

## Presenter information



**Sarah Howell, MSW, LCSW**

Sarah Howell is a school social worker of Las Americas Newcomer School in the Houston Independent School District (HISD). Sarah has built her career working with immigrants and refugees and specializes in trauma and torture survivors within those populations. Additionally, Sarah is passionate about educating others about trauma and trauma-informed education. Sarah is an advocate for the immigrant and refugee community, as well as mental health services for youth. Sarah has written two chapters about refugee trauma and school-based interventions for immigrant and refugee youth published in Spring 2019.

## The National Hispanic and Latino MHTTC

The mission of the National Hispanic and Latino Mental Health Technology Transfer Center is to provide high-quality training and technical assistance to improve the capacity of the workforce serving Hispanic and Latino communities in behavioral health prevention, treatment, and recovery. We disseminate and support the implementation of evidence-based and promising practices to enhance service delivery, promote the growth of a diverse, culturally competent workforce, and bridge access to quality behavioral health services. We are committed to increasing health equity and access to effective culturally and linguistically grounded approaches.

## The National Hispanic and Latino MHTTC School-Based Mental Health Supplement

Create awareness on the importance of school mental health services that are culturally appropriate.

Provide strategies on how to effectively implement culturally responsive mental health services for the Hispanic and Latino children and youth.


Promote the use, adoption, and implementation of evidence-based practices that are culturally responsive for the Hispanic and Latino children and youths.

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## Presentation Summary

- Experiencing or witnessing traumatic events can affect children's and adolescent's mental and emotional wellbeing.
- Traumatic events can lead to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).
- Hispanic and Latino children are particularly vulnerable to suffer or witness traumatic events.
- The use of trauma-informed practices at the school setting can help students manage their emotions and have positive academic and mental health outcomes.




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National Hispanic and Latino  
**MHTTC** Mental Health Technology Transfer Center Network  
Funded by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

# Trauma and Trauma Informed Strategies to Support Migrant Students


Sarah Howell, MSW, LCSW  
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## Learner Objectives

- Understand the high prevalence of trauma specifically among Hispanic and Latino students and families.
- Understand their role as teachers/migrant service providers when faced with mental health and trauma issues in the population they serve.
- Have access to resources and strategies to ensure culturally competent efforts to offer quality mental health assistance to those students and families.

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## Hispanic and Latino Populations

- 60 million
- 18.5% of current US population
- 22.3% under age 18
- 33% foreign born



Source: US Census Bureau, 2019

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## Migrant, Immigrant, Asylum Seeker, Refugee & Why it matters

Migrant	Immigrant	Asylum Seeker	Refugee
Someone who is moving from place to place either within their own country or across borders, usually for economic reasons such as seasonal work . Not forced to leave their native countries because of persecution or violence, but rather seeking better opportunities.	Someone who makes a conscious decision to leave his or her home and move to a foreign country with the intention of settling there. Depending on how they arrive they may become lawful permanent residents and eventually citizens.	Someone seeking international protection from dangers in their home country, but who's claim for refugee status hasn't been determined legally.	Someone that has been forced to flee his or her home because of war, violence or persecution Unable to return home unless/until conditions are safe again. Official government entity or UNHCR determines whether person meets the definition

The correct terminology is important because it reflects the experience and the access to services.

Source: IRC, 2020

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## Potential Sources of Trauma for Immigrant and Refugee Youth

- **Anxiety about the possibility of parental deportation or safety of family members in the country or origin;**
- **Family separation, either planned separation due to immigration logistics or separation as a result of immigration policy or detention;**
- **Bullying or victimization at school;**
- **Physical or sexual abuse;**

(Miller, Brown, Shramko, & Svetaz 2019)

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## Potential Sources of Trauma for Immigrant and Refugee Youth

- **Dangerous conditions during migration;**
- **Family conflict or intrafamilial violence;**
- **Unsafe neighborhoods or gun violence (in country of origin and after relocation);**
- **Racism and microaggressions (both in country of origin and after relocation).**

(Miller, Brown, Shramko, & Svetaz 2019)

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## Depending on their Acculturation Level and Immigrant Status, they may also Face Barriers of:

- English proficiency level
- Legal status
- Loss and trauma due to the immigration process
- Loss of status in the community
- Loss of self-esteem due to undocumented immigrant status



(Miller, Brown, Shramko, & Svetaz 2019)

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## Hispanic and Latino Children and Youth May Experience

Due to experiencing psychosocial stressors students may experience these symptoms.

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Post traumatic stress
- Higher externalizing behaviors



(Chavez-Dueñas, Adames, Perez Chavez, & Salas, 2019)

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## Acculturation Stress

- **Studies have shown that older Hispanic adults and Hispanic youth are especially vulnerable to psychological stresses associated with immigration and acculturation.**
- **Acculturation stress includes leaving family and friends and creating a new social network.**
- **Usually, the person's physical and mental health is affected.**

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## Immigration Stress

- **The phases of the migration process, *premigration*, *during migration*, and *postmigration*, have specific risks and exposures that may differentially impact youth mental health outcomes.**



(Cleary, Snead, Dietz-Chavez, Rivera & Edberg, 2018)

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## Immigration Stress

- Premigration trauma is associated with higher levels of anxiety.
- Postmigration trauma is significantly related to PTSD.
- PTSD and anxiety are significantly related to depression.

(Cleary, Snead, Dietz-Chavez, Rivera & Edberg, 2018)

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## Hispanic and Latino Children and Youth May Experience

- Ethno-racial trauma- individual and/or collective psychological distress after experiencing discrimination, threats to harm, violence and intimidation.
- Ethno-racial trauma could also be present at children and youth that witnessed discrimination or violence to others including their parents or siblings.

(Chavez-Dueñas, Adames, Perez Chavez, & Salas, 2019)

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## Ethno-racial trauma

- **Among Latinx children who experience ethnoracial trauma anxiety, fear of being separated from their parents, and post-traumatic symptoms might be present.**
- **Such fears can negatively impact their functioning in school by making it difficult to concentrate and complete assignments.**

(Chavez-Dueñas, Adames, Perez Chavez, & Salas, 2019)

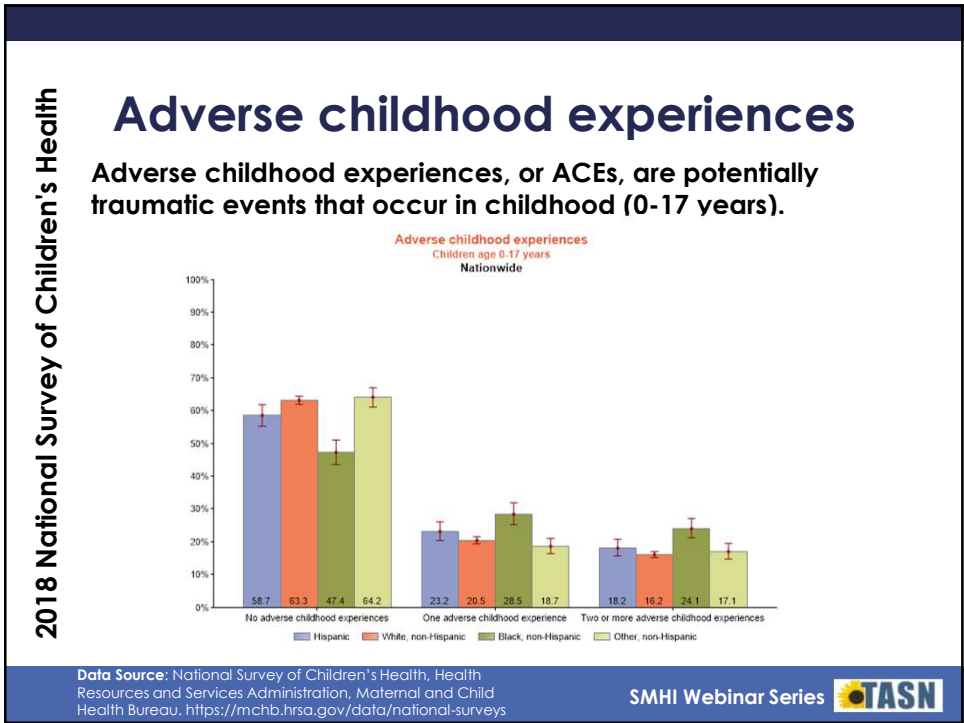
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## Ethno-racial trauma

- **Fearing law enforcement, and experiencing the stigma associated with immigration, have been associated with children distancing themselves from their cultural heritage.**

(Chavez-Dueñas, Adames, Perez Chavez, & Salas, 2019)

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# YOUR ROLE AS A TEACHER OR SERVICE PROVIDER WHEN FACED MIGRANT STUDENTS WITH MENTAL HEALTH AND TRAUMA NEEDS

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## Development of the Healthy, Solid Therapeutic Relationship

- Forming therapeutic rapport
- Expression of empathy
- Transference
- Countertransference
- Context, knowledge of the potential cultural and community values
- Consider the student/client's values and suspend judgement in order to understand the student/client

## Development of the Therapeutic Relationship

- Differing experiences of justice, oppression, and discrimination can impact the establishment of therapeutic rapport.
- The areas that are most impacted in the engagement and treatment phase are in the expression of empathy, transference, and countertransference.
- The provider must consider the client's values and suspend judgement in order to understand the client most accurately.

## Expression of Empathy

- Empathy is a “feeling in oneself the feeling of others.”
- Promotes a pro-social behavior.
- The provider should seek to empathize with the client regarding their experienced based on an understanding of each of their culturally based perspectives.
- This empathy offers clients a richer opportunity to resolve their own ethno-cultural conflicts.



(Comas-Díaz & Jacobsen, 1991)

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## Transference & Countertransference

- **Transference:** When the client attributes unconscious thoughts and feelings to the provider.
- **Countertransference:** The provider's own repressed feelings in reaction to the emotions, experiences, or problems of a person undergoing treatment, as specifically related to the race and ethnicity of the provider and client.

(Comas-Díaz & Jacobsen, 1991)

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## Impact of an Intercultural Relationship

**An intercultural relationship between a client and provider who are racially and ethnically dissimilar may present with some challenges.**

**The provider may:**

- Endorse colorblindness
- Deny importance of ethnicity and race
- Overly focus on culture\*\*
- Feel guilt, pity, or aggression toward client
- Feel ambivalent regarding cultural experiences

## Trauma informed strategies to help migrant students

**Recommendations from the Trauma Toolkit from Maryland State Education Association (MSEA) are to:**

- Train staff on the symptoms of trauma and provide strategies to help students cope and learn.
- Review school-wide infrastructure and culture, and identify ways to integrate trauma-sensitive practices into existing school operations.

## Trauma informed strategies to help migrant students

- **Develop relationships with local mental health providers, homeless and battered women's shelters, the department of youth and family services, and other organizations that could support students and families.**
- **Review your instructional approach for teaching traumatized children.**
- **Identify non-academic strategies to support students who have experienced trauma.**

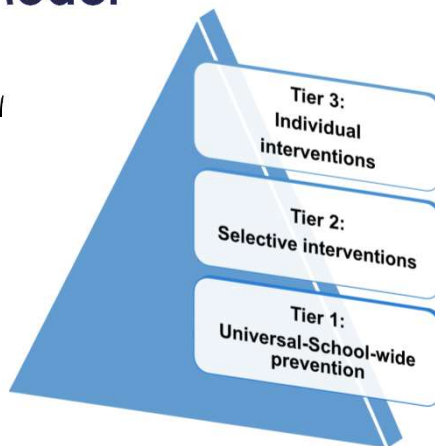
## Trauma informed strategies to help migrant students

- **Ensure each student has strong relationships with 2 - 3 adults in your school/program.**
- **Review school policies (especially discipline) from a trauma-informed lens and make any adjustments in process or protocol.**
- **Develop a plan to engage parents and build strong relationships with caregivers.**



## Multi-Tiered Systems of Support Model

- Universal**  
*(Tier 1; implemented with all students)*
- Targeted**  
*(Tier 2; implemented with a few students)*
- Individualized**  
*(Tier 3; implemented with individual students)*



## Trauma-Informed Therapies

- **Culturally-Modified Trauma Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CM-TF-CBT) was developed for Latino children who have experienced or witnessed a traumatic event.**
- **The primary goal of TF-CBT is to manage PTSD symptoms by emphasizing the role of the caregiver and the children's emotion regulation and coping capabilities.**

(Ramirez de Arellano et al., 2014)

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## Trauma-Informed Therapies

- **This therapeutic approach can be delivered in 12–16 sessions and different modalities and includes Spanish proverbs for reframing perception of the trauma and short stories for restructuring.**

(Cohen, Mannarino, & Deblinger, 2016)

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## Trauma-Informed Therapies

- **Dichos (proverbs) can be used during psychoeducation or cognitive processing.**
  - ***Después de la tormenta, llega la calma (after a storm comes a calm).***

(Cohen, Mannarino, & Deblinger, 2016)

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## Trauma-Informed Therapies

- **Cuentos (short stories) teach children and adolescents ways to modify their behaviors and thoughts in a more adapted one.**
- **It is known as *Cuento Therapy* and entails reading a *cuento* to the child and then discussing the moral message.**
  - **Little Red Ant**
  - **Laughing Skull**
  - ***La Pequeña Locomotora que Sí Pudo***

(Cohen, Mannarino, & Deblinger, 2016)

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## Questions



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## Resources for School Personnel

- **Supporting Student Mental Health: Resources to Prepare Educators:**  
<https://mhttcnetwork.org/centers/mhttc-network-coordinating-office/supporting-student-mental-health>
- **Child Trauma Toolkit for Educators:**  
<https://wmich.edu/sites/default/files/attachments/u57/2013/child-trauma-toolkit.pdf>

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