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Encuentros: A School-Based Model of Non- Clinical Mental Health Support

SBHA Conference
June 28, 2023



Encuentros: An innovative school-based model of non-clinical mental health support

Moderator

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Panelists

Erik Barrios, MSW, Therapist, True Connection Counseling, LLC

Daniela Delgado, Evaluation Coordinator, Identity, Inc.

Sandra Mejia, Youth Peer Leader, Wheaton High School Wellness Center

Youth Encuentros* Groups

what

Multi-session emotional support program to help young people manage the mental health impacts of trauma (including unaddressed prior ACES, COVID-19 traumas and those specific to immigration and separation/reunification) with non-clinical trauma- and culturally -informed strategies

who

Designed with the Latino community for the Latino community and delivered by the Latino community with support from Identity staff

* In Spanish, “Encuentros” is the act of coming together. Made possible with support from Montgomery County’s Department of Health and Human Services and Latino Health Initiative, University of Maryland, the Healthcare Initiative Foundation, CareFirst, Giving Together, Adventist HealthCare and Annie E. Casey Foundation.

Youth Encuentros

The model

Participant Recruitment

Staff and trained and trusted Youth Peer Leaders invite young people into a safe space to engage in open, confidential, and empathic group discussion about emotional health challenges

Settings

Youth Peer Leader Roles

Recruit participants from individual network	Invite peers for open, confidential, empathetic conversation about emotional health challenges	Co-facilitate Encuentros group sessions with staff	Receive ongoing training & support
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Encuentros Youth Peer Leaders are natural connectors who invite their peers into a safe space. These are the people that other people lean on.

Youth Peer Leaders

Required training

Complete an Encuentros group as a participant (6 hours)

Complete basic training on HIPAA, Confidentiality and Sexual Abuse Awareness (2 hours)

Youth Peer Leaders Supervision

To ensure the quality and fidelity of the Encuentros groups, Youth Peer Leaders participate in bi-weekly supervision with the staff team

- to work through challenges and share successes facilitating groups,
- to discuss establishing and maintaining group norms to ensure safety and confidentiality,
- to review protocols and problem solve.

A staff member co-facilitates every Encuentros group & handles any unforeseen red flags or emergencies and in the role of mandated reporters

Youth Encuentros Groups

Evaluation model

Rapid cycle iterative evaluation

Qualitative and quantitative methods

Use data in real time to make adjustments, improvements, & adaptations

Develop and evaluate simultaneously

Preliminary findings

Degree of interest and participation from community members

Meeting an enormous need in the community

Potential to become a national model for strengthening mental health in communities

Youth Encuentros Groups

Outputs since spring 2022

17 Groups completed with 153 participants. High rate of attendance - on average 81%

13 additional Groups with 143 participants will be completed by June 30th, 2023

Trained 12 Youth Peer Leaders to recruit participants and co-facilitate group

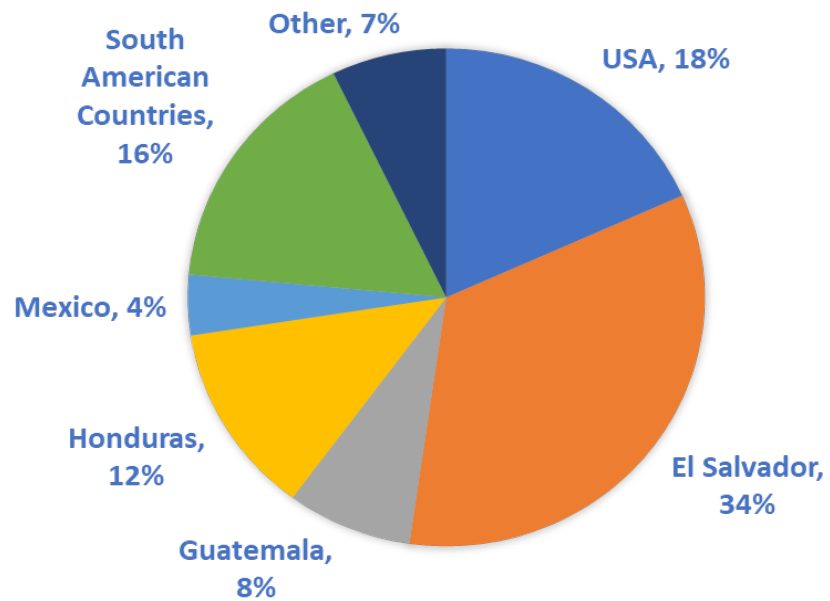
Next steps: Youth Encuentros Groups

- Implement at least 70, in-person or virtual Youth Encuentros groups across five school-based health and wellness center schools, and other high schools and in the community
- Train 18 youth peer leaders (approximately 6 per school)
- Respond to the needs of the participants by introducing new session topics

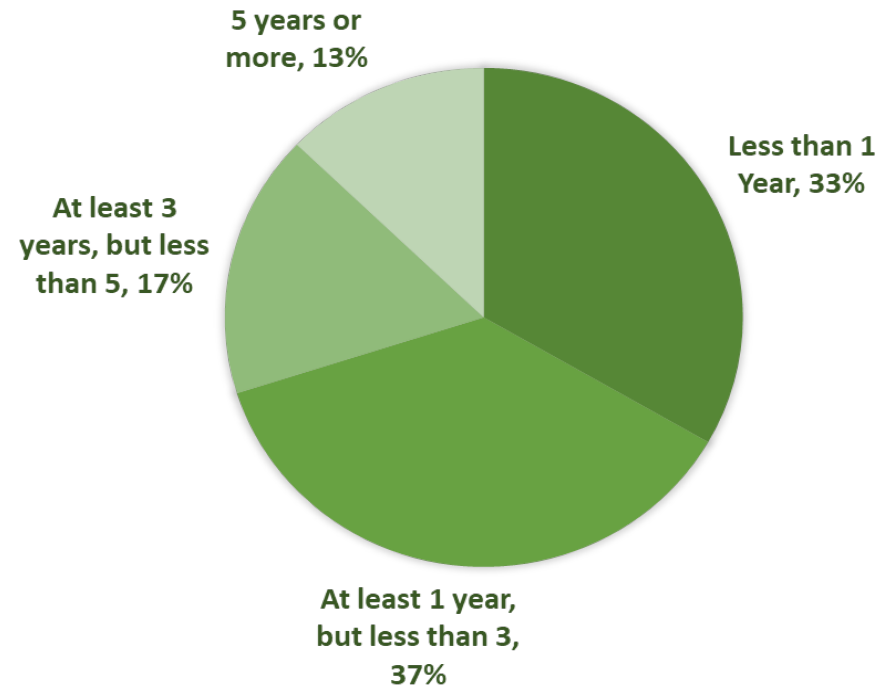
Demographics of participants

(Research group, n=153)

Country of Origin

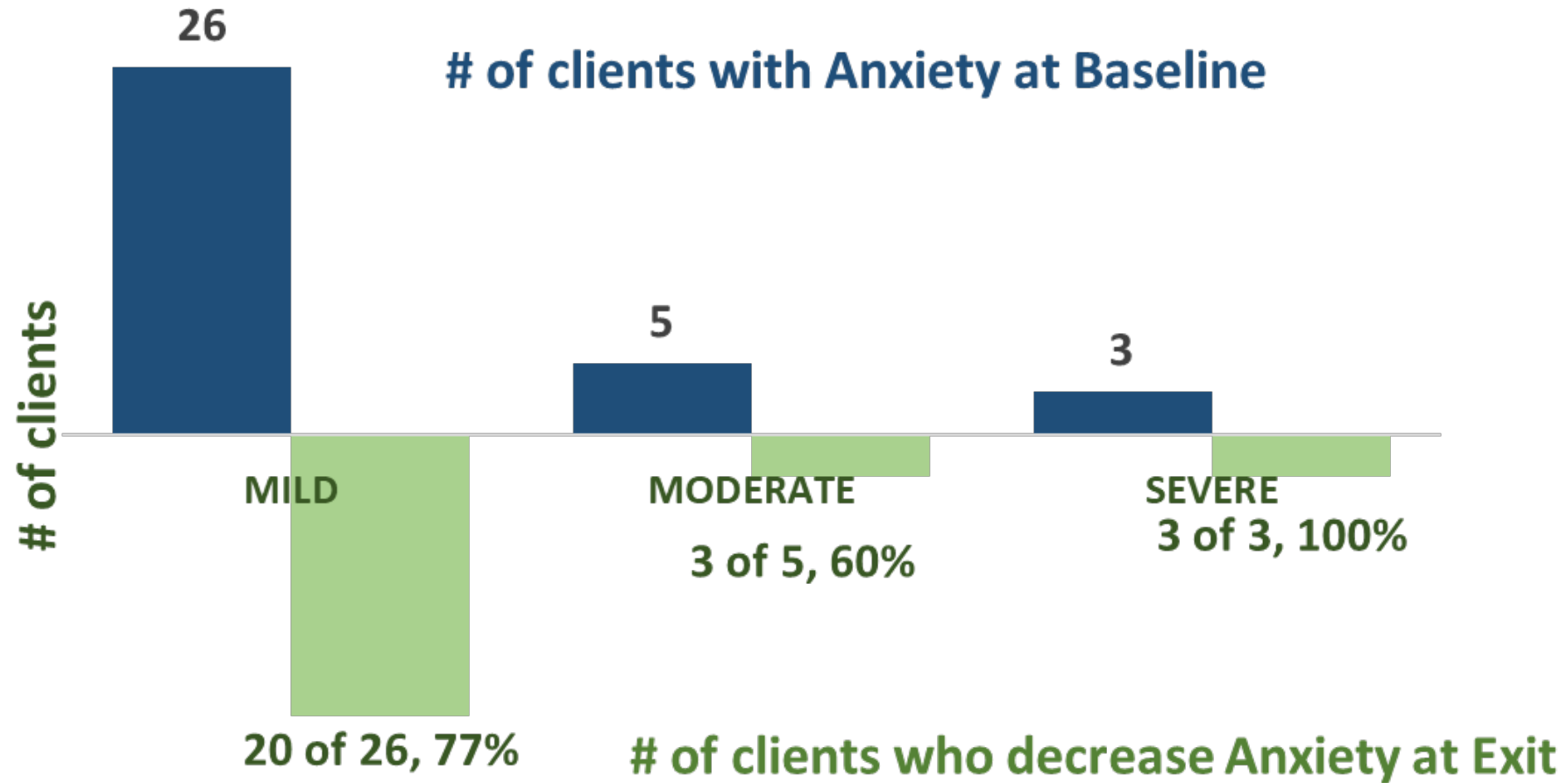


Foreign-born time in USA



Decrease in anxiety

(Research group, n=93, GAD-7 survey results)



GAD-7 (the *Generalized Anxiety Disorder Scale (GAD-7)*) is a 7-item self-report measure used to assess anxiety)

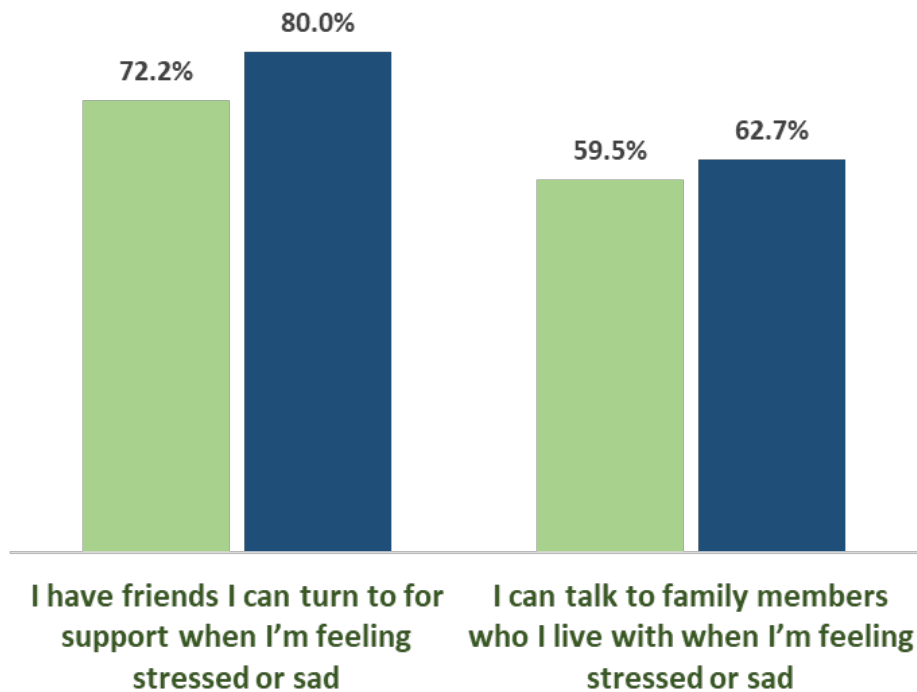


Better coping with stress & sadness

(Research group, n=153, survey items)

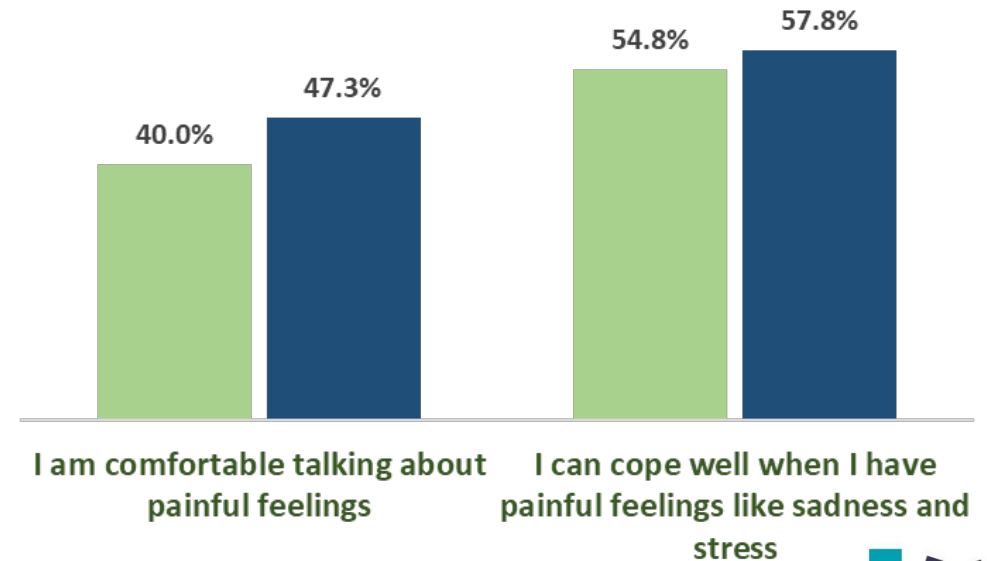
Managing stress

■ BASELINE ■ EXIT



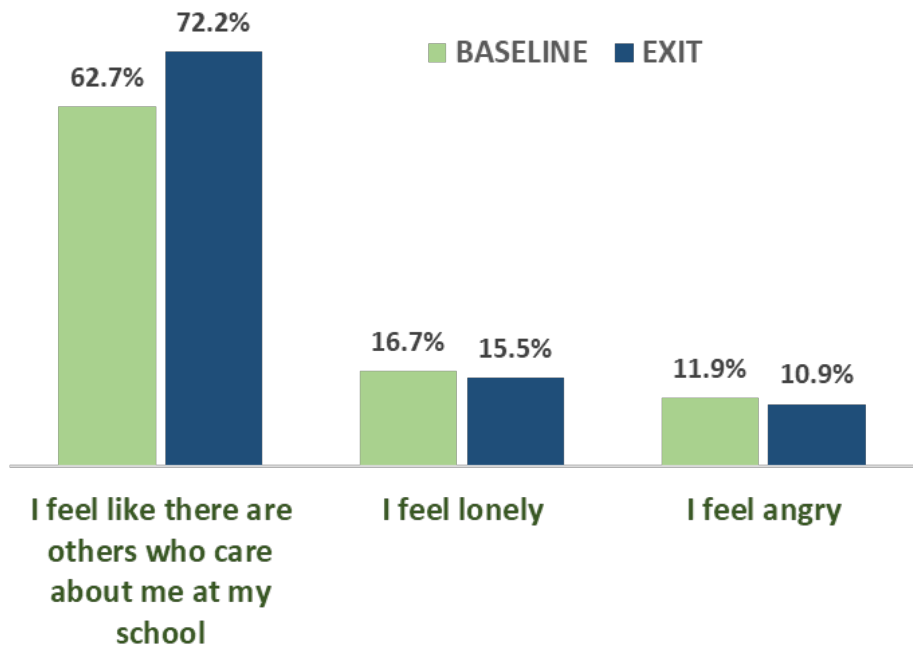
Managing feelings of sadness and despair

■ BASELINE ■ EXIT



Youth Emotional Wellbeing

(Research group, n=153, survey items)



How much do you think being in this group increased your ability to handle or cope with your feelings?



How much do you think that being in this group increased your understanding of yourself and your feelings?



Focus group evaluation

Focus group followed each cohort:

What was your experience in the group?

What motivated you to participate?

What has helped you the most?

What could make the group better?

Youth's focus groups

I don't think I feel so strong about helping other people relieve stress, but I feel better about helping myself. I learned a lot and I need some more time so that I can feel confident to help other people. Right now, I just want to focus on what I learned for myself.

I really liked all the topic we talked about and thought the presentation was really good. I agree with my classmate that this is something everyone should do. Everything is what happens with us, and it make us think about how we can change things.

CME and CE Information

In support of improving patient care, this activity has been planned and implemented by the School-Based Health Alliance and Moses/Weitzman Health System, Inc. and its Weitzman Institute and is jointly accredited by the Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education (ACCME), the Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education (ACPE), and the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC), to provide continuing education for the healthcare team.



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