

COVID-19

Best Practices

Regional OTDA Meeting
November 12, 2020
Sheila Kilpatrick
Vice President of Operations
RUPCO, Inc

Agenda

- Who Is RUPCO, Inc?
- Resident Services stories
- What We Learned & Moving Forward
- Client Surveys



RUPCO Inc.



*Strengthening Homes,
Communities
and Lives*

► **Mission**

To create homes, support people and improve communities.

► **Vision**

Our vision is for strong, vibrant and diverse communities with opportunity and a home for everyone.

Our Impact

We have an unparalleled commitment, both as an organization and as individuals, to creating quality, affordable housing and making it accessible to everyone. By expanding access to homes, we help individuals, families and communities create the stability they need to thrive.

Resident Services at RUPCO

Program Services

Be it helping the elderly “age in place” or assisting a single parent lift the family out of poverty, RUPCO continues to expand its reach into supportive services for seniors, the disabled, and working families.

When it all began back in March...

- ▶ Case Managers are now back in the office however they did transition to work from home for several months when COVID first shut the world down.
- ▶ At the beginning, checking up on our clients was done 100% virtually. Our Case Managers knew their clients very well and provided the appropriate level of follow up based on the needs of the individual. Some needed a daily check-in and some required a weekly “hello”.
- ▶ Some had access to internet for zoom meetings and many did not (especially the seniors).
- ▶ The focus of these check-ins were primarily to follow up on health and wellness needs.
- ▶ Virtual appointments were scheduled when possible and follow up that medications were being taken was a priority.

Creative

[krē'ādiv]

synonyms:

inventive · imaginative · innovative · innovatory · innovational ·
experimental · original · artistic · expressive · inspired · visionary ·
productive · prolific · fertile · talented · gifted · resourceful · quick-witted ·
ingenious · clever · smart · unconventional · unorthodox · unusual · out of
the ordinary · blue-sky · genius

NOUN

creative (noun)

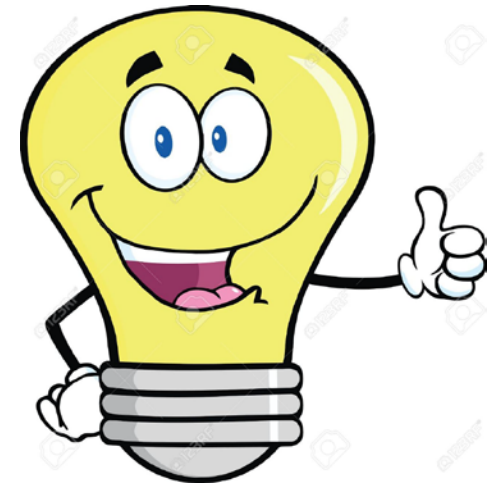
a person who is creative, typically in a professional context

Being creative has become a way of life

Staff continue to help clients schedule virtual appointments or in-person appointments depending on their situation.

In our senior properties, Case Managers bring laptops to the clients apartment for virtual appointments especially for those who are most vulnerable and should remain quarantined.

For those able to attend in-person appointments, on the day of the scheduled appointment, Case Managers meet the client in the lobby to be sure that they have the correct PPE and are following the correct safety protocols to make the trip to the doctor's office safely.



Floor Monitor Program:

Soon after COVID began we implemented a Floor Monitoring Program especially in our apartments that have a vulnerable population such as seniors and disabled.

This program is similar to a traditional *Neighborhood Watch Program* however instead of a keeping an eye on a whole neighborhood, these selected Floor Monitors become responsible for checking on the neighbors living on their floor.

They check in regularly, looking for people not following safety protocols (and report back to the Case Manager to address), look for anything out of the ordinary, become a spokesperson to make suggestions for increased tenant health & safety, and contact staff to conduct an official wellness check in the event that a neighbor has not been seen in the prior 48 hours.

The Floor Monitor is NOT responsible for correcting neighbors and do not put themselves in a position of authority. They are simply the eyes and ears of staff. This program proved to be extremely helpful when staff was performing their work remotely.



Eye Catching signage

The 8 ½ x 11 pieces of paper taped to the doors or in the elevator have become abundant and frequently overlooked by tenants.

We needed to get this important message to our residents every time they entered or exited the building. These signs are vertical and measure 7 feet tall and 2 ½ feet wide.

The message is simple but the signs are highly visible and remind tenants to practice the safety protocols necessary to keep the apartment community safe.



Housing Needs:

Leasing Up during COVID

Energy Square – Opened July 2020



The innovative building design includes solar and geothermal technology that achieved ‘Net-Zero for Living.’”

Commercial Tenants on the ground floor

- Center for Creative Education (CCE), whose mission is to enrich the social and cultural awareness of youth through arts, wellness and education.
- DRAW, an intergenerational art education project by Kingston Midtown Arts District
- Seasoned Delicious Cafe, who are bringing Caribbean flavor to Kingston with their cafe & spice shop

Energy Square

57 NEW mixed-income-apartments that are now home to 79 people!

ESSHI FUNDING:

- 7 apartments set aside for homeless Young Adults ages 18 to 25
- Funding through a COVID Community Grant enabled us to purchase essentials for the apartments that our new ESSHI tenants desperately needed.



Resident Services: HOPWA

Housing Opportunities for Persons With Aids

- 9 individuals were added onto the HOPWA program during the height of the pandemic
- For a few... we physically met in the parking lot(s) of the property management company. We signed leases on the hood of the car, while practicing social distancing
- Out of the 9 new participants, 6 were HUD homeless.



Resident Services: HOPWA

- Leasing up the new participants was very difficult considering most leasing agents, property managers and landlords were working from home.
- Everything had to be completed through phone calls and emails.
- Many hours were spent helping the new participants understand how the program works and how to find an affordable unit. We used a lot of visual information to help clients retain information. We did this with text messages, emails, zoom calls and followed up by phone calls to review the information.

Resident Services: HOPWA Battling Addiction in COVID

When face to face contact got limited in the height of COVID; calling, texting, emailing or holding a zoom meeting to reach our clients and hearing how they looked or sounded was crucial.

This was vital as many of our clients struggle with sobriety and are very accustomed to coming into the office or meeting in person for support.

Our HOPWA Case Managers helped our clients set up virtual doctor appointments and made it possible for them to remain connected to their crucial medical care.

Our unrelenting virtual meetings and follow up phone calls helped to prevent our clients from falling victim to the dangers of isolation including overdosing and stopping medical treatment.

The background features a light green gradient with abstract, overlapping geometric shapes in various shades of green on the right side, creating a modern, layered effect.

New Routines for New Times...

Welcoming Home New Tenants – NYSSHP

New York State Supportive Housing Program

NYSSHP had 3 move-ins during COVID.

Staff got creative with meeting new tenants outside on the sidewalk or on a picnic table for their initial appointments.

Staff made notes of what needed to get done in order for the client to settle in and feel at home. Once a plan was set in place, staff went back to the office to follow through with tasks and make the magic happen.

Traditional donations have been very hard to come by during the pandemic. Creative ideas to help our new tenants get the furniture and other supplies needed was necessary. Outreach to local businesses & community members through social media proved to be successful.



Resident Services:

NYSSHP New Morning Routines

We reached out to our tenants often. A great deal of our clients are singles. They were not only afraid of the virus but had a difficult time with the isolation. Allowing them the ability to call/text/email whenever they felt they needed someone to talk to, helped them during this time. Our staff continues to have their morning texts with the most vulnerable tenants even though most people in the building are becoming more comfortable with venturing out of their home these days.

THANK YOU TO OUR COMMUNITY:

- Received food donations and made food bags and hand delivered (several times over the first 3 months of the pandemic)
- Passed out “We miss you” bags- masks, coffee, creamers, donuts in honor of weekly coffee nights that were put on hold because of COVID
- Staff transported multiple clients to doctor appointments and conferenced in by phone for support and guidance from the parking lot.

Out-of-the-Box Case Management

Staff met with a client outside of her home because traditional locations (office, inside the home, coffee shop, etc.) were no longer an option. The client set up camp chairs 6 ft. apart so that a socially distance meeting could take place. Being able to meet with this person was a huge help for her mental health. We were able to focus on her overall health as well as other goals.

During the meeting, we utilized an agency iPad and connected to the client's Wi-Fi to conduct job searches and refresh her resume.

Becoming creative in our approach to execute tasks and hold meetings has made trudging through the pandemic significantly more feasible. This client has now found employment and has made progress toward self-sufficiency.



Advocating Always...



Arnold moved into the Stuyvesant in May 2001. He quickly became a Stuyvesant favorite. Always with a smile and a helping hand towards his neighbors.

You will often find him at home jamming out to his large collection of music.

His health started to go downhill over the last several months. Due to COVID he was not following through with his doctor appointments even when staff intervened with virtual appointments. This led to a number of hospitalizations and stints at the local nursing and rehab center.

Always determined to come home and live independently, staff worked hand in hand with the Managed Long Term Care Case Manager to ensure that he had all services available to him including PT, OT, and home health aides. In between the services, staff would assist him with nebulizer treatments & transportation to his weekly mental health appointments.

Advocating Always...

Despite COVID, Staff was granted admission to most medical appointments to assist with verbalizing the needs and issues that Mr. Smith was experiencing. After numerous falls in the apartment, he was admitted to the hospital.

Staff advocated to hospital staff that he needed to go to a facility for more rehab as the plan was to discharge him to home. He has recently been placed at a nursing home for rehab where staff continues to advocate for his needs in the hopes that he will return to his independent living situation in the near future.

Staff routinely visits him and brings items upon request such as clothing, music, and snacks.

Although staff is not allowed inside for the visit due to Covid-19, they are able to talk through the window and enjoy their weekly visits.



End of Life during COVID

It became apparent that one of our long time tenants was experiencing heightened mental health issues and needed hospitalization if there was any chance of him regaining housing stabilization.

Staff worked as a team in order to have a pick-up order placed and our tenant was safely admitted to an Adult Psychiatric Unit. When he returned home, 23 days later, staff worked hand in hand with a local clinic for psychiatric care and therapy.

Staff would walk with him to and from appointments, help with obtaining medications, and created guidelines to help him remember how to take them. He checked in with staff on a daily basis. The isolation of COVID caused further complications with mental health.

His mental health providers were contacted and the outcome was to increase appointments. Sadly, the frequent appointments, coupled with new dosages of medication, and support from staff did not stabilize him. After 6 months of struggles, he suffered multiple heart attacks and passed away.

Staff plans to hold a memorial so that the apartment community that he lived can honor him when the Covid19 restrictions are lifted.

Meeting Daily Tenant Needs



Sleep Tight...

- ▶ We helped one client get a new bed delivered after her bed broke and she had nowhere to sleep. Our Case Manager “masked up” and went to the store and tried the beds out looking for one that the client could afford.
- ▶ We organized to get the bed paid for entirely by an Emergency Assistance Funding source.

Man's Best Friend

- ▶ We dropped off dog food and treats to one of the participants who was having difficulty with leaving the house. We eventually were able to assist the client with signing up for pet food delivery on a regular basis.





Resident Services helps with food insecurities

Many of our program participants continue to be in need of food. Many were afraid to go to the store, in addition to many food pantries being low on donations. Our Case Manager called each one of our clients HOPWA clients to evaluate what their needs were. She then assisted with applications for food delivery programs that were available in the area where they live.

One of our clients was desperate for toilet paper! Additionally, his food supply was low. He was helped immediately and set up for a regular food delivery program. In the mean time, the Case Manager went to his house and brought him the much needed – hard to find toilet paper.

She spent a few hours sitting on his porch talking with him through the window to help with the isolation he was feeling.



Navigating obstacles during COVID

Building Bridges: Landlords

STEHP (Solutions to End Homelessness Program) has been able to successfully build rapport and trust with the landlord community, even during the difficulties of the pandemic.

Regardless of the restrictions virtual communication entails, STEHP has found success by adapting and manipulating processes to reflect today's reality. This includes virtual inspections, paperwork transfer and communication through email, and conference calling for better coordination. In addition, the Housing Navigator's ability to build trusting relationships with landlords has proved beneficial by way of rent negotiations.

Between client discussions with landlords and heartfelt, compassionate discussions between the Housing Navigator and landlords, rental prices have been reduced exclusively for STEHP clients in order to meet their affordability.





COVID Can't Stop Birthdays!

One of our tenants was celebrating a milestone birthday during the peak of COVID. Staff worked to organize a socially distanced happy birthday celebration.

Staff encouraged neighbors to stand in their doorways (while masked) to sing happy birthday to John. With everyone safe and standing 6 feet apart, we were able to surprise John with balloons and a happy birthday song, which made his day!

New Wheels, New Job

Charlie has been without a vehicle since becoming homeless several months ago. Recently he was able to secure housing through our STEHP Program.

Purchasing a vehicle during the pandemic was extremely difficult. Avoiding public transportation due to the unknowns surrounding COVID was important to him. Our Case Manager assisted Charlie by driving him (safely of course!) to view a vehicle and eventually making a purchase.

After several trips to view the car, get necessary repairs, complete the paperwork, and obtaining the funds, Charlie now has a vehicle and has been able to obtain permanent employment.



What We've Learned...

COVID Resident Services Client Survey

Summary of our survey:

Please rate the level of service you have received by phone and virtual communications? **MORE CONVENIENT**

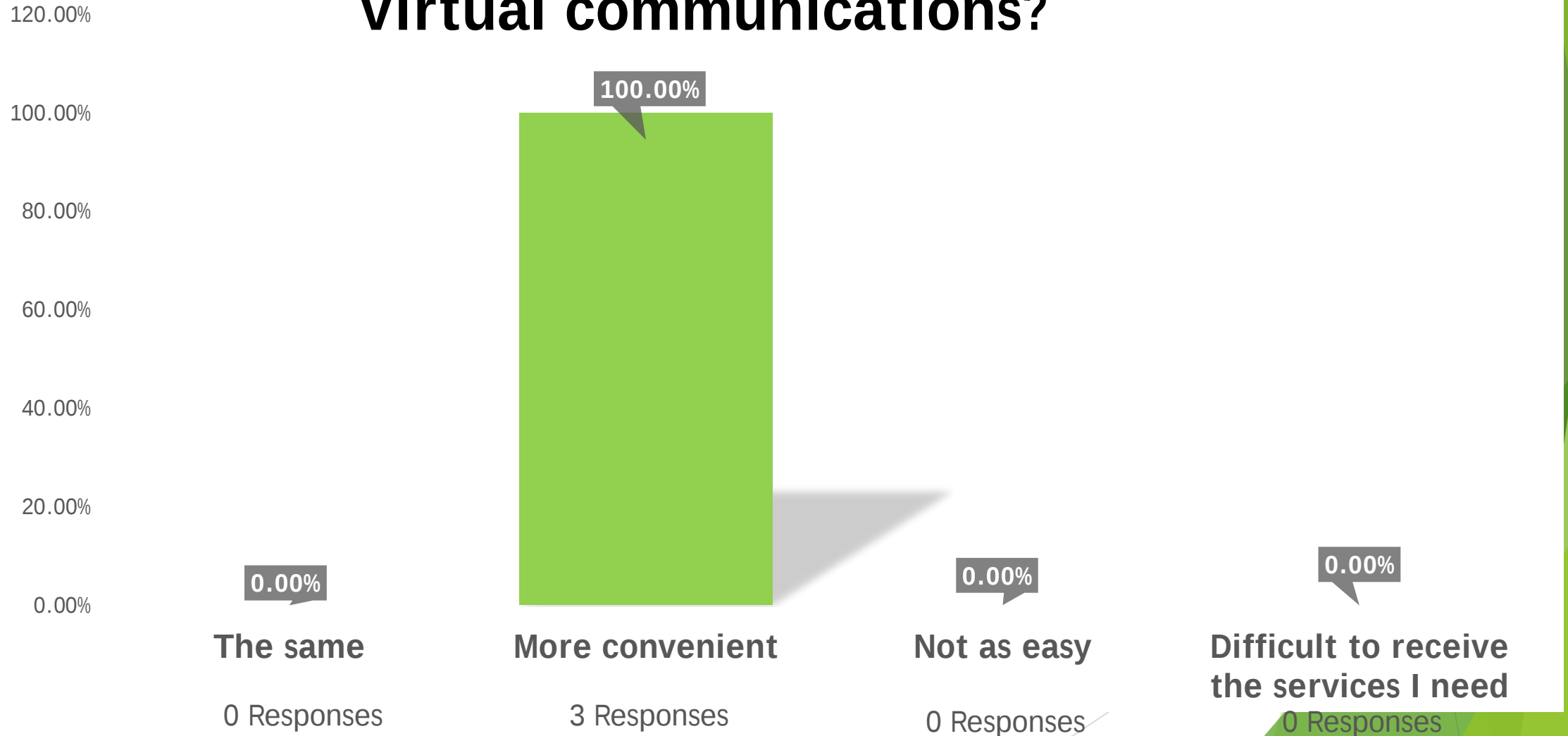
How comfortable to do you feel using technology to access services and staff? **COMFORTABLE**

Has the access to programs and staff been slower or stalled due to office closure? **NO**

Would you feel comfortable meeting in person to receive services while wearing a mask and following social distancing protocols? **YES, I PREFER TO MEET IN PERSON**

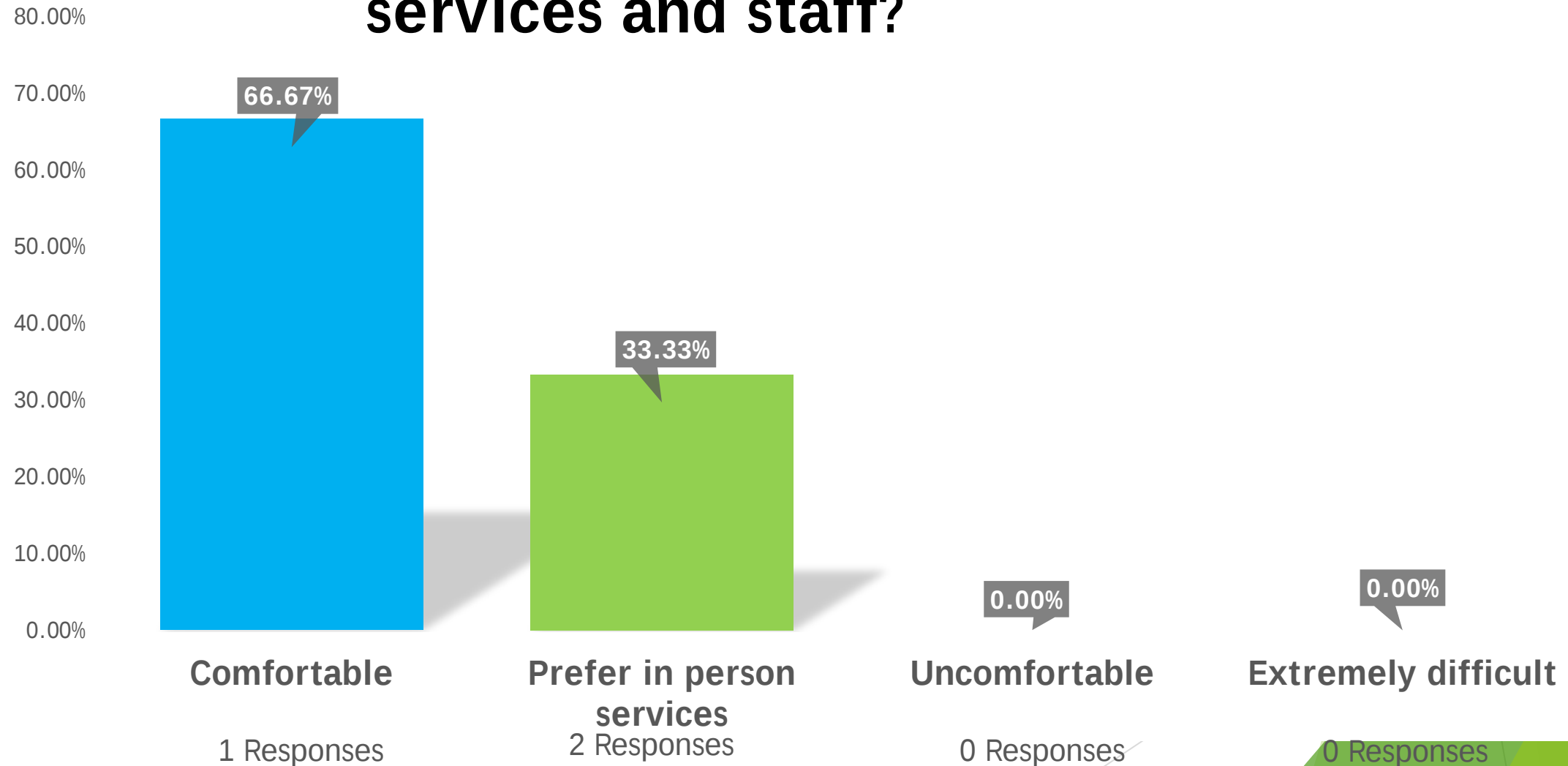
PROGRAM SERVICES

Please rate the level of service you have received by phone and virtual communications?



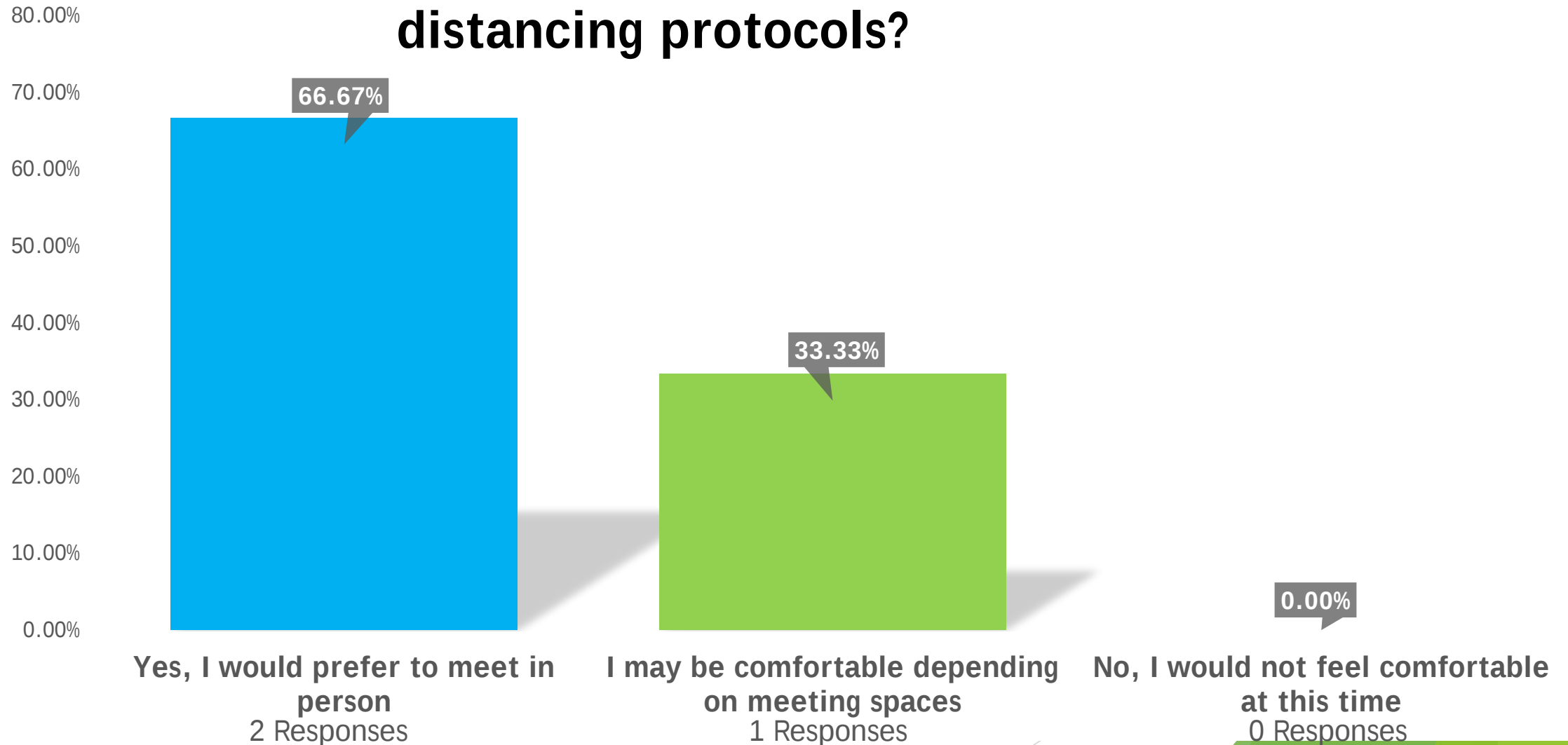
PROGRAM SERVICES

How comfortable to do you feel using technology to access services and staff?



PROGRAM SERVICES

Would you feel comfortable meeting in person to receive services while wearing a mask and following social distancing protocols?



PROGRAM SERVICES

Is there anything else that you would like to tell us about how you feel RUPCO is doing to meet your needs at this time?

- JN and JQ are the best ever. I'd be so lost without them. Right now JQ is my backbone. I'm so grateful and I will give back when I reach my goals again thank you for all you do for me and my children
- My case manager has been very helpful and empathetic. He's a great person. He checks on me regularly.
- The pandemic has been very hard. I appreciate the assistance I have received from my case manager to help with virtual doctors appointments, picking up medications and just plain caring about me!

Questions?

