

# THE PSYCH POST

*Trauma Informed Newsletter*



## ENHANCING TRAUMA INFORMED CARE FOR IMMIGRANT FAMILIES

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Immigrant families are often exposed to cumulative adversities which could lead them to psychological risk. Immigrant families present notable resilience and protective factors such as individual characteristics, family strengths, spirituality, etc. However, many immigrant families can benefit from mental health services. To successfully serve this population through the lens of trauma-informed care, cultural competence is an important piece to help immigrant families overcome their challenges. **Cultural competence means to understand and accept different cultural values, attitudes, and behaviors.**

“CULTURAL COMPETENCY WITH IMMIGRANT CHILDREN AND FAMILIES REQUIRES MORE THAN JUST LEARNING ABOUT THEIR CULTURE. IT ALSO INCLUDES AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE PROCESS OF MIGRATION, THE REASONS FAMILIES MIGRATE, AND THE PROCESS OF ACCULTURATION AND RELATED FAMILY OR MARITAL STRESSORS.”



# COMMON EXPERIENCES AMONG IMMIGRANT FAMILIES

Immigrant families might have experienced various potential traumatic experiences at different stages. These can occur in "pre-migration," or before they migrate, during migration, or after they have migrated to a new country.

Here are potentially traumatic events which immigrant families could have experienced:

1) Violence (political, domestic, and community), abuse (physical and sexual), economic insecurity, drug violence, extortion, gang violence, war, natural disasters, being a victim of and witness to a crime, poverty

2) Violence, dangerous journey, exploit by illegal human smuggling agent and/or traffickers, sexual assault, kidnap, parental separation

3) Lack of job opportunities, discrimination, lack of access to services and education, risk of deportation or detention, poverty, language barrier, community violence, inadequate housing, social isolation, intergenerational conflicts



# WORKING WITH IMMIGRANT FAMILIES

There is a **need for culturally sensitive and relevant services provided in community settings**. The following ideas will help us provide such services:

- Increasing the number of bilingual providers, conducting culturally competent assessment, and integrating evidence-based practice with competent treatment.
- Taking a strengths-based approach.
- Understand and encounter traumatized children and families by viewing them through each family's cultural lens.
- The particular expressions of children's behavior, developmental progress, and attachment style are modified by the embedded values, beliefs, and socialization practices from the family's native culture.
- Culture shapes what children perceive and interpret as traumatic, their reaction to trauma, and their potential trauma reminders.
- Make immigrant families feel safe, seen, and respect their cultural belief about attachment, childrearing, and coping with stress and pain.
- It is important to hear, in client's own words, what their traumatic experience means to them.
- Educate immigrants on their rights and the process of accessing health services, if needed.
- Be aware of and examine your own biases and assumptions of different cultures and work on eliminating them.

## REFERENCES

Torres, A. S., Santiago, C. D., Walts, K. K., & Richards, M. H. (2018). Immigration policy, practices, and procedures: the impact on the mental health of Mexican and Central American Youth and Families

Grayson, J. (2011). Virginia Child Protection Newsletter, Volume 90.

## RESOURCES

**The National Child Traumatic Stress Network**

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

**Child Welfare Information Gateway**

<https://www.childwelfare.gov/>