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While COVID-19 was the focus of the year 2020, the pandemic is not over and continues to impact healthcare services, both for clients and staff.

When the pandemic began last spring, we had to walk the fine line of changing our services to match the pandemic needs and maintaining our ability to provide all the services we did before. We had to figure out, on the fly each day of the week, what mask to wear, what eye protection to wear, how close we could be to each other, whether we could hug or shake hands with the kids we worked with, how to divide group resources for individual use, and use our trial and error approach to create a policy across our other locations, despite the fact our policy would change as more data and information became available to the public. In the first few months of the pandemic, I was required to wear at least 5 different types of masks before we finalized our policy.

Questions would be asked each day that no one had answers to because we hadn't experienced anything like this before. Each day's stress was compounded by social isolation and social distancing, physical stress as smaller spaces meant more bruises from aggressive clients and learning the physical limits of working and wearing a mask all day, and mental exhaustion when we picked up extra work as our staffing stretched thin. In spite of these factors, we knowingly came back to work as most of the world paused, because our clients needed our services in person. However, I wondered who would we see again or who we had unknowingly seen for the last time before we shut down. I had to discover how we would go from being a cohesive group of staff and clients, an unlikely family of 14 in a room, to a single child and staff only truly interacting with each other for the whole 8 hour day. Any group time was spaced six feet apart and help was a button, rather than an arm's reach away. Just as we adjusted to the "new normal" as staff, we had to teach these changes to our clients too.

Even now, as restriction have lessened with vaccinations, daily wellness screening exclusions keep staff and clients apart in order to keep everyone as healthy and safe as possible. The continuity that we continue to promote, the daily repetition our clients need, is still being tested each day. Each time a client is out, we face the struggle of backtracking once they return to our program, losing precious time as we help to prepare them for school. Even as families continue to commit to providing the best they can for their children express their gratitude daily, we as staff face burnout, staff shortages, and often physical and social isolation as we limited our exposure to others to protect those we work with from facing a disease they cannot be vaccinated from and would be dangerous to their immunocompromised bodies.

The steps gained from vaccinations are being lost to new mutations and increased cases. I continue to show up to work because the healthcare need has not stopped once, only grown during the past year. I strain my mental, emotional, and social wellbeing because the children I

saw as the world shut down didn't suddenly lose their diagnosis and their families didn't suddenly gain resources to help them as they dealt with their own personal pandemic changes. While COVID-19 may have slowed down the world for some, our lives in healthcare remain as busy as ever as those we serve keep living and needing our help through this pandemic.