

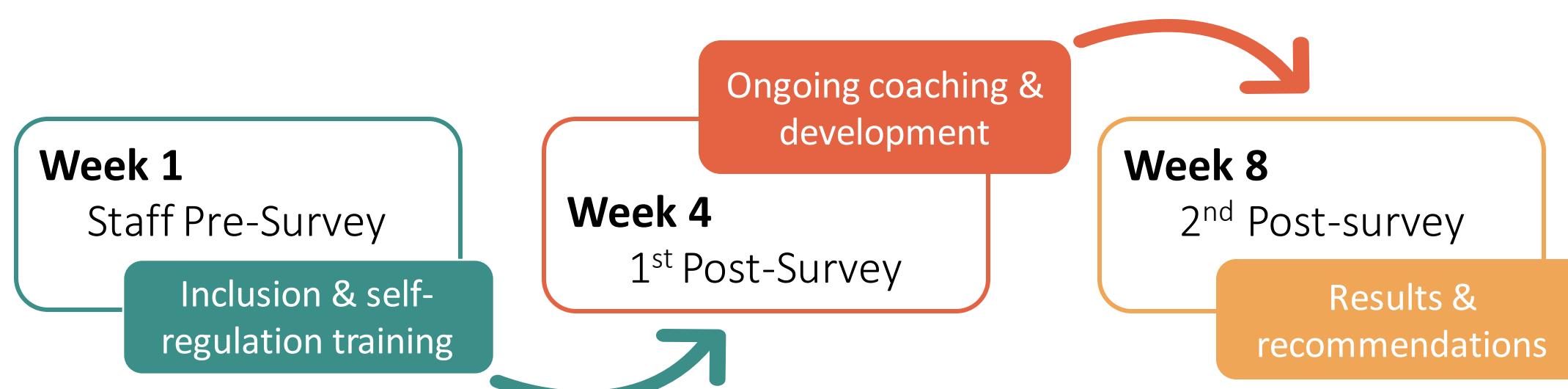
## Background Information

- Summer camp provides opportunities for children to **develop independence, social skills and the ability to self-regulate** by managing their emotional and behavioral responses to the environment<sup>1,2</sup>
- Counselors and staff are crucial to campers' experiences and participation<sup>3</sup>
- **Club Rec**, the summer camp run by the Arlington Recreation Department, **aims to provide safe, fun and inclusive programming** for all campers<sup>4</sup>
- Since 2021, Tufts University Department of Occupational Therapy has worked with Club Rec to support its programming, operations and inclusion practices
  - **2021:** Review of Club Rec's inclusion practices<sup>5,6</sup>
  - **2022:** Club Rec Inclusion Director; Inclusion training for staff<sup>7</sup>
- The 2023 project was developed from recommendations for **additional staff training** around supporting and engaging campers during **downtime and transitions** and **increased collaboration with caregivers** to ensure Club Rec is prepared to support participation of all campers

### 2023 Aims:

1. Train staff on self-regulation practices & introduce techniques to identify & support campers' self-regulatory responses & social-emotional skills
2. Engage campers in self-regulation & social-emotional skill development through programming and activities

## Procedures



Staff surveys gathered data around knowledge of topics related to self-regulation, confidence in supporting camper participation, ability to implement new strategies, and interest in inclusive programming.

Staff	Camp Resources	Caregivers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pre/Post/Post Qualtrics survey</li> <li>• Inclusion &amp; self-regulation training</li> <li>• 1:1 coaching &amp; in-the-moment support</li> <li>• Observation notes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cool Down Zones (CDZ)<sup>8</sup></li> <li>• Downtime &amp; transition supports</li> <li>• Evidence-based activities for self-regulation (i.e. DIY fidgets &amp; calm jars)<sup>8</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Camper registration form prompt on supporting camper participation</li> <li>• Communication between staff and caregivers around camper behavior</li> </ul>

## Participants

**Participants:** Campers+, Counselors\*, Activity Specialists\*, Camp Director\*, Camp Assistant Directors\*, Parents/Guardians+ (\* = surveys, observations, & interactions; + = observations & interactions)

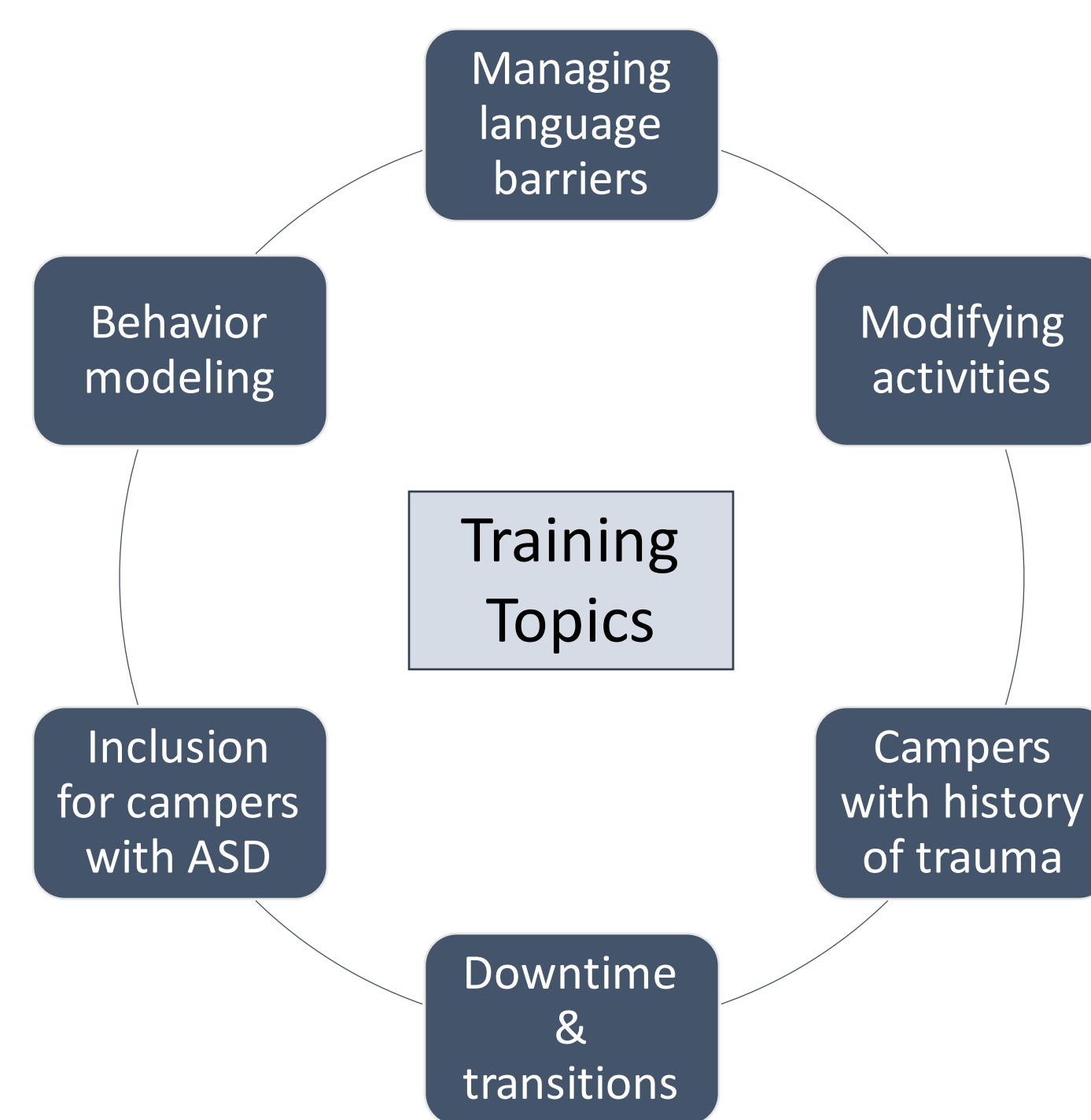
### Inclusion criteria:

- Counselors & staff: Ages 15-30; Work at Club Rec for the entire duration of Summer 2023; Attend the original staff orientation and training
- Campers: Grades K-5 (Ages 4-11); Attend Club Rec for at least 1 session (of 8)

### Staff demographics:

- 50% between 15-17 years old
- 67% of staff are new to Club Rec in 2023
- 50% of new staff have experience with children in a recreational setting

## Results



### Field Notes: Self-Regulation

#### Morning Drop-off

- Campers struggle to manage emotions during separation from caregivers
- Confusion during transition from AM-care
- Campers with noise sensitivity benefit from warning of loud noises in group activities

#### Downtime & Transitions

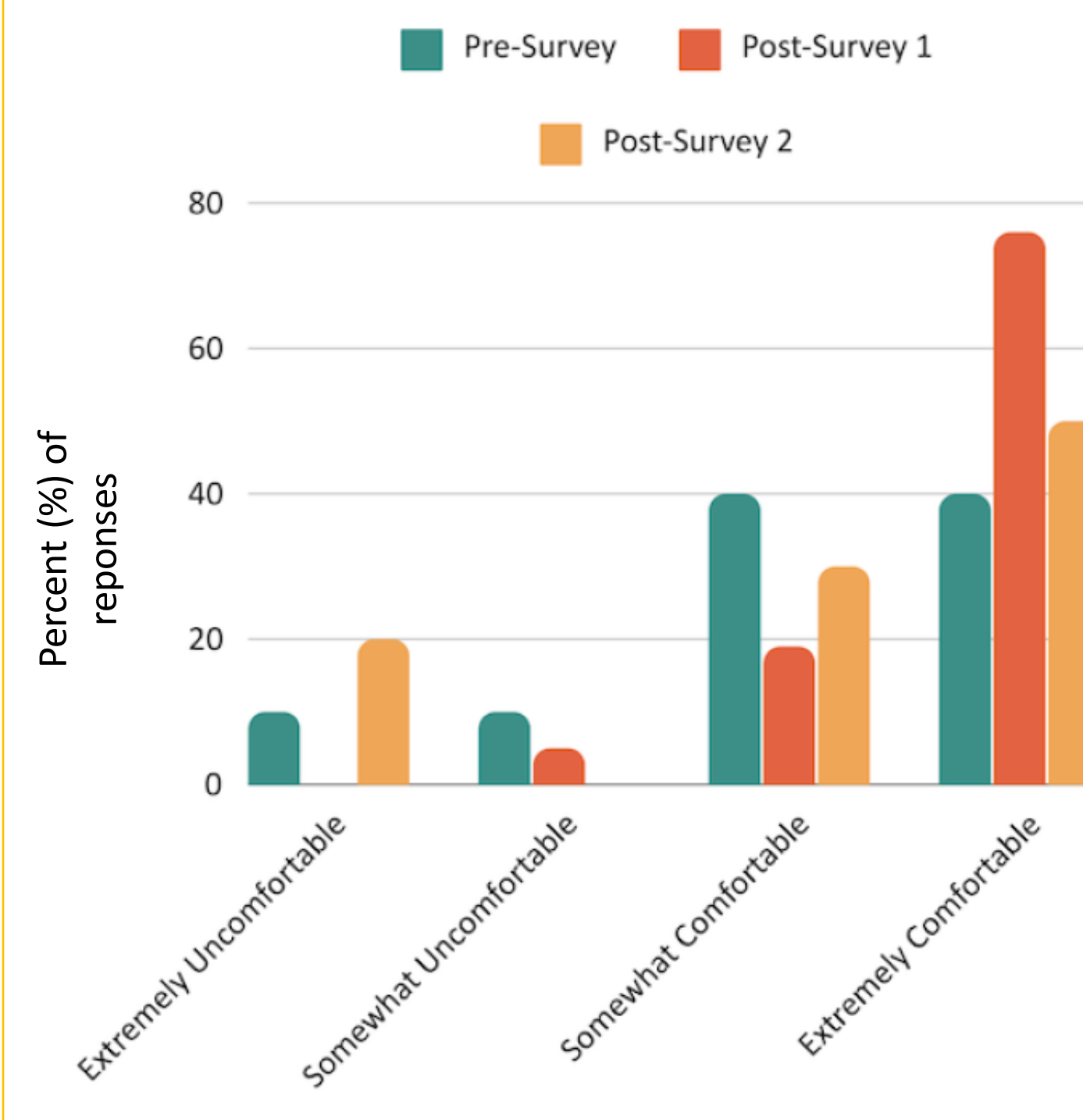
- Long periods of downtime for campers when they finish a project early or while waiting to take the swim assessment
- Campers become upset when asked to begin a new activity or take turns with peers

#### Unexpected Events

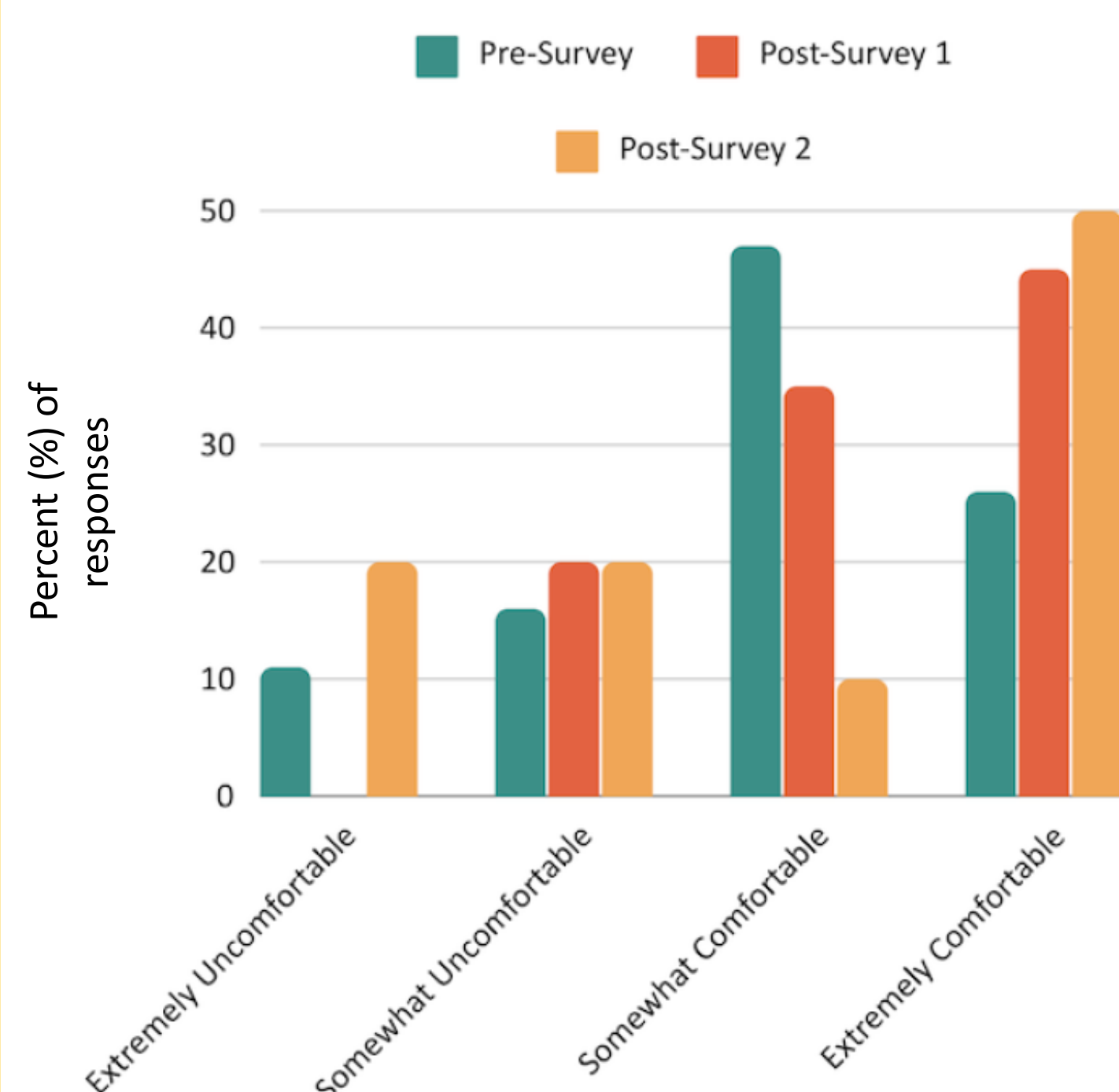
- Campers with minor injuries benefit from spending a few minutes in the Cool Down Zone
- Challenging peer interactions & disagreements
- Campers need support managing emotional responses when they lose a game

### Staff Survey Results

How comfortable are you initiating activities during downtime?



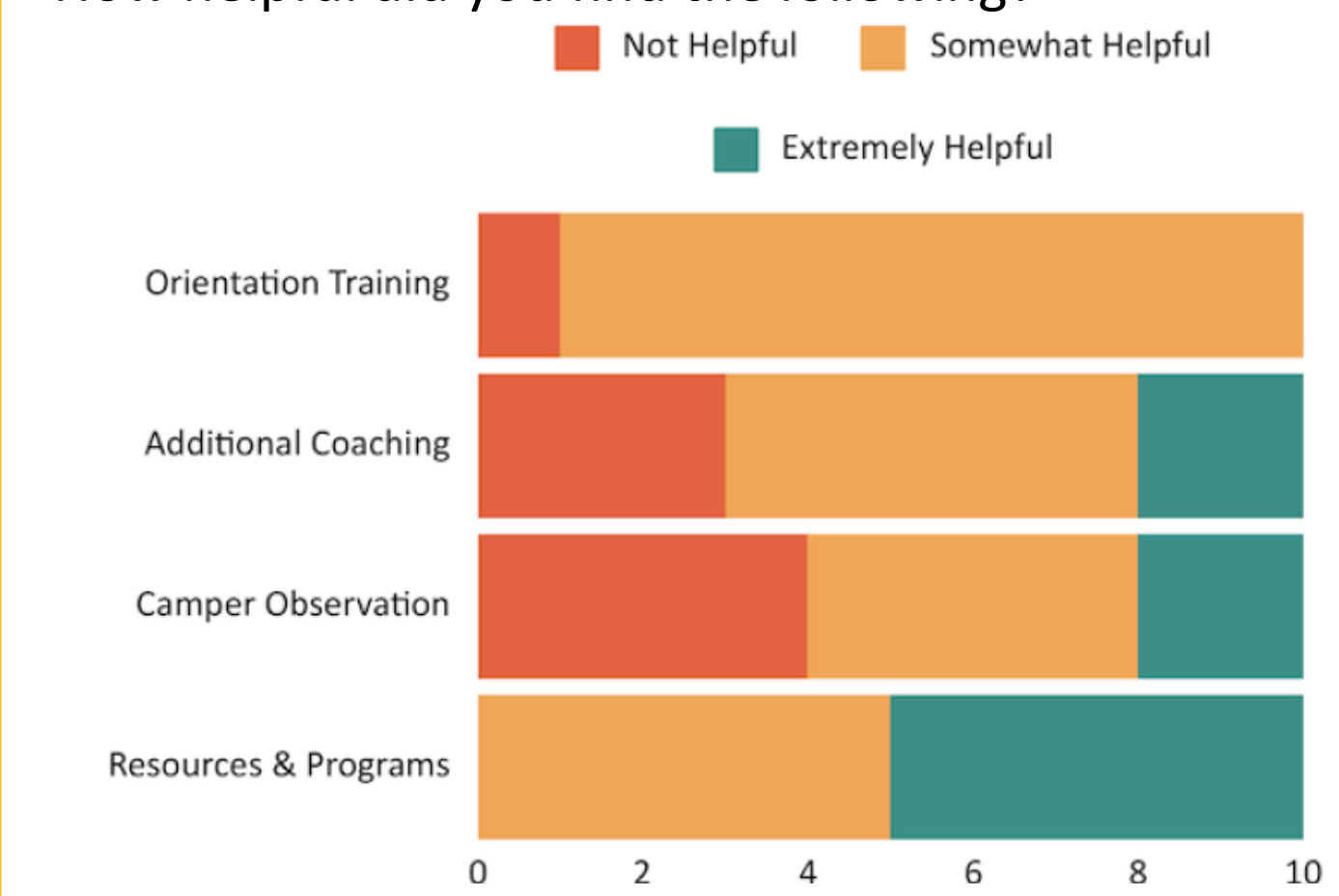
How comfortable are you talking with a caregiver about their child's participation, emotional responses & behaviors at Club Rec?



Pre-survey: 24 responses; 1<sup>st</sup> Post-survey: 19 responses; 2<sup>nd</sup> Post-survey: 10 responses (+6 incomplete responses)

- Staff and counselors demonstrated an **increase in knowledge of concepts related to self-regulation**
- **80%** of survey participants **Definitely agree** and another **10-15%** of participants **Probably agree** that **counselors and staff positively affect campers' behaviors and ability to manage their emotions**

How helpful did you find the following?



## References & Resources:



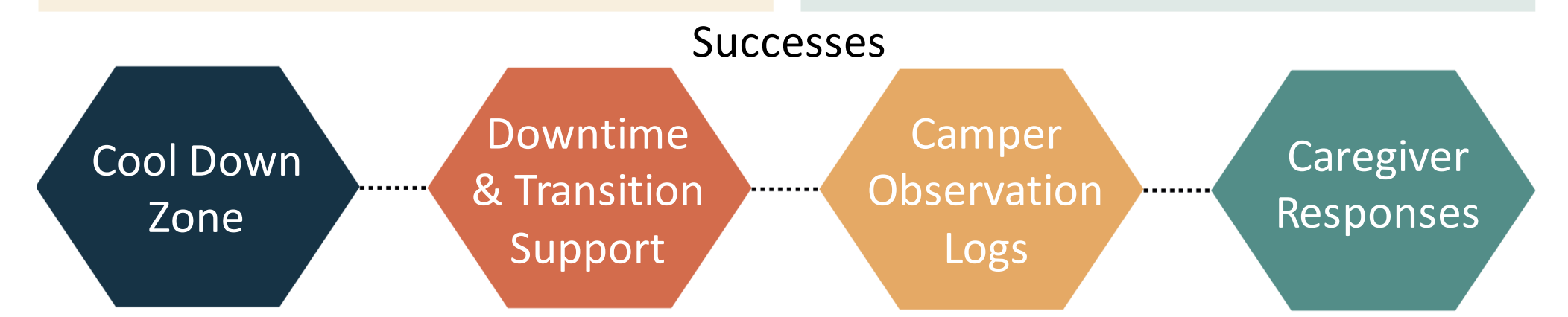
## Program Development & Review

At least 5 campers used a CDZ each day; 90% of staff that used CDZs reported positive camper outcomes

Timers & visual schedules minimized unexpected behaviors and strong reactions during transitions

Counselors reported that caregivers appreciated conversations around camper observations

Caregivers shared information to help Club Rec support their child's participation



Limited implementation by staff of mindfulness and breathing exercises introduced in staff training

Staff required frequent reminders to initiate downtime activities and implement strategies from training

Inconsistency with observation logs and infrequent follow-up conversations with caregivers

Few caregiver responses; Non-medical responses were not used to prepare and support counselors

## Future Considerations

### Topics for staff training:

- Strategies for working with children with ADHD
- Navigating conversations with caregivers
- Additional coaching and support for new staff members

### Limitations:

- Decrease in number of surveys completed from the 2<sup>nd</sup> to the 3<sup>rd</sup> survey may be result of staff burn-out or decrease in motivation at the end of the summer. Some of the results may not accurately depict counselor and staff views due to a smaller sample size for the final survey.
- Some staff did not complete the initial pre-survey

## Recommendations

### Staff training and development:

1. **Counselor engagement & motivation**
  - Focus-groups around expectations of working at camp and motivations
  - Team-leads assigned for each age group to support counselors with completing observation logs and supporting team morale
2. **Specialist coaching**
  - Activity modifications
  - Planning and leading
3. **Leadership team training** (director, assistant directors, inclusion director)
  - Professionalism, feedback, behavior modeling, strengths-based approach
  - Prepare them to effectively lead and give feedback to counselors and staff
  - Clearly define roles and expectations

### Caregiver communication & interaction:

1. *Questions on registration forms and caregiver survey*
2. *Weekly updates from counselors using camper observation notes*
3. *Club Rec welcome/introduction video for new campers*

Contact: Alexa Klein: [Alexa.Klein@tufts.edu](mailto:Alexa.Klein@tufts.edu)

Ryan Whitney: [Ryan.Whitney@tufts.edu](mailto:Ryan.Whitney@tufts.edu)