

Immigrant and Refugee-Led Capacity Development  
Network of Illinois  
Executive Advisory Board Member

*Mental Health Promotion & Resources*

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# *Immigrant Family Mental Health Advocacy Program*



Clinical Services



Community-Engaged Research



Policy Advocacy

Intersecting program components informed by:

- The global context of human migration
- Systemic inequity and marginalization of immigrant & refugee communities
- Policy impacts on mental health
- Local context, collaboration, and resource development



## *Integrative approach*

- Contextually driven EBP
- Empowerment based and advocacy focused
- Intensive case management

## *Community-based support and legal advocacy*

- Support for immigration cases; growing need for forensic evaluations
- 504 Plan and school advocacy/language supports
- Know Your Rights

## *Case consultation and resource development*

- Dearth of multi-lingual and trauma-informed providers
- Limited knowledge about immigration policy
- MH context of im/migrant families



- Mentor trainees/students interested in immigrant mental health, immigration policy impacts, and community intervention development
- Build the capacity of CBOs to promote mental health and well-being
- Summarize and disseminate research to community and policy partners
- Research to Policy Action!



Original Article

## A Community-Based Organization Model to Promote Latinx Immigrant Mental Health Through Advocacy Skills and Universal Parenting Supports

Dana Rusch ✉, Angela L. Walden, Catherine DeCarlo Santiago

First published: 03 September 2020 | <https://doi.org/10.1002/ajcp.12458>



Policy Statement | [Open Access](#) |

## Statement on the Effects of Deportation and Forced Separation on Immigrants, their Families, and Communities

A Policy Statement by the Society for Community Research and Action: Division 27 of the American Psychological Association

First published: 31 July 2018 | <https://doi.org/10.1002/ajcp.12256> | Citations: 15



Policy Statement | [Open Access](#) |

## The Roles of Settings in Supporting Immigrants' Resistance to Injustice and Oppression: A Policy Position Statement by the Society for Community Research and Action

A policy Statement by the Society for Community Research and Action: Division 27 of the American Psychological Association

Sara L. Buckingham ✉, Regina Day Langhout, Dana Rusch, Tara Mehta, Noé Rubén Chávez, Kevin Ferreira van Leer, Ashmeet Oberoi, Monica Indart, Virginia Paloma, V. Elizabeth King, Bradley Olson

First published: 07 May 2021 | <https://doi.org/10.1002/ajcp.12515>



## Policy impacts on mental health

- Aug 2019-Jan 2021: 20+ policy updates created and disseminated to the department
- Oct 2018-Oct 2020: 11 public comments submitted



## Local advocacy efforts, cross-taskforce collaborations, development of community trainings and outreach

- Coalition for Immigrant Mental Health (CIMH) Core Leadership Member and Policy & Advocacy Workgroup Co-Chair
- UIC Provost's Taskforce on Immigration Issues
- Midwest Human Rights Consortium
- APA Div 27 Society for Community Research and Action Immigrant Justice Special Interest Group



### **Task Force on Immigration Issues** →

Addresses changes in state and federal policy involving immigration and undocumented students.

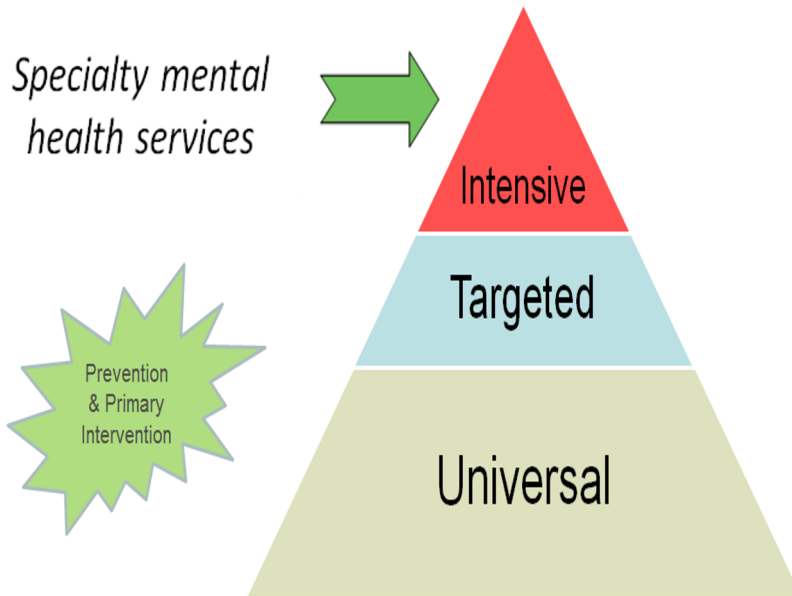
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What are some key things that CBO staff need to keep in mind about the mental health and well-being of the immigrants/refugees they serve?

# Mental Health Context of Migration

Pre-Flight	Flight/Migration	Post-Migration
<p>Violence contexts (gang, domestic, gender-based, sexual orientation)</p> <p>Persecution</p> <p>Torture,</p> <p>War &amp; unrest</p> <p>Climate &amp; natural disasters</p> <p>Economic instability</p> <p>Transnationalism &amp; family separation</p> <p>(Push &amp; Pull Factors)</p>	<p>Trauma</p> <p>Family separations</p> <p>Traveling long distances</p> <p>Loss of community</p> <p>Detention by authorities</p> <p>Interactions with systems</p>	<p>Poverty</p> <p>Acculturative stress</p> <p>Family reunification challenges</p> <p>Discrimination</p> <p>Insecure employment and exploitation</p> <p>Limited access to health &amp; social services</p> <p>Undocumented status</p> <p>Fear of deportation / ICE</p> <p>Anti-immigrant policies</p>

# Ecological Public Mental Health Model



*Journal of Clinical Child & Adolescent Psychology*, 45(2),215-226, 2016  
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DOI: 10.1080/15374416.2015.1050724

 **Routledge**  
Taylor & Francis Group

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## FUTURE DIRECTIONS

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### Future Directions for Dissemination and Implementation Science: Aligning Ecological Theory and Public Health to Close the Research to Practice Gap

Marc S. Atkins, Dana Rusch, and Tara G. Mehta  
*Institute for Juvenile Research, University of Illinois at Chicago*

Davielle Lakind  
*Department of Psychology, University of Illinois at Chicago*

- **Where:** Move mental health out of clinics and into natural settings
- **Who:** Leverage key opinion leaders and non-traditional providers
- **What:** Aligning MH with goals of the setting
- **How:** Messaging, modeling in context



# CBO Model of Mental Health Promotion

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**Settings Matter (*Where*): Community-Based Organizations**

**People Matter (*Who*): Community paraprofessionals/CBO staff**

**Align Mental Health Promotion with CBO Goals (*What*):  
Parenting Supports and Advocacy Focus**

**Family Mental Health Advocacy Training (*How*):  
Support CBO staff in their daily work with immigrant families**

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What are some key strategies or techniques that can help CBO staff promote mental health?

- Supporting parents
- Family Mental Health Advocacy
  - PFA & tips provided by CIMH

# Partners Achieving Student Success (PASS)

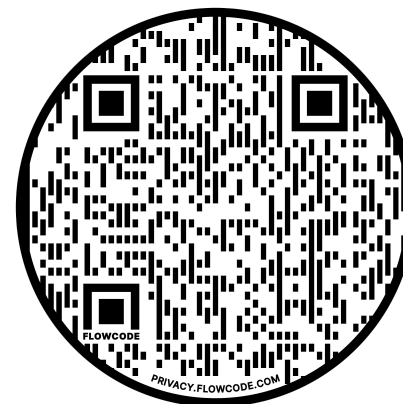
Mehta et al., 2019; Lakind et al., 2019

Academic-community partnership between [IJR Research Team](#)  
and four social services agencies (2013-2017)

School-based paraprofessional-led model to support parents in high poverty urban communities via six key skills

- ★ *Supporting reading*
- ★ *homework r& home routines*
- ★ *positive parenting*
- ★ *positive discipline*
- ★ *family-school connections*
- ★ *reducing stress*

## PASS Key Skills



Let us know how you use them:  
<https://redcap.link/2kvbhbp2>

# Family Mental Health Advocacy

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**Draws upon key parenting skills/supports and advocacy steps to train staff how to integrate mental health promotion strategies within CBO services**

Contextual knowledge of factors that affect mental health and well-being (migration context, acculturative stress, policy impacts, factors that promote family resilience)

Development of skills & strategies to promote parent self-advocacy skills (CAP) and positive parenting skills (PASS)

Psychoeducation to equip CBO staff with understanding of children's mental health (anxiety, depression, stress and coping, disruptive behaviors, learning challenges and academic success)



# Family Advocacy Plan

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## Parent/Caregiver

- Recognize challenges & help seeking efforts
- Generate strategies
  - Available supports (tangible/social)
  - Empowerment goals
  - Normalize help-seeking
  - Anticipated barriers
- Practice action steps
- Feedback / Acknowledge Efforts
- Re-assess Action Plan

## Children/Adolescents

- Parent-child communication
- Self-advocacy skills
- Navigating roles & responsibilities
- Identity development & integration

## School

- Family-school communication
- Psychoeducation
- Resource development and linkage
- Policy advocacy



# Psychological First Aid (PFA)

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- Goals is to help providers make quick assessments of needs and reduce distress during a crisis
- Originally designed to be implemented by non-mental health providers (e.g., disaster relief worker, emergency responders)

**5 Essentials**: safety, calming, connectedness, self-efficacy, and hope

NCTSN has PFA training: <https://www.nctsn.org/treatments-and-practices/psychological-first-aid-and-skills-for-psychological-recovery/about-pfa>

Note: Rapid proliferation of PFA calls for more research to determine its effectiveness across target populations (Schultz & Forbes, 2014)

# Steps To Support Your Community

- **Observation and Awareness:** You may be aware of news or events happening at the local or national level that affect your community or see/hear community members say something that calls your attention. You might also notice that someone is sounding very distressed because of these circumstances.
- **Make a Connection:** this usually means being/acting in a way that makes it clear you are there for the person. Introduce yourself, your work, and your organization to community members. You may want to let community members about resources and services your organization offers.
- **Help People Feel Comfortable and at Ease:** Be friendly and inviting, provide information and resources about upcoming events, Know Your Rights information, and other information relevant to the community or to the person/family.
- **Be Kind, Calm, and Compassionate:** Show that you care and are respectful. Be careful about touching depending on your relationship with the person and their background. If you don't know the person well, wait to see if he or she touches your hand or arm. A brief, light touch on the hand or arm can be very reassuring or warming. Create a tone within your program/class/event that models kindness, tolerance and inclusion.
- **Assist with Basic Needs:** When relevant provide water or food, accommodations for sleeping, and ways for staying connected with support systems and resources.

*Adapted from the American Red Cross: 12 Steps for Psychological First Aid*

# Steps To Support Your Community

- **Listen:** Let people talk about whatever it is they would like to talk about, but do not push them beyond what they want to share. Sometimes all a person needs is an opportunity to "vent," or share their feelings or frustrations. For example, as an ESL teacher, you might find that listening to a parent talk about their worries for their children goes a long way. Maybe look for opportunities to role play how to talk to their children.
- **Give Realistic Reassurance:** "Everything will be fine" is not realistic. Saying "I'm sorry to hear that" or "I can see how you would be feeling that way" helps people see their reactions as normal. Reassure them that resilience can help carry them through (use a "dicho" here if appropriate - la gota de agua labra la piedra). An immigration lawyer described this process as a marathon, not a sprint. One step at a time, one day at a time, even if we can't see the finish line.
- **Encourage Good Coping:** Coping behaviors are learned based on our unique life experiences. We all have our own styles and strategies for coping. Some are positive and some are not so helpful. Acknowledge that participating in CBO programs/events is a positive step toward taking care of their needs. What might be other ways of coping that's been helpful in the past? This also creates opportunities to create social support networks. For example, look for ways to empower them in the everyday (recognizing parenting successes, job responsibilities).

*Adapted from the American Red Cross: 12 Steps for Psychological First Aid*



# Steps To Support Your Community

- **Help People Connect with Others:** staying connected socially is a very important way to be supported/ to stay positive. Help them make other social connections. For example, host a community meeting, discussion, or potluck where community members can meet, chat, and build new connections. Invite them to upcoming events or meetings.
- **Give Accurate and Timely Information:** Share relevant information only if you know it to be accurate; otherwise refer them to organizations or resources in the community. This is also an opportunity to refer to some of the pamphlet information you provided to them as alternate sources when you're not sure about something.
- **Suggest a Referral Resource:** know your referral resources and networks. Keep a list of referrals for common issues, including immigrant legal assistance, mental health/health care resources, or social service resources.
- **End the Conversation:** This depends on the circumstance and your relationship to the person. However, leave the person with the impression that you care (even if you are unlikely to see the person again) and that others care as well.

*Adapted from the American Red Cross: 12 Steps for Psychological First Aid*

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Are there webinars, conferences, or coalitions/networks that can help build CBO staff development and skills around mental health services?

- Coalition for Immigrant Mental Health
- Center for Childhood Resilience at Lurie Children's Hospital
- National Child Traumatic Stress Network

# Coalition for Immigrant Mental Health

- Strong network involved in immigrant justice activities
- Local advocacy efforts, cross-taskforce collaborations, development of community trainings and outreach
- Resource sharing, referrals, linkages

Website Demo:

<https://ourcimh.org/>



## AREAS OF ACTION

CIMH provides a forum for dialogue regarding ongoing challenges, needed resources, and ways to improve current interventions and approaches to mental health in immigrant communities. Three areas of action have been identified: Education & Outreach, Research & Data, and Advocacy.



## EDUCATION & OUTREACH

Develop resources, training and educational materials about mental health. Connect organizations that support immigrant and refugee communities.



## RESEARCH & DATA

Support and develop community-based research to identify gaps in services and knowledge regarding the dynamic mental health consequences of immigration status and translational research to improve services and interventions for immigrants and refugees.



## ADVOCACY

Engage coalition members, community members as well as other stakeholders in advocating for positive legislative policies, programs and initiatives in support of immigrants and refugees.

# Additional Resources

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Webinars, psycho-educational materials, trauma-focused

Website demo:

<https://www.nctsn.org/>

Virtual Learning Community for training & resources

Website demo:

<https://childhoodresilience.org/virtualllearningcommunity>

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Are there funding sources to help CBO staff attend conferences or trainings to build up mental health skills?

- CIMH listserv, community convening
- UIC Community Engagement and Collaboration Core

# Coalition for Immigrant Mental Health

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- Join the Listserv or visit our website for our bi-monthly general meetings (now via zoom)
- Join one of the workgroups!
- Take a look at our Convening series. Each convening ends with a Call to Action to encourage CIMH members and attendees to engage in social action advocacy efforts with all immigrants, refugees, and undocumented groups.

For more, see:

<https://ourcimh.org/community-convenings>



## 2020-2021 Annual CIMH Convening Series

### 2020 ANNUAL COMMUNITY CONVENING SERIES

This series of virtual gatherings have focused on supporting the mental health and the well-being of our diverse immigrant and refugee communities in these very challenging times.

Each gathering reflects thoughtful discussions of the intersection of justice, equity, fair and humane treatment as they interact with the particular issues we are currently facing, such as grappling with these issues in the midst of a pandemic.

REGARDING THE RESTRICTIONS PLACED UPON US BY THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC, COMMUNITY CONVENINGS ARE OFFERED AS SERIES FOR THE NEXT COUPLE OF MONTHS.



# UIC-Community Research Partnerships

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## Community Engagement and Collaboration Core



Demo contact form:

<https://ccts.uic.edu/services/community-engagement/>

CIRTification: Research Ethics Training for Community Partners

Available in English & Spanish

<https://ccts.uic.edu/tools/cirtification/>

# Contact Information

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