The BridgeUM Team (a pediatrician, licensed clinical social worker, and two professional counselors) has embarked on a journey to improve the provision and use of trauma-informed mental health services by UMs in the greater Houston area by (1) conducting an in-depth needs assessment of the access to mental health services for UMs and (2) building a collaborative coalition of key healthcare partners to begin to tackle this wicked problem.

**Overview**

**BACKGROUND**

- The highly diverse and rapidly growing greater Houston metropolitan area is home to 1.6 million immigrants from all over the world.
- Asylum-seeking unaccompanied minors (UMs), children who crossed the Southern United States (U.S.) border without their parents or guardians, are likely the most vulnerable immigrants in the U.S.
- UMs experienced high rates of trauma and grief in their home countries and during their journeys to the US.
- After immigrant children and UMs leave shelters and enter the community, many of their physical and mental healthcare needs are unmet.
- The provision of trauma-informed and culturally-responsive mental health care services for vulnerable immigrant children is a social justice and human rights issue that must be tackled.

**PROJECT ACTIVITIES**

**Phase 1: Community Needs Assessment & Coalition**
- Participants: UMs in Community, their Guardians, Clinical Providers (CP), & Community Leaders (CL)
- Understands mental and social needs in Community
- Focus Groups (1 per participant group, for 8 total & Development of Coalition

**Phase 2: Development of Best Practices Toolkit**
- Participants: UMs in Community, Clinical Providers, & Community Leaders
- Identify best practices for Providers serving UMs in Community
- Best Practices Checklist: Supporting UMs, based on Focus Group data

**Phase 3: Toolkit Development & Training**
- Participants: Clinical Providers & Community Leaders
- Provide Best Practices Toolkit and Training to Support UMs’ Info
- Focus Group data and Best Practices Checklist

**Phase 4: Impact Assessment**
- Participants: UMs in Community, Clinical Providers, & Community Leaders
- Assess Impact of Training & Toolkit
- Post-surveys: Follow-Up Focus Groups with UMs

**HEALTH CARE PROVIDER BEST PRACTICES TO SUPPORT UMs’**

**Understanding Unaccompanied Minors (UMs):**
- Each UM’s situation is unique
- UM’s perception is that “everything is a challenge”
- UM’s feel uncertainty about the future and are living moment to moment
- UM’s are worried about deportation
- UM’s need support in general (food, housing, legal, language, medical, and mental health)
- UM’s experience racism and xenophobia

**Provider Action Steps to Take:**
- Compassionately ask about immigration history
- Build trust with UM’s and their families
- Empower UM’s and their families by addressing:
  - Social and legal needs
  - Physical and mental health needs
  - Systemic issues that affect UM’s
- Support mental and emotional wellness of community
  providers who work with UM’s and their families

**Downloadable as a one-pager here:** [www.bbhouston.org/](http://www.bbhouston.org/)

**THE BIGGEST NEED IS "EVERYTHING"**

-ヘリング the relationship
- Understanding the barriers
- Noting the challenges
- Addressing the needs

The biggest need is "Everything"

- The importance of working collaboratively with legal supports
- UMs Experience Discrimination
- All noted that UMs experience discrimination and racism from health care providers to share a unified standard of trauma-informed, culturally responsive health care services for UM’s.
- Support efforts in creating community-based supports for UM’s and provide trainings on best practices across the United States.

**NEXT STEPS**

- Create a Toolkit for Providers working with UM’s as a supplement to our research-based Best Practices.
- Deliver resources and trainings to health care providers to share a unified standard of trauma-informed, culturally responsive health care services for UM’s.
- Support efforts in creating community-based supports for UM’s and provide trainings on best practices across the United States.

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