

Substance Treatment Phone Line Expansion Improves Connection to Treatment and Resources

INTRODUCTION

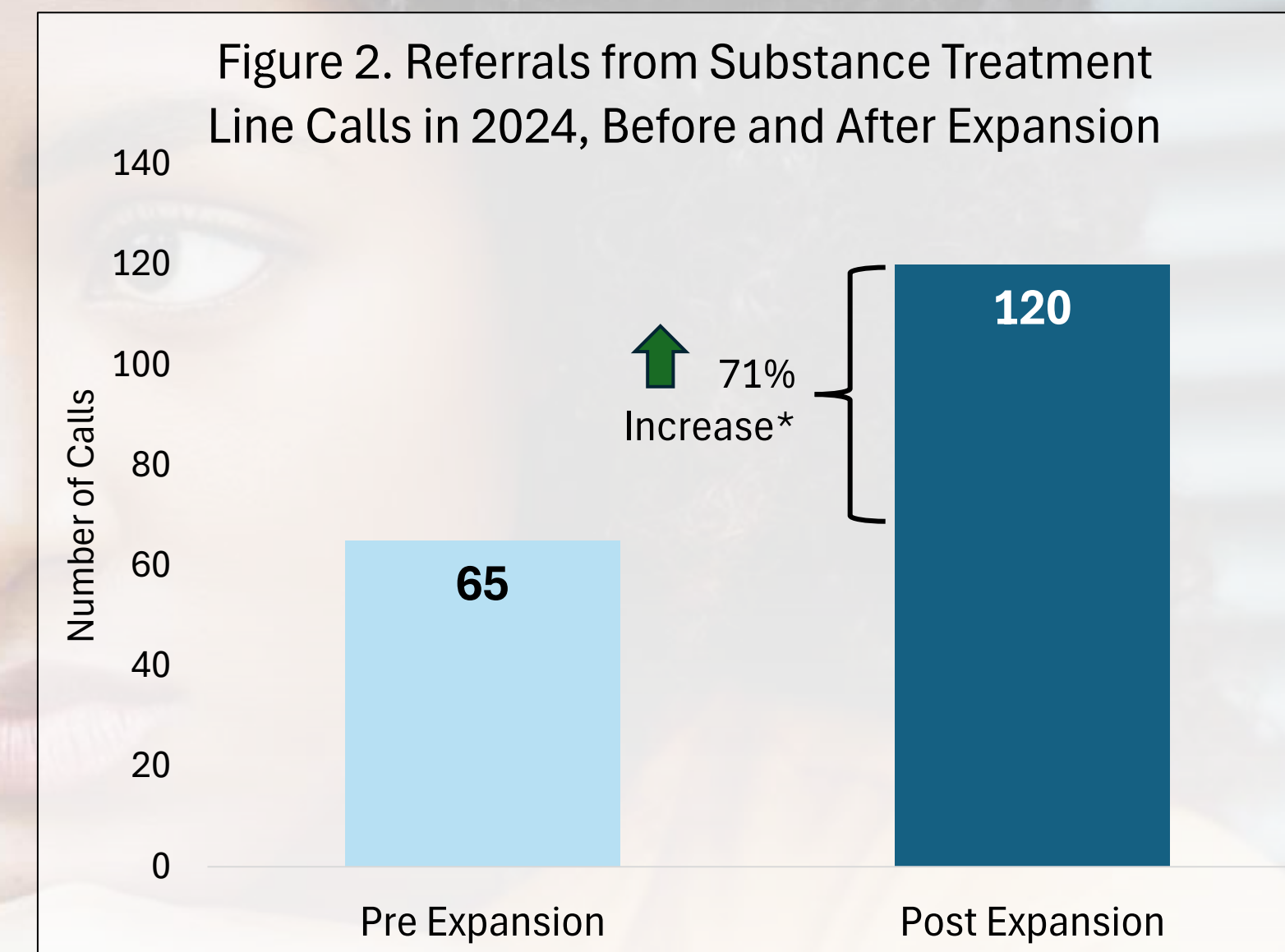
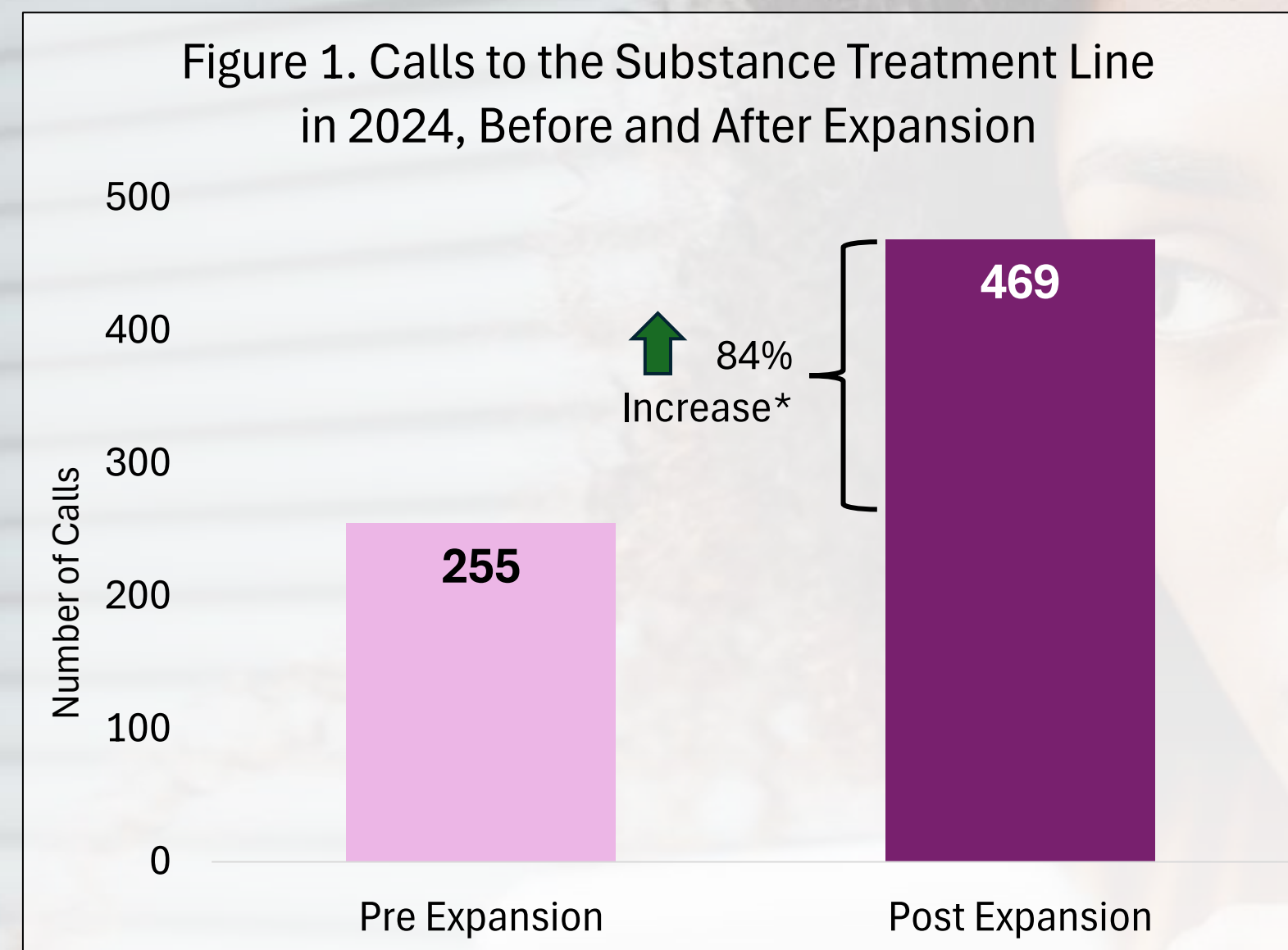
- Phone-based support systems can reduce barriers to accessing mental health and substance use resources and lead to greater patient engagement in substance treatment programs.^{1, 2}
- Denver Health is an integrated, safety-net hospital system in Denver, Colorado. The Substance Treatment Line (STL) is a phone-based support system that operates through Denver Health's Center for Addiction Medicine and provides specialized guidance and treatment referrals for individuals with substance use disorders (SUDs), their loved ones, and professionals seeking support for their patients.
- Originally a voicemail service, the STL was expanded in June 2024 through marketing efforts and the hiring of additional Behavioral Health Educators (BHEs) to become a live, direct phone service.

METHODS

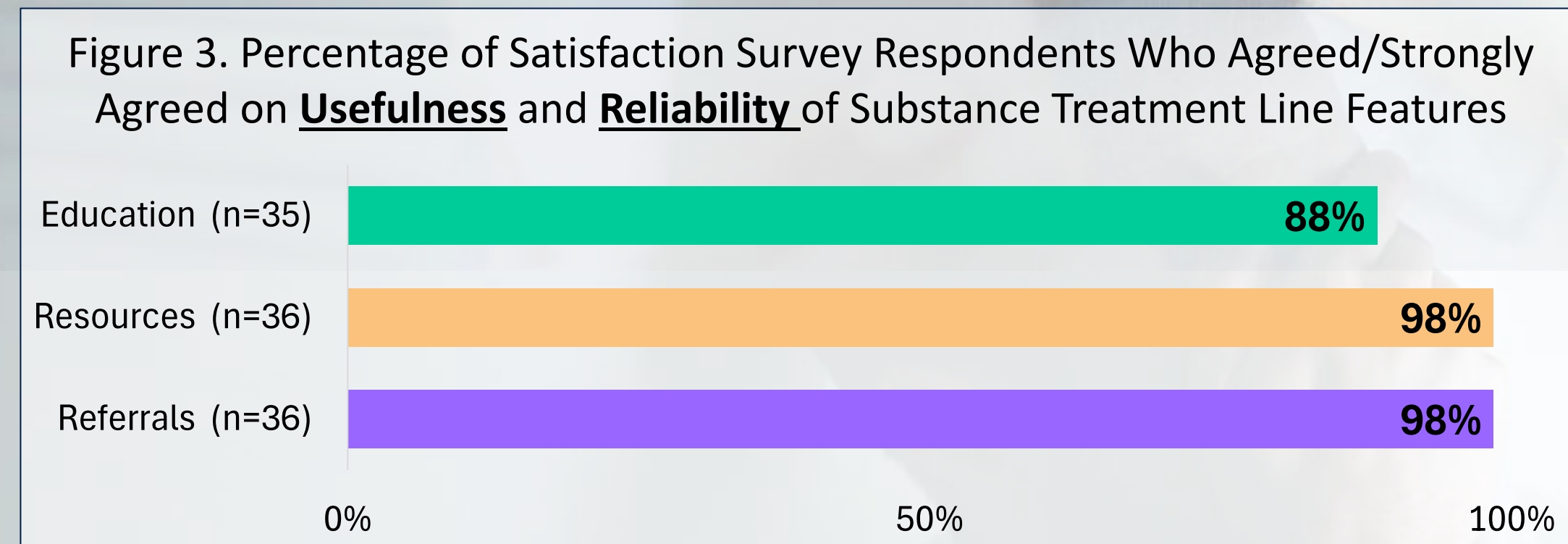
- We evaluated the STL and aimed to describe the effect of the expansion through two separate analyses:
 1. Changes in call volume, caller characteristics, and call outcomes were compared between pre- (Jan–Jun 2024) and post-expansion (Jul–Dec 2024) periods and analyzed using t-tests, z-tests, and chi-square tests.
 2. A satisfaction survey measured callers' self-reported opinions on the usefulness and reliability of education, resources, screening, and referrals since the STL expansion.

RESULTS

After the expansion, the number of STL calls and referrals to treatment increased by 84% and 71%, respectively. Nearly all satisfaction survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the STL was a reliable and useful resource for education, resources, and referrals for SUD treatment.



*Statistically significant ($p < 0.05$)



“Extremely prompt in returning my call and was able to immediately answer the questions I had.”

“Pleasant and helpful. Most appreciated.”

“Thank you for helping me. I needed this so I can see my future.”

“As a case manager from the opposite side of the country, I was having a hard time finding resources necessary for my client. [BHE] went out of her way to reach out to other organizations to collaborate on getting my client the necessary level of care.”

“I wanted to start a program for treatment today and the information I received was very helpful.”

CONCLUSION

- The STL expansion successfully increased call volume and referrals to SUD treatment with consistently high caller satisfaction, highlighting the value of a live, direct support line.
- Challenges included delays in hiring BHEs, and limitations such as low satisfaction survey response rates and the inability to track caller outcomes such as retention in care or stage of recovery.
- Despite these challenges, the STL model is a scalable and replicable approach for improving access to SUD treatment and care coordination in other communities.

REFERENCES

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2. Moore B.A., Buono F.D., Lloyd D.P., Printz, D.M.B., Fiellin, D.A., Barry D.T. (2019). A randomized clinical trial of the Recovery Line among methadone treatment patients with ongoing illicit drug use. *Journal of Substance Abuse Treatment.* 97: 68-74. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsat.2018.11.011>

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1. Denver Health and Hospital Authority
A. Nothing to disclose