

Addressing Risk for Depression and Unmet Social Needs among Immigrant Latina Mothers



Cohort:
2019-2022

Team Members:
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Location:
Baltimore, Maryland

Focus Areas:
Behavioral and Mental Health
Immigrants & Refugees
Maternal & Infant Health

Wicked Problem Description

Our project targets the “Wicked Problem” of unaddressed mental health and social needs in limited English proficient (LEP) Latina mothers of young children. Maternal mental health problems have far-reaching adverse effects on family and child mental health, somatic health and functioning. Immigrant Latinas, who constitute the majority of LEP Latinas, are at substantially elevated risk for postpartum depression compared to the general population of perinatal women. Despite this excess risk, immigrant Latinas have extremely low rates of engagement in mental health treatment. Many barriers contribute to disparities in treatment engagement including lack of insurance, shortages of culturally/linguistically competent specialty providers, competing demands at work and at home, sociocultural barriers and low rates of identification and detection. Non-traditional service delivery models are critical to addressing our wicked problem.

Baltimore is an “emerging settlement” for Latino immigrants, a historically non-Latino settlement area that has experienced a dramatic growth in the Latino population in the last 15 years. The disparity between mental health need and service utilization may be even greater in emerging settlement areas. Baltimore is home to a diverse immigrant community, primarily from Central America and Mexico. Compared to the general US Latino population, Baltimore

Latinos are more likely to be foreign born, undocumented, have low income, low educational attainment and limited English proficiency.

Local schools present a key opportunity to address depression and the social needs of mothers of young children in Baltimore’s Latino community. Schools have been described as a more accessible and less stigmatizing environment in which to address mental health needs, particularly for Latino families. Baltimore City Schools recently adopted a “Community School” policy with a stated goal to integrate family and community supports into the school structure. Judy Centers, established by the Maryland state legislature in 2000, provide family-centered childcare, school-readiness education and assessment for children 0-5 years. Children are eligible for services based solely on residence. There are currently 53 Judy Centers across the state, including 11 sites in Baltimore. Statewide, in 2020, 21% of families served by Judy Centers self-identified as Hispanic. Community partnerships and programming are the cornerstone of Judy Center programming.

Project Strategies

Current Actions

- Continuing analysis of baseline data and follow-up data from Fall 2020 and Spring 2021 pilots
- Continuing analysis of post-intervention interviews with Mothers and Babies participants (including about the virtual experience)
- Partnering with statewide Judy Center Coordinator and Mothers and Babies intervention developers in planning and training interested Judy Center sites for program delivery (17 sites trained in May 2021)
- Offering a 4th virtual cohort, co-facilitated by Judy Center school staff and supervised by our partnering therapist, being the first Judy Center site to deliver the program post-training.

Future Actions

- Analyzing additional participant interviews and preparing further manuscripts
- Piloting a Mothers and Babies virtual cohort in a healthcare setting
- Continuing to partner with Judy Centers – next Mothers and Babies facilitator training planned for winter 2022
- Continuing to discuss optimal staffing for Mothers and Babies – therapist back-up is essential, but having a therapist as a co-facilitator is limiting as not all Judy Centers in the state (particularly those in areas with more limited supply of bilingual mental health providers) have partnerships with mental health agencies
- Presenting early findings to a Baltimore City stakeholder group

Outcomes

Completed Outcomes

- Attendance, survey and interview data with first, second and third participant cohorts.

Anticipated Future Outcomes

- Mothers and Babies
 - Complete program with pilot cohort #4 (December 2021)
 - Start pilot cohort #5 at a pediatric clinic
 - Work with the other 2 partnering Judy Centers as they prepare to deliver the program on their own (Spring 2022)
- Addressing food insecurity
 - Rate of success in receipt of SNAP benefits for families assisted by Resource Advocate
- Sustainability
 - Align with Pritzker initiative
 - On-going assessment with Judy Centers regarding feasibility of program and program components

Timeline - (for the remaining fellowship time period)

Spring 2022

- Present findings to date to new Judy Center leadership
- Determine whether stakeholder roundtable will be needed according to response from new Judy Center leadership
- Plan for Judy Center Mothers and Babies cohort for summer and fall 2022
- Submit 1 manuscript

Summer 2022

- New Judy Center locations (10 in the state of Maryland) will be announced
- Submit 1 manuscripts

Fall 2022

- Host symposium or mini-conference re: Mothers and Babies as a prototype for teaching skills to mothers for the benefit of themselves, their children and their families

Winter 2022

- Complete current cohort
- Train new Judy Center staff to facilitate Mothers and Babies
- Start 2 new cohorts in Judy Centers
- Start 1 new cohort in pediatric primary care
- Restart group well childcare and discuss how/when to embed Mothers and Babies into group well curriculum

Partnerships - (including community partnerships, extended team members, etc.)

- Hopkins Community Connections: organization training college student volunteers to address unmet social needs
 - Kristin Topel, program director; Student Advocate, TBD
- Johns Hopkins Bayview Medical Center Community Psychiatry
 - Omaira Mejia, therapist
- Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health Department of Population, Family and Reproductive Health
 - Cynthia Minkovitz, leading the Pritzker Children's Initiative
- Judy Centers
 - Commodore John Rogers – Veronica Jackson, Nikki Venuti
 - John Ruhrah – Yenssi Cisneros, Angeles Mendez-Jimenez, Katie Vaselkiv
 - Lakeland – Melissa Cercado, Tessera Slade
- Maryland State Dept. of Education: administrative home for Judy Centers
 - Amy Beal, Judy Center Partnership Specialist
- Northwestern University Center for Community Health: home to Mothers and Babies developers
 - Erin Ward
 - Darius Tandon

Evaluation Strategies

- Qualitative Interviews
- Surveys
- Process Measures
 - Attendance

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