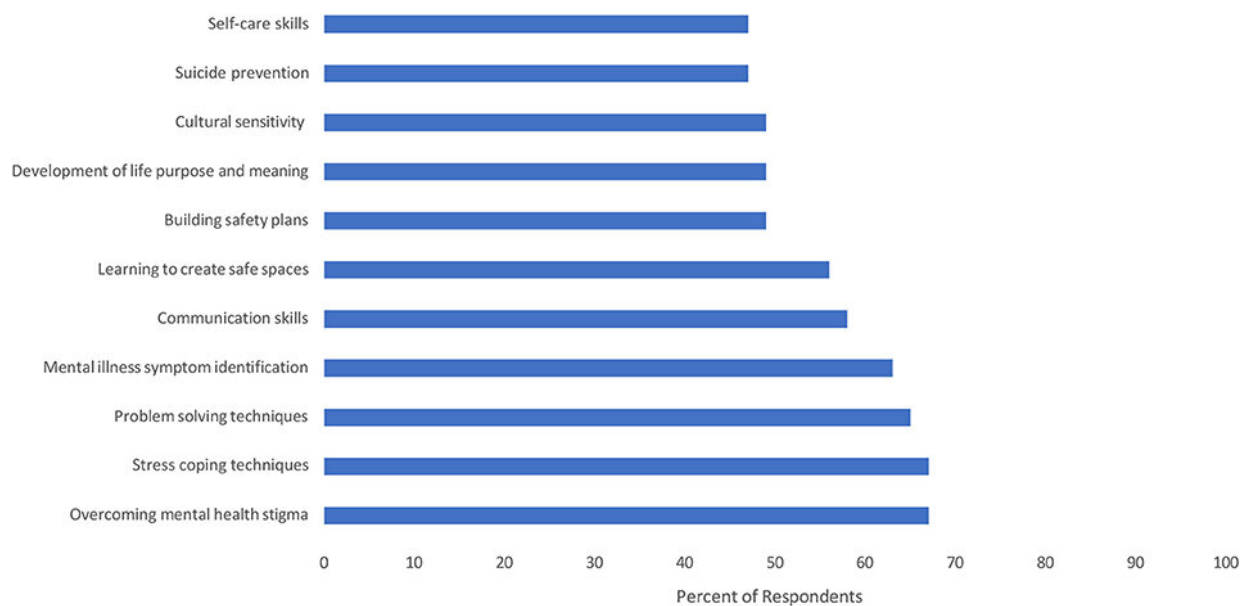


Health care workers need better training to support immigrants' mental health needs, study shows

September 26 2022, by Amy McCaig



Training recommendations for CHWs to address mental health needs in underserved communities. Credit: *Frontiers in Public Health* (2022). DOI: 10.3389/fpubh.2022.928575

As the immigrant population in the U.S. grows, so does the need for mental health care in the communities where they live—a problem spotlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

A new study from Rice University and the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio finds [health care workers](#) need better training on communication, [mental health](#) and culture to support immigrant mental health needs.

"Mind the gap: Identifying training needs of community health workers to address mental health in U.S. Latino communities during and beyond the COVID-19 pandemic" appears in the latest edition of *Frontiers in Public Health*. The researchers examined [survey data](#) collected from focus groups of health care workers in historically underserved areas near the U.S.-Mexico border.

"From our data collected and analyzed, it was abundantly clear that [mental health issues](#) were especially prevalent amid these medically underserved communities during the pandemic, and yet, community health care workers felt unequipped to fully address the needs of their patients," said Luz Garcini, an assistant professor of psychological sciences at Rice and the study's lead author.

Specifically, workers expressed the need for additional training to support them with communication, identifying mental illness symptoms, handling trauma, promoting self-care and stress reduction, and practicing cultural awareness and sensitivity.

"The tasks performed by community health workers require a unique skill set and a significant emotional investment," the authors wrote.

"Mental health training is required for them to effectively carry out their work and maintain their own well-being. It is time to invest in the mental health training and support for these essential workers to ultimately further health equity and to protect the mental health of the most vulnerable during and beyond the COVID-19 pandemic."

Garcini hopes future work will continue to identify and implement ways

to address training needs.

"Only then will we be able to best serve the complex health needs of historically marginalized communities," she said.

More information: Luz M. Garcini et al, Mind the gap: Identifying training needs of community health workers to address mental health in U.S. Latino communities during and beyond the COVID-19 pandemic, *Frontiers in Public Health* (2022). [DOI: 10.3389/fpubh.2022.928575](https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2022.928575)

Provided by Rice University

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