



First Connection Work Group Meeting Notes

May 7, 2024

8:30 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.

Paso del Norte Health Foundation

221 N. Kansas, 19th Floor

El Paso, Texas 79901

Meeting Room C

Attendees:

Noemi Armendariz
Sharon Butterworth
Mariana Cardenas
Gus Cohen
David Cotchery
Gilda Gil
Adrienne Harrel
Josue Lachica
Violeta Lopez-Unzueta
Laura Marquez
Enrique Mata
Ruben Marquez
Dr. Sarah Martin
Kim Shumate
Emily Stuessy
Kathie Valencia
Sophia Wozniak

Representing:

TTUHSC El Paso CPAN/TCHATT
Paso del Norte Center at Meadows Institute
El Paso Child Guidance Center
YWCA El Paso del Norte Region
American GI Forum/National Veterans Outreach
Paso del Norte Children's Development Center
TTUHSC El Paso CPAN/TCHATT
Paso del Norte Center at Meadows Institute
United Way of El Paso
Paso del Norte Children's Development Center
Paso del Norte Center at Meadows Institute
American GI Forum/National Veterans Outreach
TTUHSC El Paso CPAN/TCHATT
County of El Paso Juvenile Justice Center
El Paso Independent School District
El Paso Center for Children
Emergence Health Network

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Welcome and Introductions

Josue Lachica welcomed the group and called for introductions.

First Connection through community settings

Enrique Mata provided the group an update on the efforts of the Meadows Institute to connect with local primary care and pediatric providers in hopes of developing some champion Collaborative Care model practices in the region.

The group also discussed the efforts to improve access to programs such as the Child Psychiatry Access Network (CPAN) and Texas Child Health Access Through Telemedicine (TCHAT), and how collaboration is developing with the schools and the nonprofit providers for improved upstream access. Dr. Martin reported that as EPISD joins TCHAT, they will have most districts in their designated service region actively making child health access to telehealth a more seamless option for timely assessment and as needed connection with mental health services. The state is allowing for up to eight sessions. Dr. Martin also shared that their Psychiatry residency and fellowship programs continue to grow. They now have four fellows for child psychiatry. The number of slots has doubled and there are now at least five child psychiatrists that have stayed in the region after completing the program. Texas Tech is also working on a pilot project to expand consultation for primary care settings and perinatal women.

Several concerns were identified with workforce availability. Most of the organizations represented are seeking professional staff. For example, Ms. Kathie Valencia commented that they are taking an approach to bring interns on board. Ms. Adrienne Harrel commented that Texas Tech has positions open with some positions that could be a match for individuals who are early in their mental health career path. Some strategies the group discussed to help alleviate the workforce challenges included arranging for free of charge supervision for LPC-As to complete their required practical hours, providing opportunity for staff to shift through natural attrition and growth to other organizations to create more robust and diverse experience across a professional's career span.

Dr. Emily Steussy commented that El Paso Independent School District (EPISD) is seeking to expand and enhance its social work team. She explained that EPISD has had social work staff to assist with coordination of care and to allow counselors to focus on other needs. The program started 32 years ago with a CDBG grant only serving up to second grade. They are now growing programming from pre-k to the 6th grade. They have 37 social workers, some full-time, some part-time. Part of their role is to do community outreach and address the social work aspect. It was suggested that this program, if not already existing, periodically convene with other social work teams existing teams within other school districts.

First Connection through mental health settings

Emergence Health Network held a second learning session on first episode psychosis entitled "Mind Matters: Identifying and Assisting with Psychosis Effectively" on Friday, May 3rd. Those who participated in the session had very positive comments about how understanding can improve timely treatment and decrease fears about connecting with mental health service providers. Dr. Martin commented that the Child Psychiatry Fellows are providing support for the First Episode Psychosis program at EHN. First episode psychosis requires broader explanations for family members of individuals who have been diagnosed, especially in the areas of triggers and treatment.

Laura Marquez with Paso del Norte Children's Development Center provided an update on the Help Me Grow initiative. Ms. Marquez commented that they are on track with progress collaborating with champion pediatric practices and have connected with more than seventy-four families along with their efforts to improve

workforce training in the area of autism spectrum conditions. She also summarized the work on their Neurodevelopmental Disabilities Workforce Capacity grant. This is a Pilot Project of the Health Resources Services Administration (HRSA) entitled Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and Related Disabilities (LEND). Ms. Marquez explained that the PdN Children's staff with the assistance of Dr. Camille Maldonado, a parent who is also a primary care physician are working to bring this program to El Paso. Their efforts are hoped to bring a greater understanding of conditions such as Autism to providers in the region. She explained that most pediatricians use the MCHAT which is a parent reported assessment of developmental milestones. By bringing training and awareness of other screening tools to help make a more comprehensive assessment will improve opportunity for youth in need of more focused care.

Other Business:

Sharon Butterworth shared a recently released book called "The Anxious generation: How the great rewiring of childhood is causing an epidemic of mental illness." She explained that the book not only shares key concerns and possible solutions as they relate to youth and their access to technology. Ms. Butterworth shared the following podcast link that summarizes the book: <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/the-anxious-generation-with-jonathan-haidt/id1561689671?i=1000650449476> .

The data in the book are of great concern and some of the solutions are challenging. For example, there is a recommendation for collective adoption of four norms, especially for children K-8th grade:

- No child should have a smart phone until they are a freshman in high school. Flip phones are ok because they are limited to use for communication only.
- No social media until 16 years of age, especially no tic tokk, Instagram, or snap chat.
- Remove smart phone access from school classrooms.
- Increase opportunities for independent free play for kids. Restore a play-based childhood.

David Cotchery and Ruben Marquez shared an overview of their work under the [American GI Forum/National Veterans Outreach](#). The National Veterans Outreach Program (NVOP) has been supporting veterans and their families for over 50 years. Offering housing, employment, and mental health services Ft. Bliss is the largest base in the united states and they work to connect individuals in need with the community organizations. For more information contact them at 915-774-0525.

Next Meeting

The group will be targeted to meet on June 4th at Paso del Norte Health Foundation, Meeting Room C from 8:30 – 10:00 am. Room availability will need to be confirmed. A meeting notice will be sent to the FLC members.