



Utilizing Health Navigators in Addressing Trauma Among Refugee Children and Youth

Patricia Ruiz de Santiago, LPC¹; Danielle Jackman, PhD.²; Savina Treves, LPC¹; Neyva Hernandez¹; Grace Ushindi¹; Francis Cheung, MA²; Crystal Luce, MA², & Emma Fargo²
¹Colorado Refugee Wellness Center; ²Aurora Research Institute



Abstract

Refugee and immigrant children and youth tend to have higher than average needs for mental and behavioral health treatment.

While health navigators have shown to be important in assisting new refugee adults integrate to their receiving community, little research and practice is known on the utility of health navigators in assisting children and youth from refugee and immigrant families.

Four focus groups with 23 parents representing different cultures were conducted. Results highlighted health navigators serve a crucial role in building trust with the staff in the treatment of their child or children's mental and behavioral health.

Methods

Participants were parents or primary caregivers of the children and youth who receive TRYP's services.

Focus groups were separated by language

Spanish	n=9
Nepalese and Karen	n=10
Swahili	n=2
Sango	n=2

Each group had at least one health navigator to translate.

All focus groups were audiotaped, transcribed, and coded.

All audiotapes were destroyed after transcriptions were completed.

Discussion

Most importantly, all participants suggested that health navigators provide social support for them. Additionally, the familial feeling surrounding having someone from a similar culture/tradition helps to build trust between participants' families and TRYP's staff.

Limitations:

1. There was no assessment of the children and youth's attitude towards health navigators.
2. There is no quantitative data directly supporting the qualitative data.

Benefits of Utilizing Health Navigators for this population

1. Utilized as interpreters.
2. Utilized as case managers.
3. Utilized as cultural brokers: Contacting people on clients' behalf.

Challenges of Utilizing Health Navigators

1. Not enough Health Navigators to serve all clients in need of service. In particular, Aurora, CO houses refugees and immigrants who speak over 130 languages.
1. Not enough funds to hire full time Health Navigators.
2. Inconsistent methodologies in implementing program/health navigator services.

Need for This Research

To date, there are approximately 70.8 million people who were forcibly displaced worldwide.¹ Of that number, 25 million are refugees and over half are under the age of 18.^{1,2}

Refugee and immigrant children and youth are at risk for having higher than average levels of mental and behavioral health problems.

Such individuals who do not receive sufficient or appropriate mental and behavioral health care tend to have elevated levels of functional impairment and cognitive delays that may persist into adulthood.³

There is much research on health navigators (patient navigators/cultural brokers) assisting newly arriving and immigrant families understand and integrate into their receiving communities.⁴

More work is needed to understand how health navigators can assist refugee children and youth integrate into their receiving communities.

Results

1. Health Navigators are useful

All focus groups commented that health navigators are useful in: translating important documents and therapy sessions; signing up for housing and health insurance and; scheduling appointments.

"It's really very nice to rely on the navigators; they [health navigators] do everything [schedule appointments] so we don't need to worry; it makes it very kind and easy" [*Nepalese speaking parent*]

2. Health Navigators are like family

Participants commented that they were able to trust the processes more because the health navigators understood the cultures/traditions/language.

"Health Navigator takes the steps in making my children feel like family so it feels really comfortable." [*Spanish speaking parent*]

Future Direction and Conclusion

Based on these results, TRYP suggests:

1. Implement evidence supported Trauma Systems Therapy for Refugees (TST-R).⁵
2. Creating best practices for Health Navigators.

Conclusion

TRYP continues to work closely on evaluating its program and the role that health navigators contribute towards building and maintaining trust between children and therapists.

Trauma Resilience Youth Program (TRYP)

The Trauma Resilience Youth Program (TRYP) is a Colorado based trauma informed treatment program for children and youth of refugee and immigrant families.

Purpose: To provide evidence based services to treat trauma among this highly underserved population, including: therapy and wellness groups, counseling services, interpretation, case/management and cultural brokerage in different settings: Outpatient, schools, in-home.

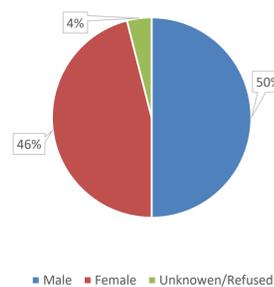
Core strategy: To create a safe, culturally sensitive, linguistically accessible and trauma informed system of care.

268 children and youth served to date.

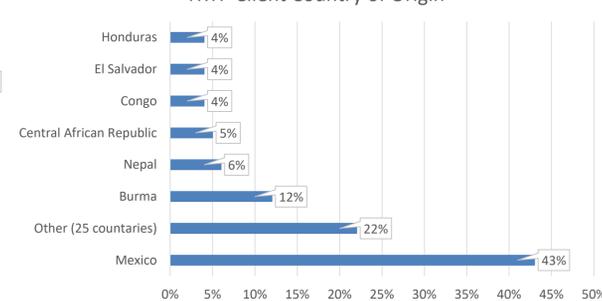
TRYP Clients

Ethnicity:	57% Latinx
Age range:	0-24 (at 24 youth are transitioned to adult services)
Migrant Status:	Asylee 2%, Immigrant 60%, Refugee 28%, Unknown 10%
Generation:	1 st Generation 46%, 2 nd Generation 42%, Unknown 12%

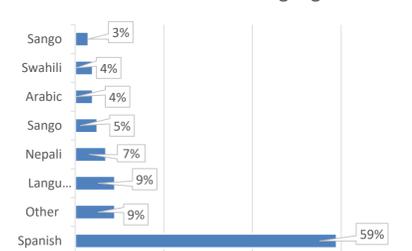
TRYP Client Gender



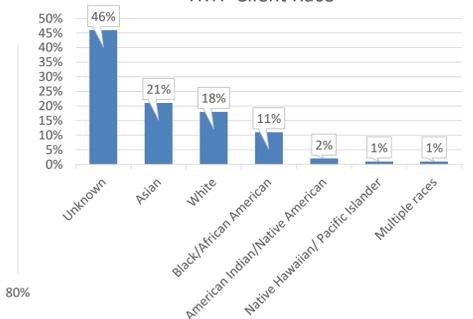
TRYP Client Country of Origin



TRYP Client Language



TRYP Client Race



Contact

Savina Treves, LPC
 Project Director
 Trauma Resilience Youth Program
 savinatrev@saurmhc.org
 303-617-2610

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