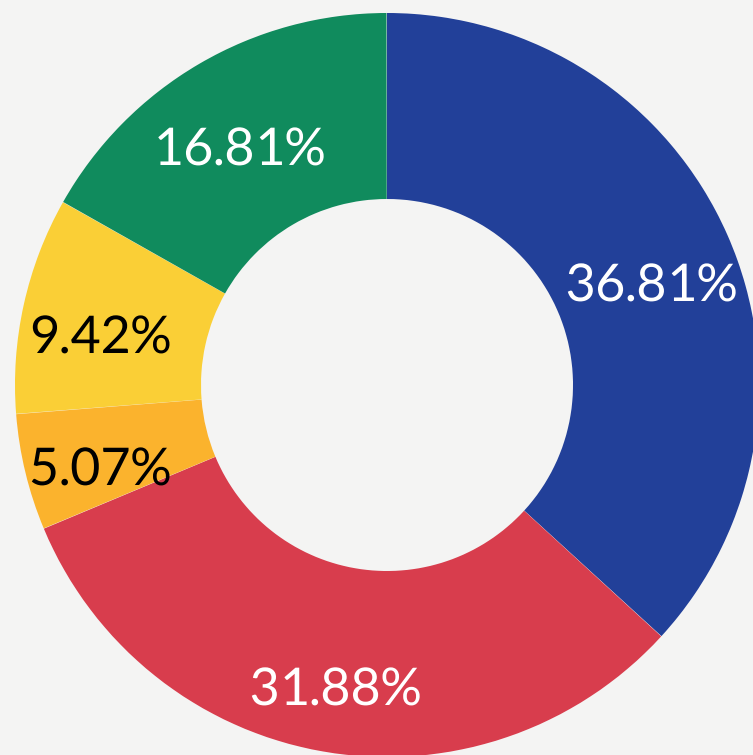
67%  
Children are insured with  
health insurance



In the photo: an animal-assisted  
leadership class at UNITAF afterschools

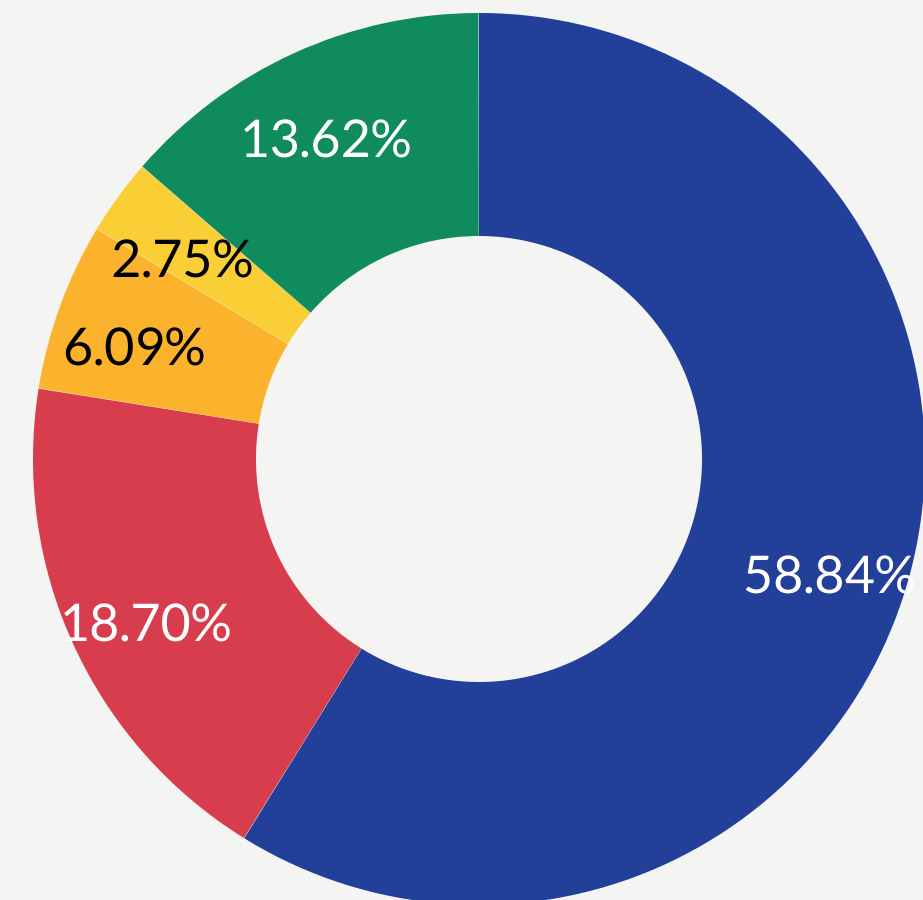


## Employment Status



- Both parents work (36.81%)
- One working parent (31.88%)
- No income (5.07%)
- Difficulties maintaining stable income (9.42%)
- No info. (16.81%)

## Family Status



- Both parents (58.84%)
- Single parent (18.7%)
- Divorce (6.09%)
- Other (2.75%)
- No info. (13.62%)

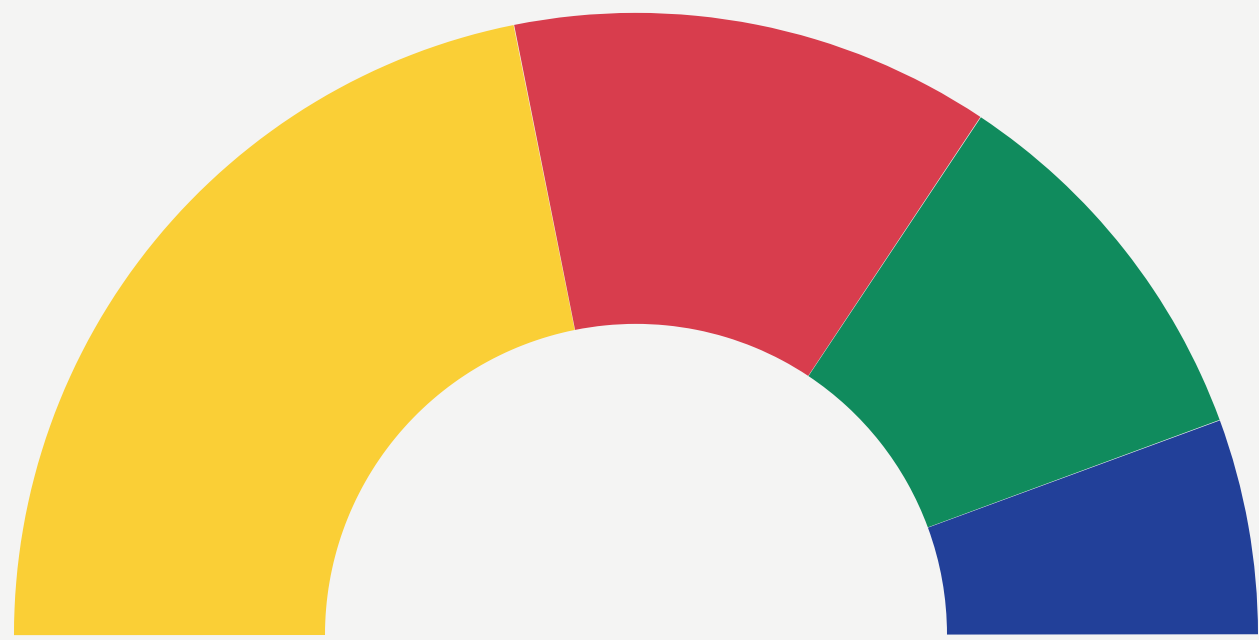
About 470 families are in financial difficulties and need assistance

The percentage of single-parent families in UNITF is 4 times From the general population



70 Children in diagnostic assessment processes

### Segmentation of Diagnostic Assessment Referrals

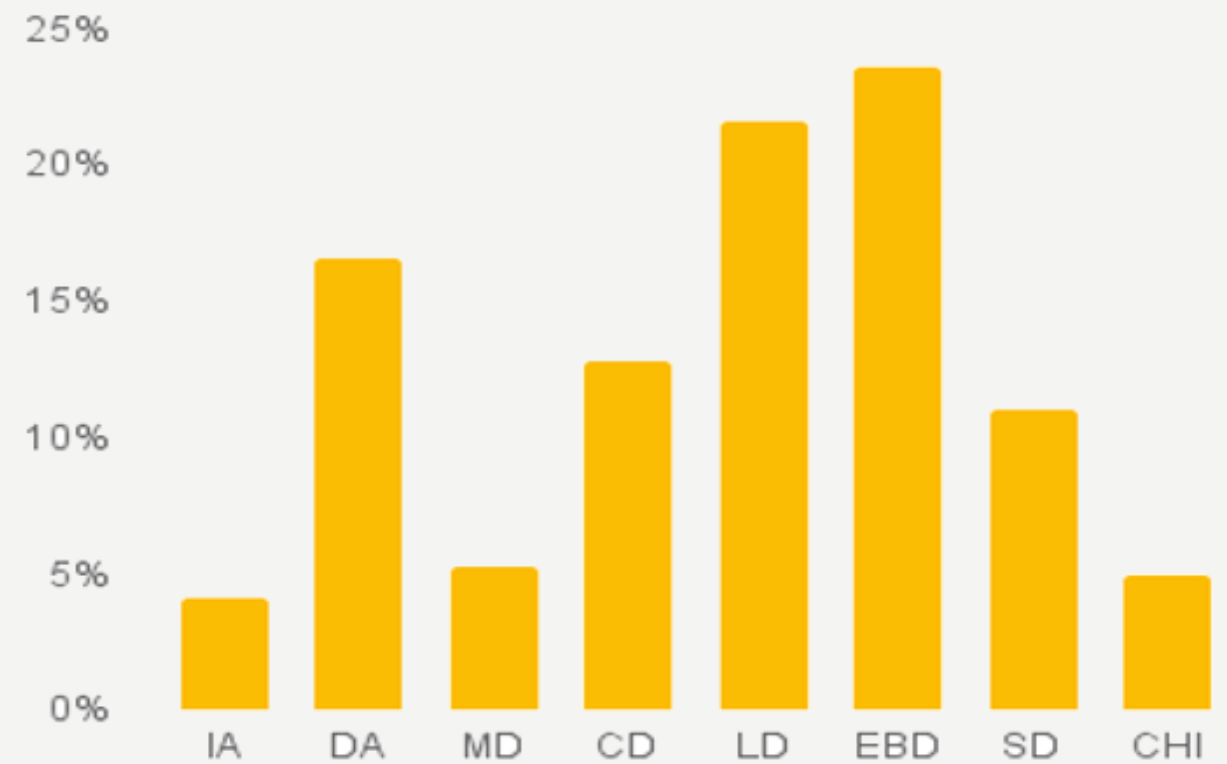


- Language and communication difficulties (43.72%)
- Behavioral emotional difficulty (24.99%)
- Social difficulty (20.09%)
- Motor difficulty (11.2%)



497 Children have needed interventions around educational and developmental issues In the past year

### Identifying Educational and Developmental Needs



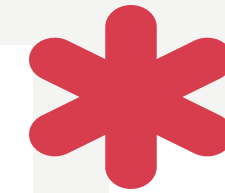
- IA - Inconsistent Attendance
- DA - In Diagnostic Assessment
- MD - Motor Difficulty
- CD - Communication Difficulty
- LD - Lingual Difficulty
- EBD - Emotional-Behavioral Difficulty
- SD - Social Difficulty
- CHI - Child Health Issue



- 8 Women in prostitution
- 12 Fathers in prison
- 23 Parents are recognized as victims of trafficking
- 29 Parents suffer from addictions
- 115 Parents in mental struggles

The categories indicated are equivalent to the characteristics of ACE research Risk predictors from childhood to adulthood.

64 Children were included under 3 categories and above And are defined by us as children at high risk

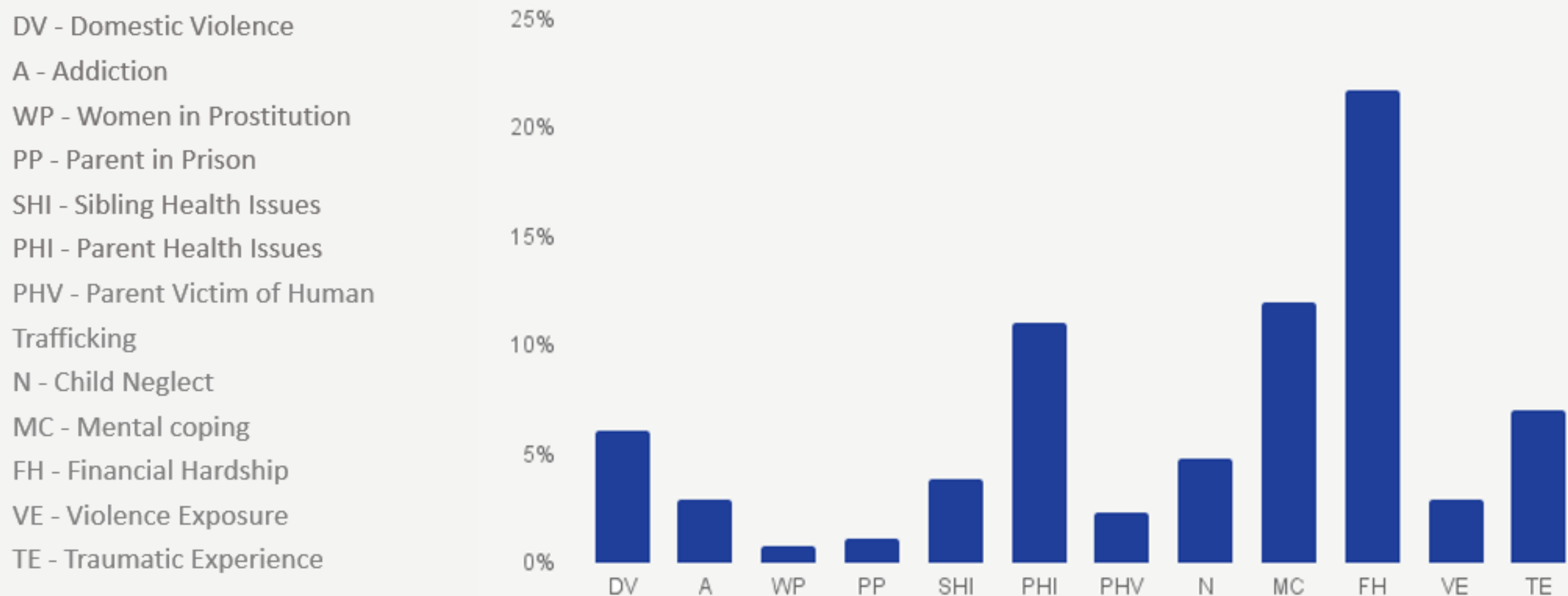


303

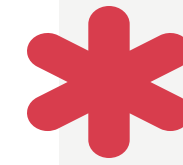


Children needed interventions around welfare issues

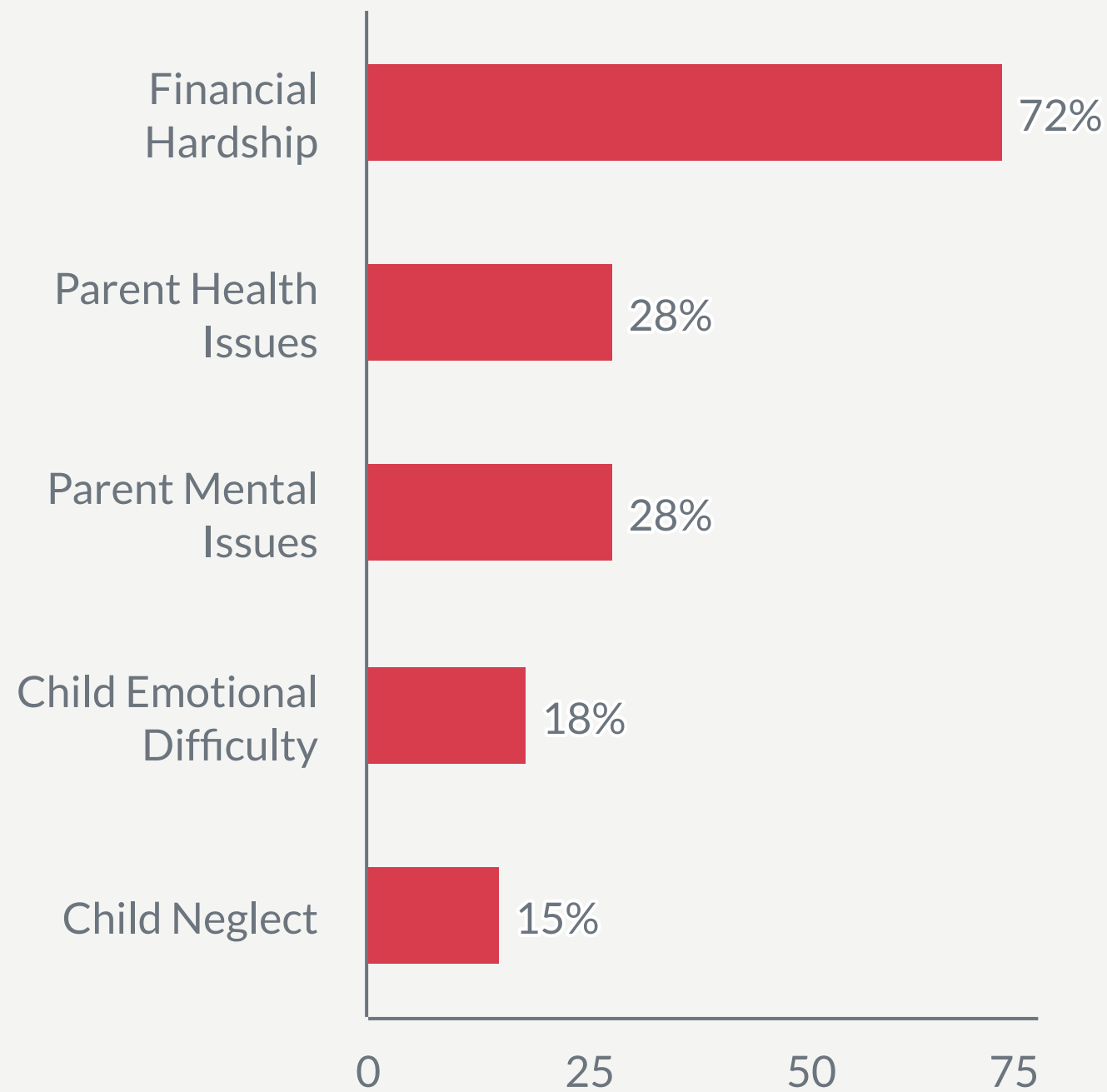
## Interventions around Psychosocial Needs



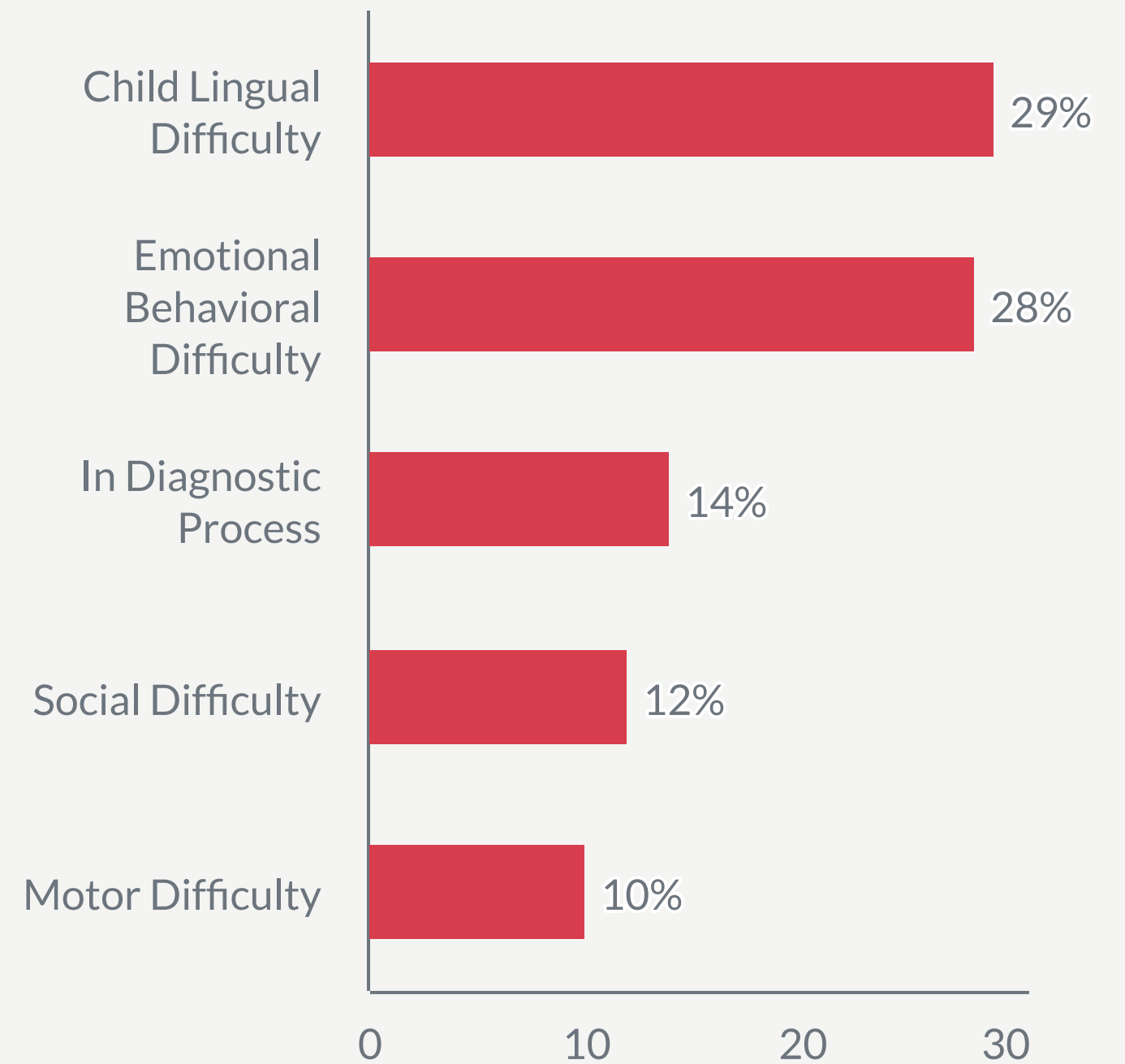
Families' livelihood difficulties significantly reduce educational and emotional interventions for the child



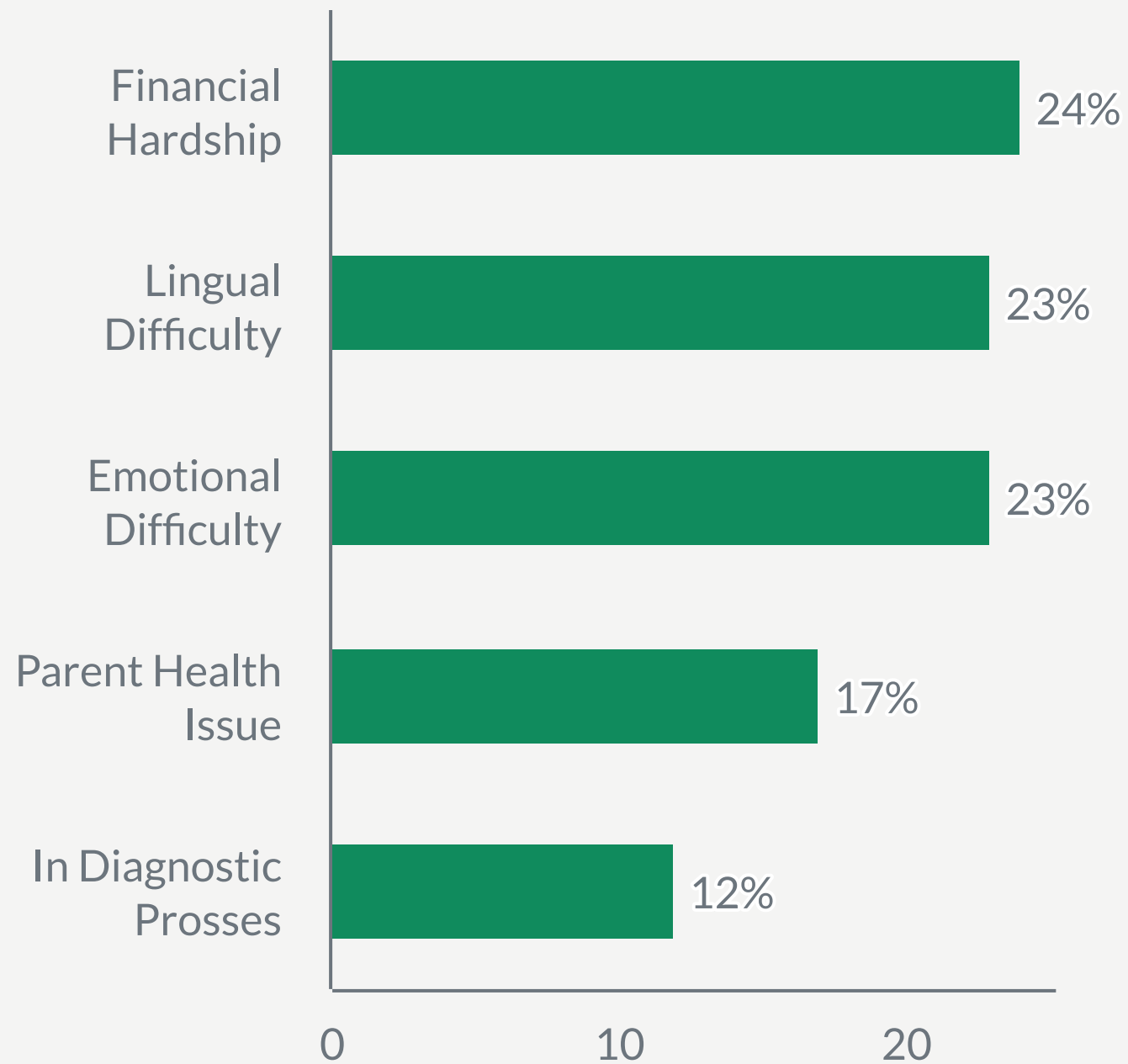
Major Interventions in Families with Livelihood Difficulties



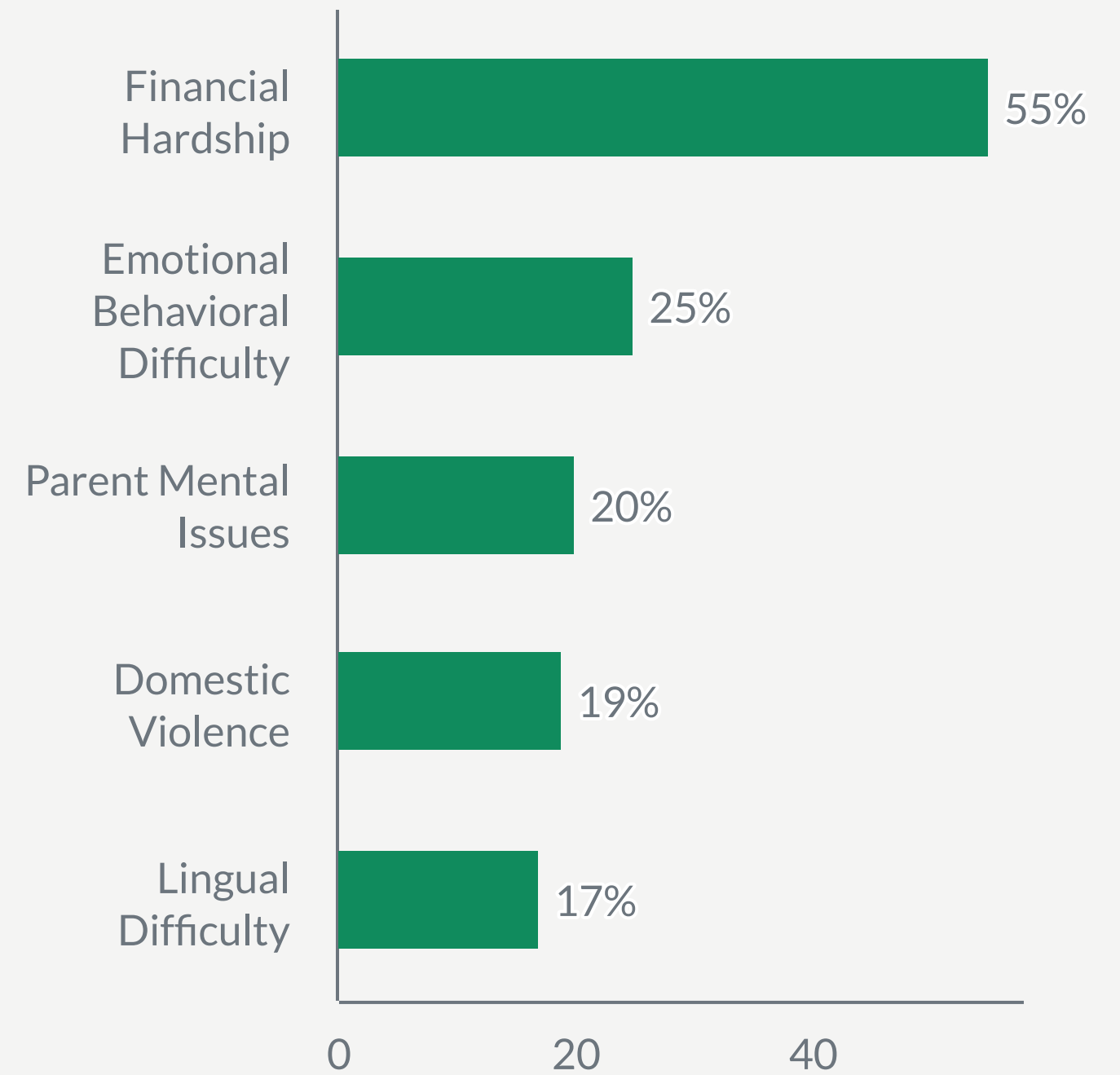
Major Interventions in Families Where Both Parents Work



## Major Interventions in Families with Two Parents



## Major Interventions in Single-Parent Families



39% of single mothers are in mental distress



25% Of the families in need of intervention are single



Single parent families are twice as much in need for financial assistance

# Our Gratitudes

קרן משפחת רקנאטי

קרן  
משפחת  
פרנהאוט

Frieze Family Foundation

The Shapiro  
Foundation

 DIE STERNSINGER  
KINDERMISSIONSWERK



BADER  
PHILANTHROPIES, INC.



The Boston  
Foundation tBf



To the wonderful partners,  
volunteers and supporters  
who accompany our work  
and contribute to the  
success of hundreds of  
Unitaf children

# Thank You

Our work was not  
possible without you