

Training Community Leadership of Naturally Occurring Social Networks to Improve Access of Children Suffering from Trauma to Mental Health Services



Cohort:
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Location:
New Orleans, Louisiana

Focus Areas:
Behavioral and Mental Health
Social Determinants of Health
Violence & Trauma

Short Project Summary

Funded research sited by a task force for the City of New Orleans, surveyed 5,000 youth between 2012 and 2018. They found a startling prevalence of youth living through profoundly traumatic events. This reality calls for the development of interventions that will heal and partnerships that promote trauma-informed spaces. Strongly cohesive naturally occurring social networks (NOSN), that have decades of history in the various communities of Orleans Parish (Metro New Orleans), serve a strong healing purpose for people historically disenfranchised from traditional mental health and social supports.

We seek to address the “wicked problem” through the theory of change that a larger percentage of children living with profound trauma will access services through bridging two needs: increasing the cultural competence of our fragmented mental health treatment network, and empowering communities to more effectively access resources to support its children. The dyad of NOSNs and school-based nursing/social work resources will then have a vehicle to make a tremendous difference in the lives of children suffering from trauma.

Wicked Problem

Funded research cited by a task force for the City of New Orleans, surveyed 5,000 youth between 2012 and 2018. They found a startling prevalence of youth living through profoundly traumatic events. This reality calls for the development of interventions that will heal and partnerships that promote trauma-informed spaces. The existing institutions to treat and support children living with trauma are fragmented. Strongly cohesive naturally occurring social networks (NOSN), that have decades of history in the various communities of Orleans Parish (Metro New Orleans), serve a strong healing purpose for people historically disenfranchised from traditional mental health and social supports. Getting the evidence-based clinical resources of the formal support structures paired with culturally competent access for the affected community has been historically challenging and problematic.

We seek to address the “wicked problem” through three aims:

1. We plan to unify fragmented systems of support.
2. We plan to create trauma informed spaces in NOSN.
3. We plan to connect formal pediatric mental health treatment structures with naturally occurring informal ones.

The theory of change is that a larger percentage of children living with profound trauma will access services through bridging two needs: increasing the cultural competence of our fragmented mental health treatment network, and empowering communities to more effectively access resources to support its children. The dyad of NOSNs and school-based nursing/social work resources will then have a vehicle to make a tremendous difference in the lives of children suffering from trauma.

Propose Project Plan

This project proposes to increase the cultural competence of our fragmented mental health treatment network, and empower communities to be more effective at accessing resources to support their children via:

- Recruitment of partners in NOSN organizations.
- Recruitment of partners in the Charter School system that are mental health professionals.
- Training of NOSN representatives in ACE theory to create trauma-informed spaces.
- Bridging of the NOSN with the charter school system mental health professionals.

The goal is to have 10-15 dyads that undergo training.

Anticipated Outcomes

- Positive change in the mental health status of traumatized children due to Trauma-informed education and formal Trainings
- Increased engagement between representatives of the NOSNs and affiliated schools on behalf of children's behavioral health needs
- Change in referral actions (i.e. from disciplinary action to trauma-informed care referral) per NOSNs and affiliated school dyads
- Change in behavioral health seeking and care behaviors of NOSNs
- Increase in NOSNs, teachers, clinicians and families using culturally competent language and interactions with children exposed to trauma.

Timeline

Year 1

We plan to identify NOSNs in New Orleans of structural and cultural significance.

Year 2

Champions or leaders in 10 of these organizations will undergo formal Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) training. This will lead to the creation of trauma informed spaces within these groups.

Year 3

Trained NOSN leaders, with their trauma informed spaces, can then be paired with school-based health professionals (social workers, school nurses). The school health professional will be primed to facilitate access to appropriate mental health interventions.

Partnerships

In addition to being credentialed health professionals that understand the mental health of children, we have membership in, and active participation with, NOSN organizations.

Evaluation Strategies

Year one the milestones will be the identification and dyad creation. Year two the training and exchange between the dyad members will occur. Year three will be spent analyzing the qualitative information and experiences of the dyads.

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