

# The Relationship and Value of Covering Occupational Therapy in Home and



## Community-Based Services (HCBS) Waivers

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### Introduction

- Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) waivers are a state-based Medicaid program providing individuals with chronic or disabling conditions access to long-term care services & support
  - Approved & authorized under section 1915(c) of Social Security Act in 1981<sup>1</sup>
  - Populations most often seen under-waivers are older adults & individuals with: Intellectual/developmental disabilities (I/DD), brain/spinal cord injuries, behavioral health diagnoses, physical disabilities
  - In 2019, HCBS 1915(c) waivers accounted for 50.7% of total Long-Term Services & Supports (LTSS) within home & community-based settings & 30% of overall total LTSS spending<sup>2</sup>
  - In 2020, >1.9 million people received care under Section 1915(c) waivers across 47 states through 257 active waiver programs<sup>1,3</sup>
- HCBS waivers allow States to bypass certain Medicaid program requirements, creating an opportunity to diminish service gaps & permit access to services for more individuals who may not have been deemed eligible under Medicaid
  - Waivers promote care in home & community, reducing institutionalized care<sup>4</sup>
  - HCBS waivers allow increased flexibility to States re: waiver program administration including target populations served through HCBS 1915(c) waivers<sup>4</sup>
- Occupational Therapy Practitioners (OTPs) can directly support & offer quality services within these waivers
  - HCBS 1915(c) waivers directly promote meaningful daily community living by focusing on environmental adaptations, caregiver & vocational training, & community integration through IADLs and ADLs<sup>5</sup>
  - With occupational therapy services, healthcare system & individuals experience less acute care costs & hospitalizations, & clients experience better functional outcomes<sup>6</sup>

### Purpose, Aims, Participants, and Methods

**Purpose:** Increase education & knowledge around HCBS waivers for OTPs

**Aims:**

- Improve OTPs knowledge related to 1915(c) HCBS waivers
- Create & provide resources to ↑ OTPs awareness of HCBS 1915(c) waiver benefits
- Gather background information from content experts about current utilization of HCBS waivers across different states

**Participants:**

- IL, KS, & MA state-selected analysis<sup>7</sup>
- Community stakeholders & content experts
- Focus group participants
- OTP & OT/OTA Student Attendees from State Medicaid Inspire Session

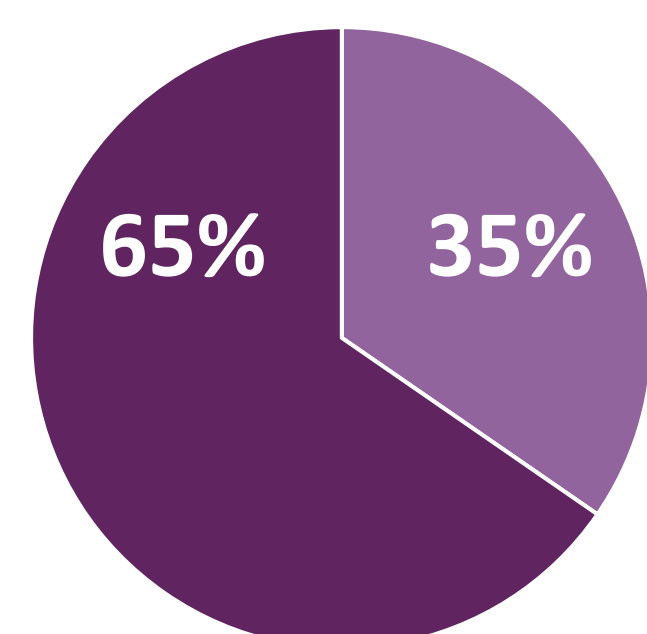
**Methods:**

Semi-structured stakeholder interviews (N=16)

Analysis of state-run HCBS 1915(c) waivers

Focus Group (N=6)

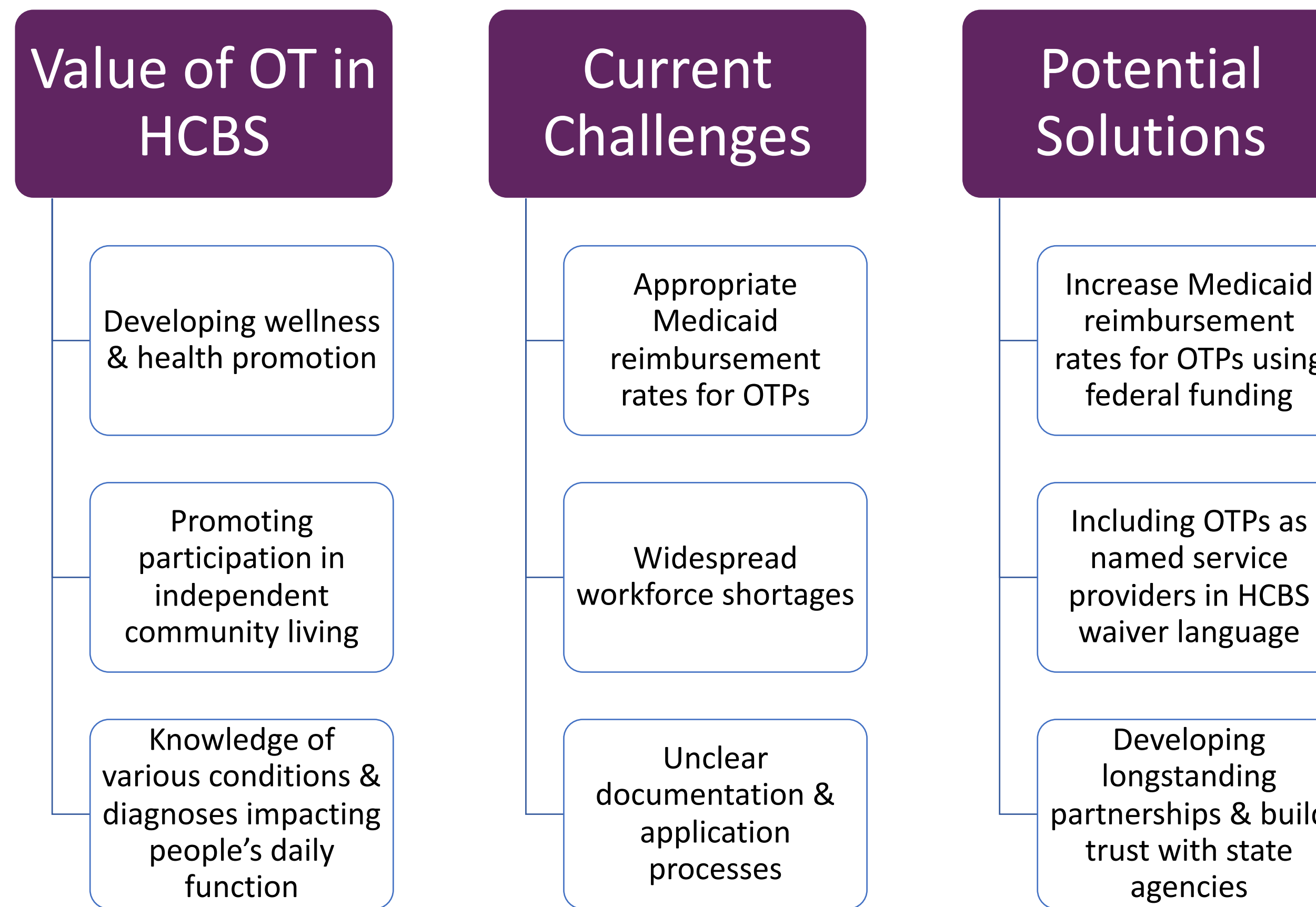
Combined Total 1915(c) Waivers in IL, KS, and MA



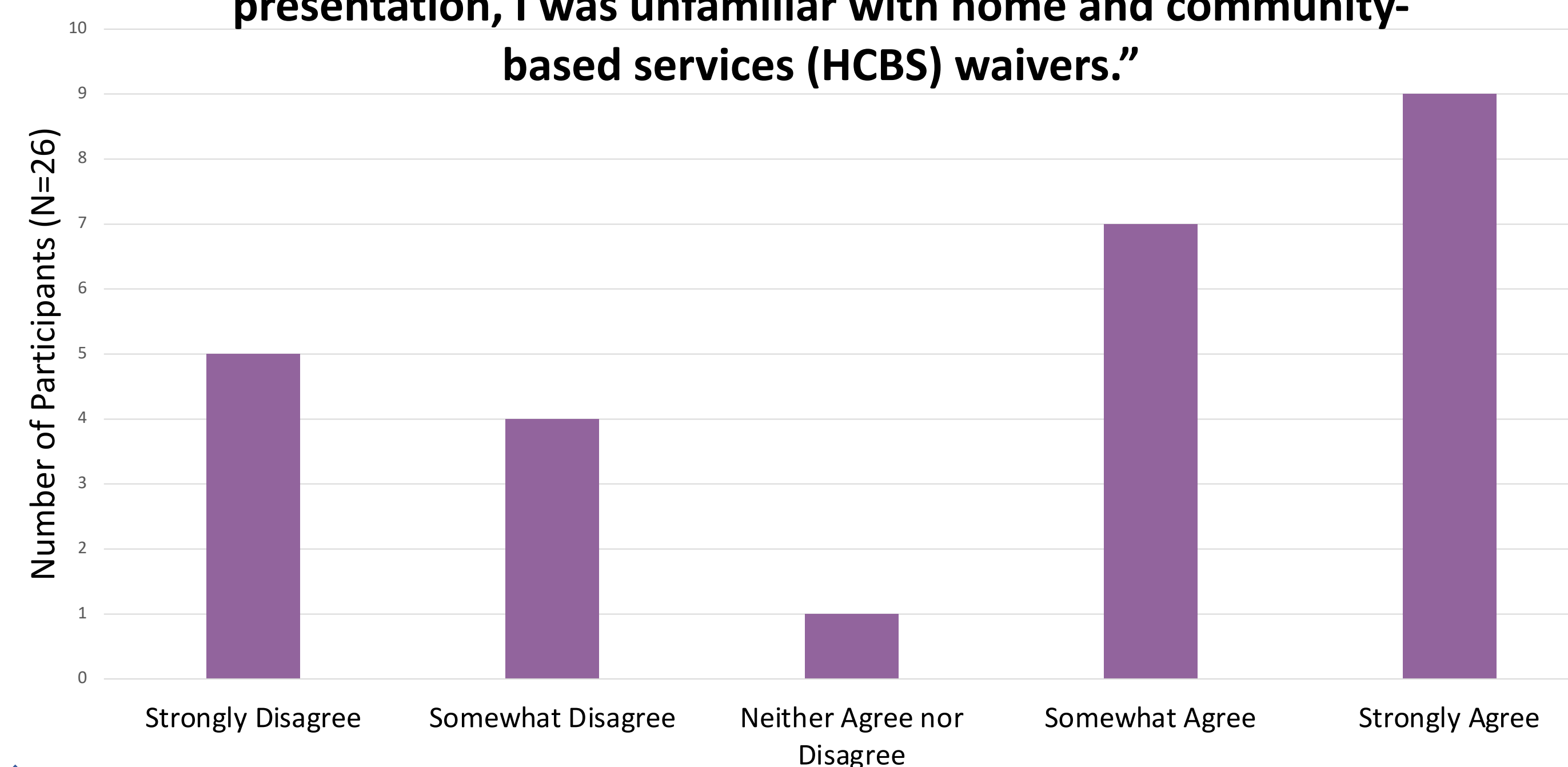
■ Waivers with OT (9 of 26)  
■ Waivers without OT (17 of 26)

### Results

#### Qualitative Thematic Results from Content Expert Interviews (N=16)



#### Response to survey item: "Before this State Medicaid presentation, I was unfamiliar with home and community-based services (HCBS) waivers."

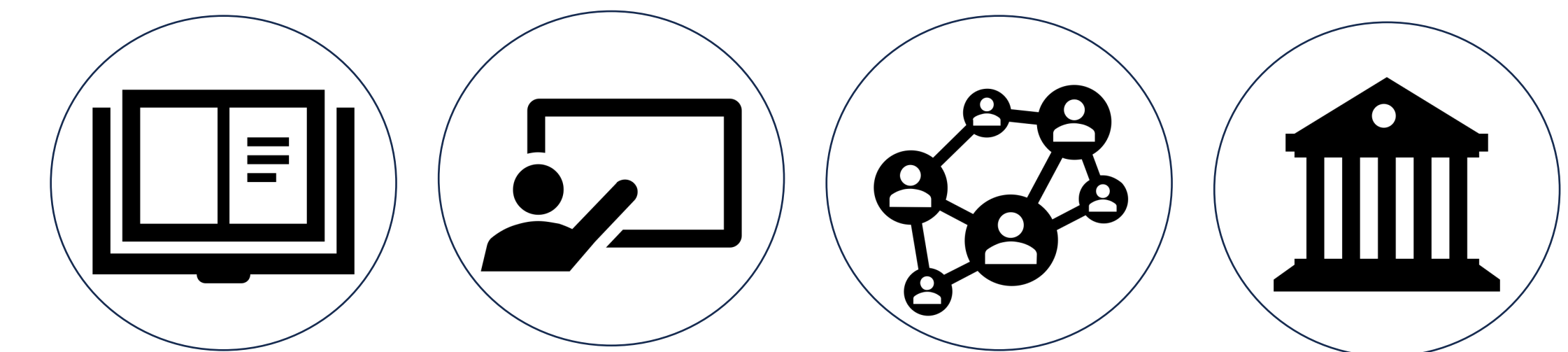


- IL** Illinois OT Association (ILOTA) assembled OT HCBS task force in 2023
  - Medicaid reimbursement rates increased, making HCBS a financially competitive option
- KS** Relationship building with state agencies allowed for OT to be a direct service provider in the only habilitation & rehabilitation HCBS waiver
- MA** OTPs are one of highest utilized service providers in an Adult Residential Waiver (estimated over 350 clients)

### Discussion

- Strong interest demonstrated by AOTA Inspire State Medicaid participants as evidenced by 100% of participants wanting to investigate HCBS waivers further in home state
- Occupational therapy not included in all waivers where could be valuable, & sometimes underutilized in waivers where covered
- HCBS a unique community-based reimbursement method for OTPs to focus on meaningful client participation & engagement in community
- Significant variance between states' reimbursement rates for OTPs [\$36-129 per hour] under current waiver system
  - Low reimbursement rates cause OTPs & organizations to re-evaluate time & procedural effort required in submitting for reimbursement
- Need for increased state & national-level advocacy to educate OTPs on HCBS & opportunity to become service provider under state waiver systems
- Educational materials developed, publicized, & available on AOTA website for members & non-members to gain better understanding of Medicaid waiver reimbursement option
  - Resources are available to members & nonmembers, which allows for sharing advanced knowledge amongst all OTPs in U.S.

### Student Capstone Outcomes



HCBS 1915(c) Educational Resources and Published Articles on AOTA's website | Experience in Presenting at National Conference | Networking Relationships | Advocating for policy on Capitol Hill

### Conclusion

- Opportunities exist to expand OT's role in HCBS
- OTPs can provide vital services to support meaningful engagement for clients within home & community settings
- Occupational therapy within HCBS waiver program promotes community-based lifespan model of care
- Recommendations & proposed next steps**
  - Creation of a Community of Practice through AOTA to support networking & focused discussion for OTPs within HCBS waiver systems
  - Hold webinar for OTPs & students to educate on process of enrolling as Medicaid provider & reimbursement processes
  - Build state agency relationships with state OT associations to address unclear documentation & application processes
  - Develop Fact Sheets to further future advocacy with evidence-based literature on supporting clients in community (OT in employment services, lifespan care for adults with I/DD, etc.)

### Published Deliverables & References

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