

What does community health need to support Advance Care Planning conversations?

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Background

Changing public health policy has seen a shift towards person directed approaches which empower individuals to make choices about their healthcare.

Community health settings are well placed to have person-centred conversations. Clients often see multiple service providers enabling rapport building and care planning conversations over multiple visits.

Community health values delivering person-centred care which supports people to participate in their healthcare decisions.

Description

Two metropolitan community health services were involved in a 12 month quality improvement project to embed Advance Care Planning into usual practice.

The work was part of a Collaborative project funded through the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services.

Pre-project survey data was collected and project plans were developed to support work. Quarterly reports were produced to highlight the work completed and identify the enablers and barriers.

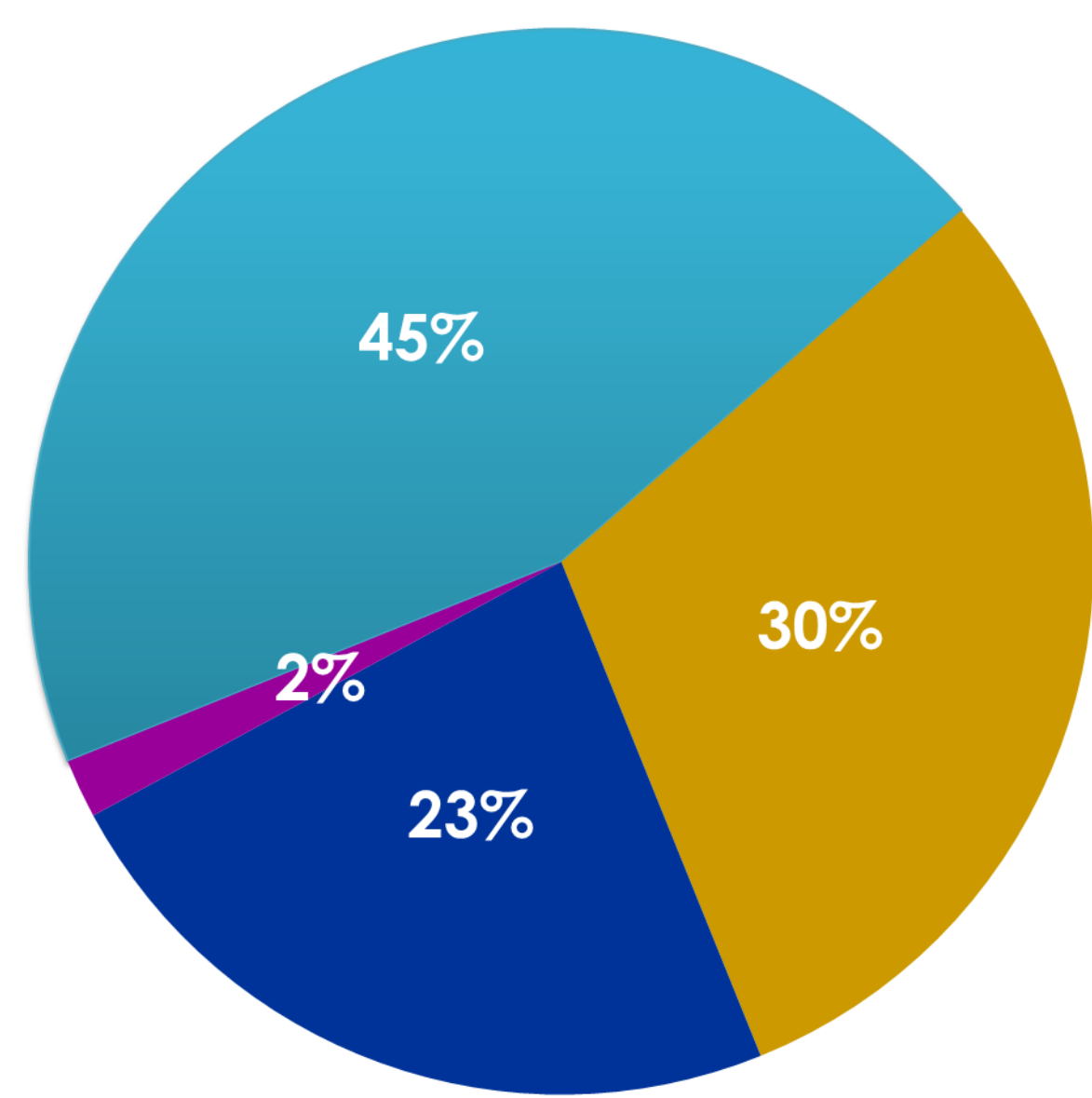
Results

Results gathered in a pre-project survey indicated that over 70% of staff were interested in learning more about ACP (Figure 1) and a large majority had heard of ACP before (Figure 2). Several did not see its relevance to their role (Figure 3), and a large percentage were not aware of a policy or procedure document (Figure 4).

Results show data collected from pre-project surveys. Figures 1, 2 & 4 report results from two community health services and Figure 3 reports results from one community health service.

Figure 1. How interested are you in learning more about ACP?

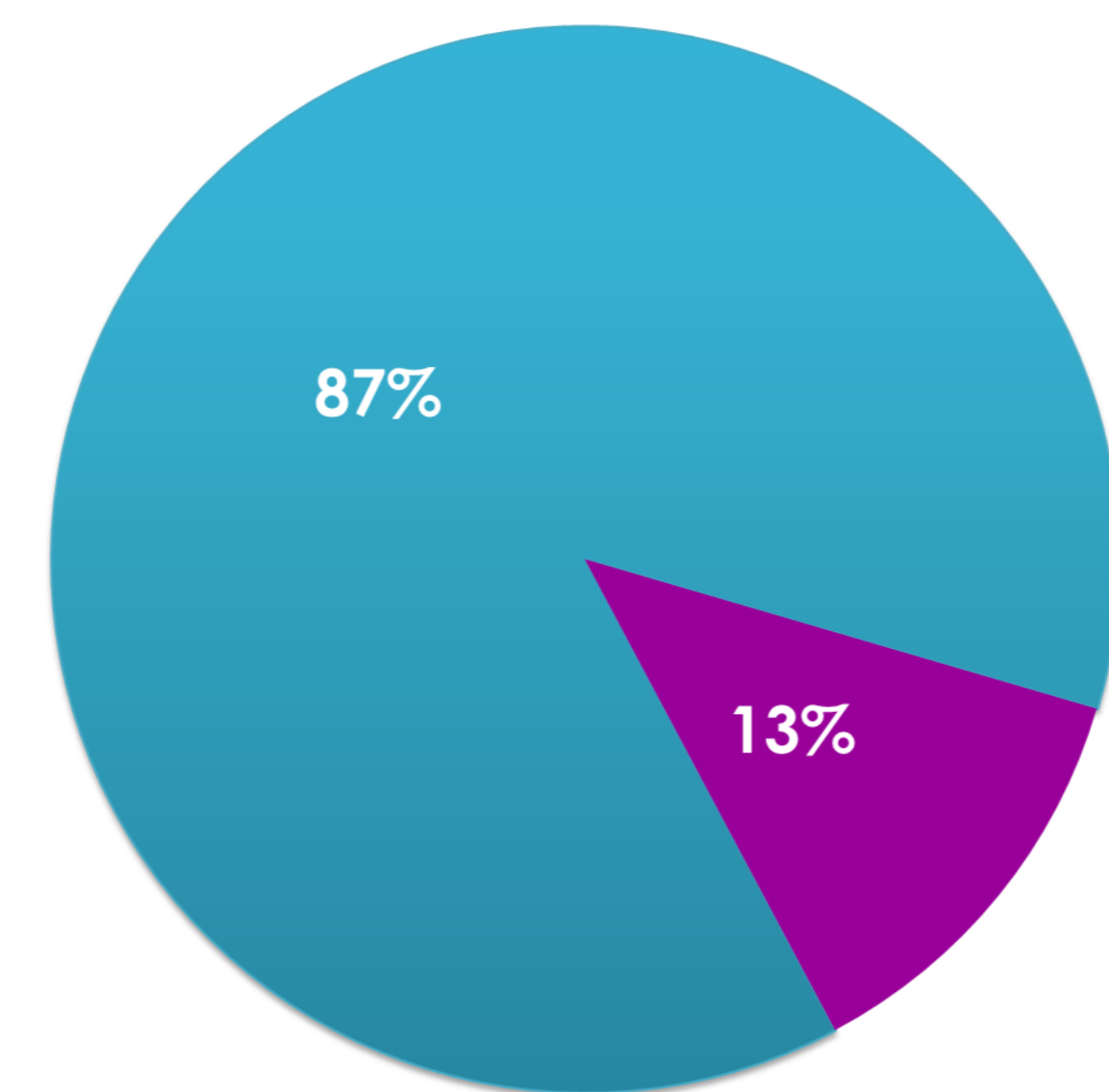
Very interested Mildly interested
Neither interested nor disinterested Not at all interested



n=56

Figure 2. Prior to this project, had you heard the terms Advance Care Planning (ACP) or Advance Care Directive?

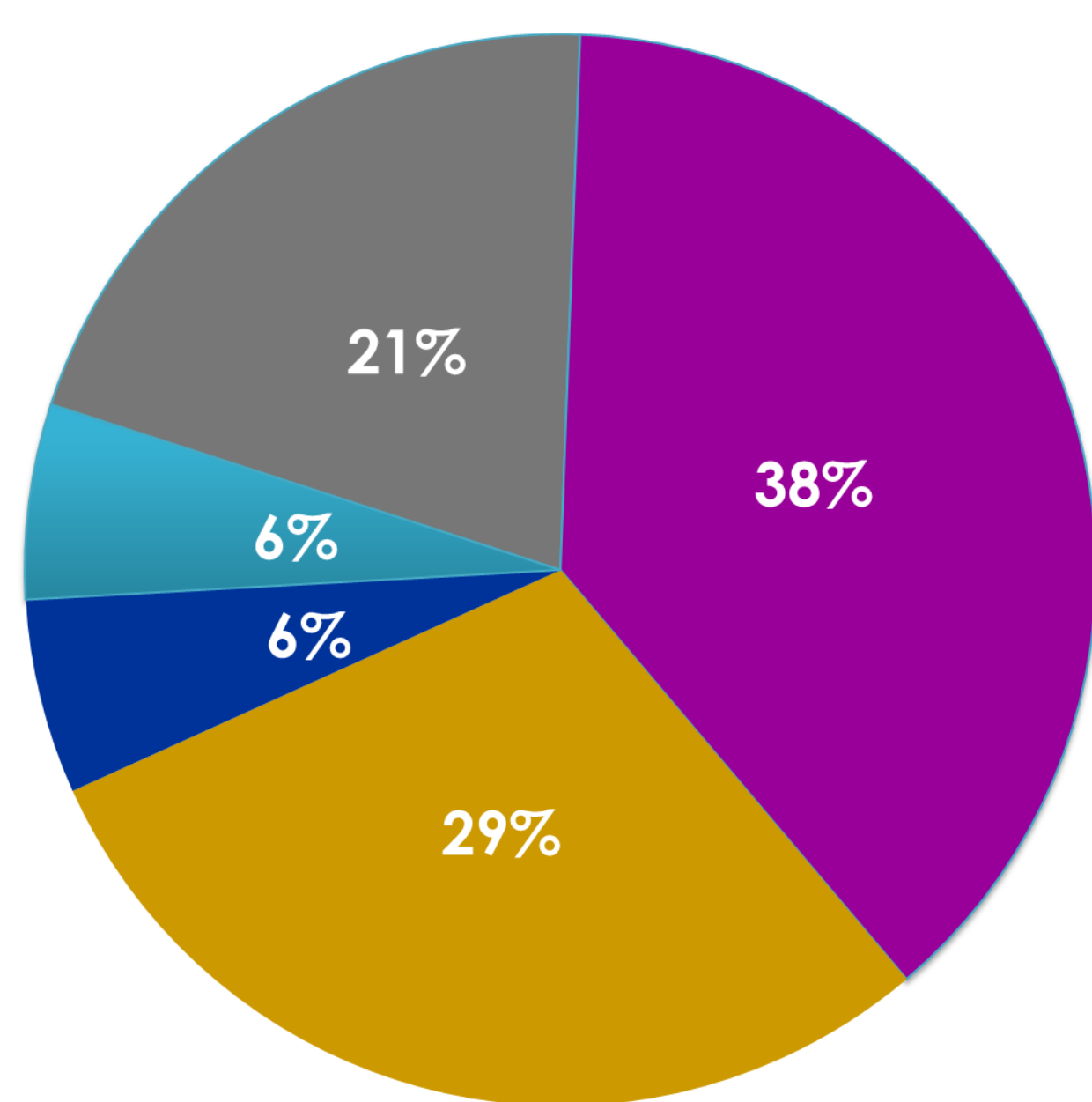
Yes No



n=63

Figure 3. How strongly do you agree with the following statement about ACP in your organisation: "I have no role in ACP"

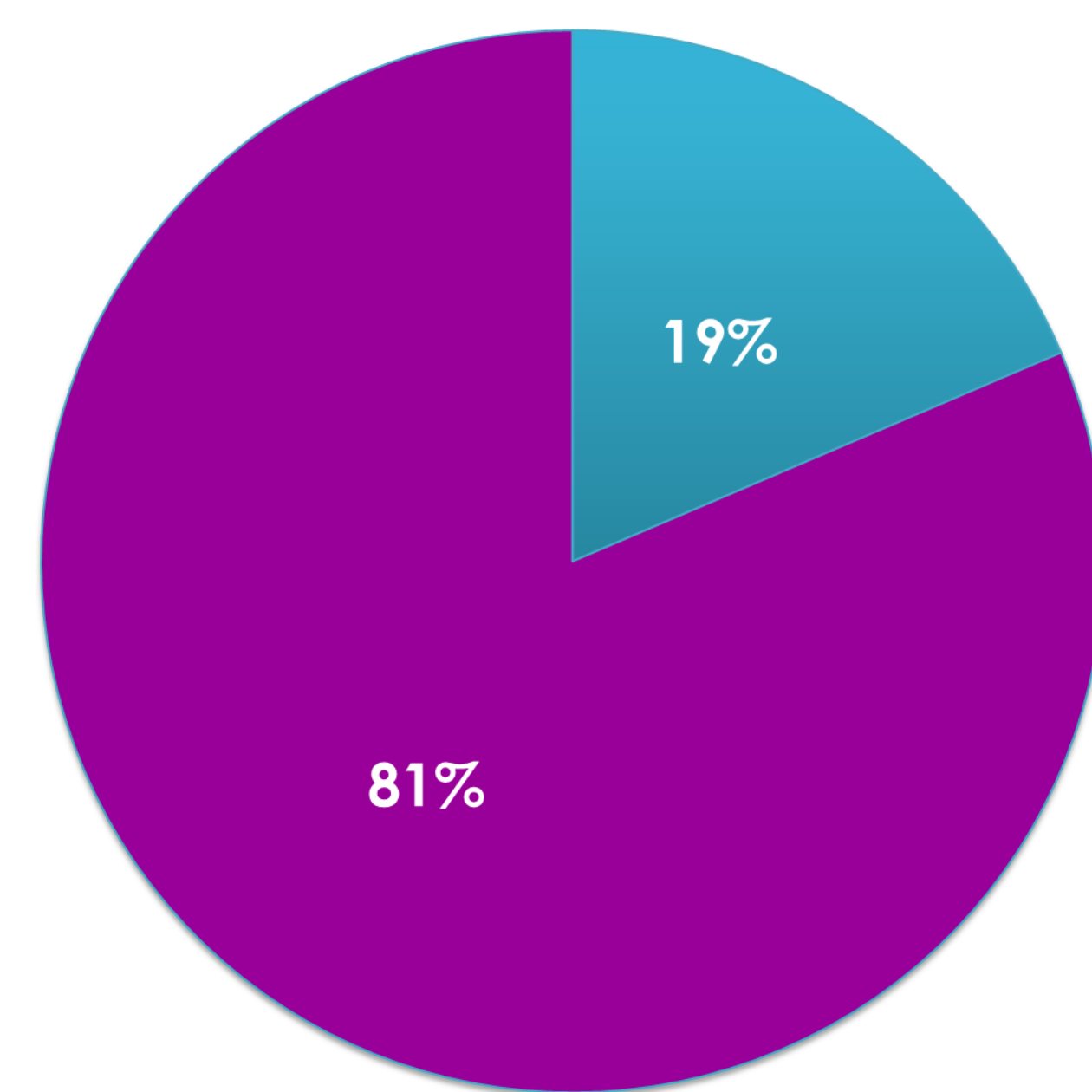
Strongly disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly agree



n=34

Figure 4. Are you aware of written ACP policies or guidelines in your organisation?

Yes No



n=70

Policy and procedure development were seen as integral to successful implementation of ACP including defining role responsibilities of staff to support ACP conversations. One community health service developed a whole-of-organisation ACP policy and procedure as part of their quality improvement approach.

The policy and procedure acknowledges that not all clients are ready to discuss ACP at an initial visit, however the benefit of having multiple service providers who know and have built rapport with clients means that ACP conversations can occur during any appointment with any service provider.

The document outlines staff roles and responsibilities relating to different aspects of the ACP process. As education is integral to ensuring staff are confident to have ACP conversations, the policy also documents that all staff be offered and engage in training to suit their level of involvement in ACP.

Next Steps

Community health is continuing to support consumers and their substitute decision makers to undertake ACP by encouraging conversations.

The policy and procedure document was launched towards the end of the project and impact evaluation is in progress.

Over the next 12 months, the focus will be on disseminating the policy and procedure across relevant areas of community health so all clients have the opportunity to discuss ACP.

