

MMHPI SIM Board Update

Who: Center for Child and Family Wellness + the Paso del Norte Center

What: El Paso Behavioral Health Consortium Family Leadership Council Partners Convene to discuss opportunities for improving child, youth and family service and support systems.

In a joint effort with the El Paso Behavioral Health Consortium, Paso del Norte Health Foundation, and the Judicial Commission on Mental Health, the Paso del Norte Center at Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute conducted a Youth Sequential Intercept Model (SIM) event on October 25th and 26th. The event served as a platform for community leaders and stakeholders in child, youth, and family services to discuss strategies to divert young individuals with behavioral health needs away from the juvenile justice system and the school-to-prison pipeline.

The Sequential Intercept Model is widely used across the United States and provides an effective framework for planning justice diversion programs that span various sectors, including schools, crisis response, child welfare, and juvenile justice. The El Paso SIM event specifically concentrated on intercepts 0 and 1, delving into schools, community and behavioral health, law enforcement, and crisis intervention.

The primary objective of the SIM mapping session was not just to produce tangible outcomes but also to facilitate open dialogue among diverse leaders from different sectors. This discussion allowed participants to identify gaps, opportunities, and alternatives to justice system involvement for young people.

During the event, stakeholders also examined the issue of THC vaping, which is becoming increasingly prevalent among youth and young adults. Possession of THC (tetrahydrocannabinol) in Texas can lead to felony charges. This aspect of the project complemented the ongoing system improvements of the El Paso Behavioral Health Consortium and provided valuable data to support the Smoke-Free Paso del Norte initiative, aimed at reducing THC vaping among youth. The insights gained from the event will help inform youth diversion strategies, with a particular focus on schools and the initial interactions with law enforcement.

Approximately 70 individuals participated in the 1.5-day event, and their feedback was overwhelmingly positive. Participants emphasized the value of networking opportunities, the timeliness of the information shared, and the readiness of teams to engage in addressing the identified issues. Collaboration among the diverse groups represented at the event was robust, and steps have already been taken to implement parts of the action plan developed during the sessions.

As the event concludes, a clear highlight is the commitment of El Paso's community leaders to creating better outcomes for young people facing mental and behavioral health challenges and to tackle the rising concern of THC vaping among youth. The community eagerly awaits the related report that will further inform and guide their efforts in developing effective strategies to divert youth from the juvenile justice system and address the vaping issue.



