

Whole Person Care Program Successfully Navigated Around COVID-19 Challenges in 2020

California's **Whole Person Care (WPC) Program** Pilots were forced to change their approach to care coordination because of the COVID-19 lockdown that started in March 2020. However, pilots were able to keep delivery of primary, specialty, and other health services to WPC enrollees from being reduced, in part due to enrollees' access to telehealth visits with health providers.

How COVID-19 restrictions affected WPC Pilots' ability to deliver services and WPC Pilot's response



80% (20 of 25) pilots **limited** in-person services

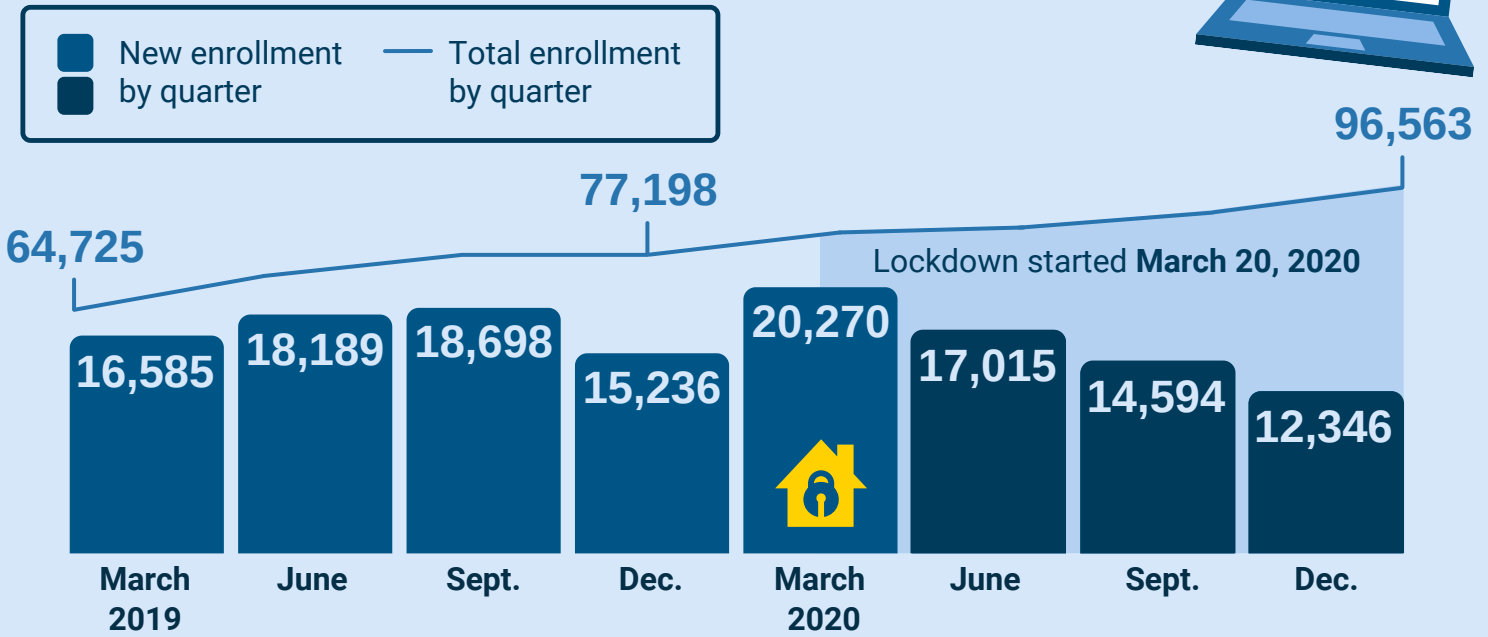
68% (17 of 25) were **constrained** by hiring freezes, safety concerns, and other reasons

68% (17 of 25) partnered with short-term housing programs to better **identify** and **engage** eligible enrollees in WPC services



Enrollment in WPC during pandemic

Overall enrollment increased from 64,725 in March 2019 to more than 96,000 by December 2020. **New enrollment grew more slowly during the pandemic.**



Which WPC enrollees had a reported COVID-19 diagnosis? (March–December 2020)



4.1% of all WPC enrollees

42% used **primary care services** for COVID-19 related services

33% used **emergency department services** for COVID-19 related services

WPC enrollees with a COVID-19 diagnosis compared to **WPC enrollees without a diagnosis** were more often:



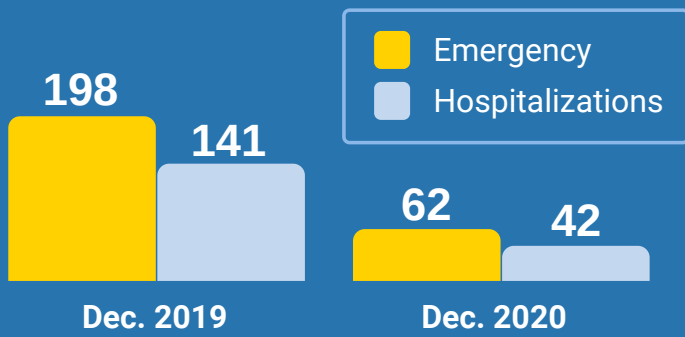
Latinx (42% vs. 26%)

Ages 50–64 (35% vs. 31%)

Women (47% vs. 44%)

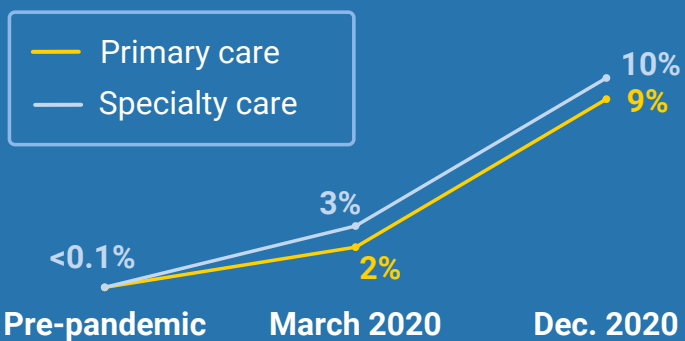
Health care service utilization during the COVID-19 pandemic

Emergency and hospital visits **declined** and **remained low** throughout 2020.



*Rates are reported as services per 1,000 Medi-Cal member-months

Health services delivered to WPC enrollees by telehealth **increased significantly.**



IMPLICATIONS:

- The COVID-19 pandemic **altered** the ability of pilots to provide WPC services.
- Challenges were mitigated by partnerships with **community-based organizations** and **data-sharing capabilities**.
- Increased use of telehealth**, supported by reimbursement allowed under emergency Medicaid waivers, helped to **limit** the impact of the pandemic on primary and specialty care services.
- Maintaining** the WPC infrastructure and delivery of telehealth under Medi-Cal are essential for population health management.



Source: UCLA analyses of Medi-Cal enrollment and claims data from March 2020 to December 2020

Read the policy brief: <https://ucla.in/3Farvyh>