Bienestar: A Program for Traumatized Youth

Pia V. Escudero, L.C.S.W.
Crisis Counseling & Intervention Services
LAUSD/RAND/UCLA Trauma Services Adaptation Center for Schools and Communities
Los Angeles Unified School District

Erum Nadeem, Ph.D.
LAUSD/RAND/UCLA Trauma Services Adaptation Center for Schools and Communities

Analuisa Espinoza, L.C.S.W.
LAUSD Immigrant Assessment and Placement Center

Bradley Pilon, M.F.T.
LAUSD Immigrant Assessment and Placement Center
Belmont Newcomer
Welcome to LAUSD

- Current student population total:
  - 877,010
    - Includes k-12 enrollment, community adult schools, and early education centers
    - The total area of LAUSD is 710 square miles. In addition of the city of Los Angeles, the district serves many other cities and several unincorporated areas of LA County.
American Indian/Alaska Native - 0.3%
Asian - 3.8%
Black, not Hispanic - 11.6%
Filipino - 2.2%
Hispanic - 72.8%
Pacific Islander - 0.3%
White, not Hispanic - 9.0%
Important Facts About Schools

Education Statistics
- 15,000 School Districts
- 100,000 Schools
- 70% Children K-12 in Schools
- 50% of Total US Population Connected to Schools

Schools have become the de facto source of mental health services for children
Traumatic Events That Affect Children

- Trauma is embedded in the fabric of daily life
  - Child Abuse and maltreatment
  - Domestic violence
  - Community violence
  - Criminal victimization
  - Medical trauma
  - Traumatic loss
  - Accidents and fires
Range of Traumatic Events

- School Related Violence
- Bullying
- Gang Violence and Threat
- Internet Sources of Information, Values, Instruction
Traumatic Events among Recent Immigrant Students

- Exposure to violence in country of origin
- Traumatic experiences during migration
- Exposure to violence in United States
- Separation and loss
“Interpersonal violence is a public health emergency ... and one of the most significant public health issues facing America”

National Studies: 20% - 50% of children in the U.S. exposed to community violence

Disproportionately affects urban, poor, and minority youth
National Survey of Adolescents 
Prevalence of Violence History

- No Violence (27%)
- Witness Only (48%)
- Assault + Witness (23%)
- Direct Assault Only (2%)

(N=1,245) Kilpatrick et al, 1995
LAUSD 6th Grade Students
Prevalence of Past Year Violence, 2004

- Gun or knife violence (40%)
- Non-weapon related violence (54%)
- No Violence (6%)

(N=28,882)
Violence Exposure and Symptoms among Latino youth (n=770)

- Violence exposure (in last year)
  - 90% report witnessing violence
  - 85% report being threatened with violence
  - 69% report violence victimization
  - 43% report violence involving a knife or gun

- Symptoms
  - 27% with PTSD symptoms in clinical range
  - 16% with Depressive symptoms in clinical range
Mental Health Consequences of Violence Exposure

- Post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
- Depression
- Substance abuse
- Behavioral problems
Common Reactions to Stress or Trauma

- Having trouble speaking
- Thinking about it all the time
- Wanting to Not think or talk about it
- Avoiding places, people or things that remind them of incident
- Feeling scared for no reason
- Feeling crazy or out of control
- Not being able to remember parts of what happened
- Having trouble concentrating
Common reactions to Stress or Trauma

- Being on guard
- Jumping when there is a loud noise
- Feeling anger
- Feeling shame
- Feeling guilt
- Feelings of sadness/grief/loss
- Feeling bad about yourself
- Having physical health problems and complaints
Why a program for traumatized students?

One night several years ago, I saw men shooting at each other, people running to hide. I was scared and I thought I was going to die. After this happened, I started to have nightmares. I felt scared all the time. I couldn’t concentrate in class like before. I had thoughts that something bad could happen to me. I started to get in a lot of fights at school and with my brothers.

Martin, 6th grader
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The negative effects of trauma exposure may explain one aspect of the bleak reality of the Achievement Gap...that psychologically traumatized students who live in communities with high rates of poverty and crime continue to trail far behind their peers academically. *Trauma leaves children behind.*

*(Dr. Marleen Wong, LAUSD, 2005)*

Students who live in communities with high rates of poverty and crime have lower test scores and higher drop out rates from high school, even after generations of education “reform.”

*(Shin, 2005)*
Students and Trauma DVD
How does violence exposure impact learning?

- Decreased IQ and reading ability (Delaney-Black et al, 2003)
- Lower grade-point average (Hurt et al, 2001)
- Higher school absenteeism (Hurt et al, 2001)
- Increased expulsions and suspensions (LAUSD Survey)
- Decreased rates of high school graduation (Grogger, 1997)
Which students are at greatest risk for violence exposure, PTSD and Depression?: Disparity

- Ethnic minorities (90% in LAUSD)
- Lower socio-economic status (73% in LAUSD on free or reduced lunch program)
- Older children
- Early conduct problems
- Living in urban areas
- Males - LAUSD Study of 28,500 6th Graders
3 Symptom Clusters of PTSD

These symptoms must be present for at least 1 month and must cause significant distress or impairment in functioning in order to formulate the diagnosis of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder

- Re-experiencing
- Avoidance/Numbing
- Increased Arousal
How does distress from violence affect students in the classroom?

- Decline in classroom performance from:
  - Inability to concentrate
  - Flashbacks, preoccupation with trauma
  - Avoidance of school and other places

- Development of other behavioral and emotional problems:
  - Substance abuse
  - Aggression
  - Depression
What can be done for students exposed to violence?

- Early detection of violence exposure and associated distress
- Teaching students skills to cope better with distress and to learn social problem solving skills
- Informing teachers and parents how they can support these students in the classroom and at home
Bienestar Program Components

- Institute community-based participatory process
- Alleviate barriers to care via case management (Immigrant Center)
- Develop and implement youth program for 9th grade students (Belmont HS)
- Raise trauma awareness among school staff and caregivers
LAUSD Crisis Counseling and Intervention Service

- Will provide overall leadership for CAC grant
- Supported by UCLA Health Services Research Center as part of SAMHSA-funded LAUSD/RAND/UCLA Trauma Services Adaptation Center for Schools and Communities
Provide a range of health services to facilitate families enrolling in school
- Emergency Medi-Cal
- Nursing/immunizations
- Psycho-educational assessments
- Social work
- School counseling and placement assistance

Social worker and school psychologist will provide local leadership related to *Bienestar* case management and mental health services
LAUSD Immigrant Center: Additional Countries Served

- Argentina
- Bangladesh
- Belize
- Bolivia
- Brazil
- Bulgaria
- Cambodia
- Canada
- Chile
- Colombia
- Congo
- Costa Rica
- Cuba
- Czech Rep.
- Denmark
- Ecuador
- Egypt
- India
- Iran
- Italy
- Jamaica
- Japan
- Kazakhstan
- Kenya
- Laos
- Lithuania
- Malaysia
- Morocco
- Nepal
- Nicaragua
- Pakistan
- Paraguay
- Peru
- Russia
- Saudia Arabia
- Senegal
- Singapore
- Spain
- Sudan
- Thailand
- Turkey
- USA
- Uzbekistan
- Vietnam
LAUSD Immigrant Center: Key Language Groups

- Spanish: 66%
- Korean: 15%
- Tagalog: 6%
- Chinese: 4%
- Armenian: 2%
- Mongolian: 2%
- English: 1%
- Other: 4%
Belmont High School’s Newcomer Center

- Spanish: 89%
- Tagalog: 4%
- Chinese: 3%
- Korean: 2%
- Other: 2%
Bienestar: Program Components

- Community coalition
  - To include diverse community and professional voices
    - Immigrant parents
    - Student leaders
    - Professional experts (clinicians, nurses, teachers, community leaders)
  - Monthly meetings
    - Discuss mutual goals and how to meet service needs using existing resources
Bienestar: Program Components

- Community coalition members
  - Asian-serving agencies (Koreatown Youth and Family Center, Search to Involve Philippino Americans, Chinatown Service Center)
    - Implement psychoeducation counseling groups at Belmont
    - Referral source
    - Consultation re: needs of Asian immigrant students
  - Immigrant-serving Organizations
    - Sin Fronteras
    - Queenscare Health and Faith Partnership
Bienestar: Program Components

- Immigrant Center: Minimizing Barriers to Care
  - Trauma-focused mental health screening tool for all students
  - Increased capacity for referral and follow-up related to school enrollment and other needs
    - Intensive efforts focused on Belmont 9th grade students
  - Tracking system will be introduced as part of quality improvement efforts
Bienestar: Program Components

Belmont High School Newcomer students: Youth Program

- Primary prevention: counseling groups for all recent immigrant students
  - Acculturation and adaptation
  - Psycho-education re: US educational systems
- Early intervention: adapted version our CBITS program
  - Group cognitive behavioral therapy
  - Problem-solving (acculturative stress, family reunification/separation, and adolescent risk behaviors)
  - Academic engagement
Bienestar: Program Components

- Raising Trauma Awareness
  - For School Staff
    - In-services for Immigrant Center staff, teachers, and school staff across LAUSD
  - Parent support groups and workshops
    - Immigrant center
    - Belmont
CBITS Is a Product of a Participatory Partnership

- CBITS can be provided by school-based clinicians
- Framing program in terms of a “curriculum” not mental health treatment
- CBITS is feasible within schools
  - Sessions occur during one class period
  - Can be flexible with school schedule
  - Minimal burden on teachers
- Easy identification of students for the program
  - Short screening questionnaire filled out by students
CBITS Program

- 10 trauma-focused, group therapy sessions for students delivered on school campuses and focused on skills building
- Parent outreach, education about trauma, parenting support
- Teacher education about detecting and supporting traumatized students
- Evaluation with randomized wait-list comparison group design
Key Program Components

- Educating students about trauma and common symptoms
Key Program Components

- Educating students about trauma and common symptoms
- Relaxation training and fear thermometer
The Fear Thermometer

10
8 – Walking home from school alone
7
6
5
4
3 – Going out on playground at recess
2
1

Very anxious

Not anxious at all
Key Program Components

- Educating students about trauma and common symptoms
- Relaxation training and fear thermometer
- Cognitive therapy
Key Program Components

- Educating students about trauma and common symptoms
- Relaxation training and fear thermometer
- Cognitive therapy
- Learning to face the trauma
Key Program Components

- Educating students about trauma and common symptoms
- Relaxation training and fear thermometer
- Cognitive therapy
- Learning to face the trauma
- Problem-solving in social situations
Parent and Teacher Education Sessions

- Parent Education Sessions
  - 2 sessions related to CBITS
    - Covering the main techniques
  - 2 sessions relevant to other parent concerns

- Teacher Education Sessions
  - Overview of CBITS program
  - Tips for working with traumatized youth
CBITS as Recommended Practice

- U.S. Department of Education: CBITS meets standards of the No Child Left Behind policy
- Recognized as evidence-based program by:
  - National Child Traumatic Stress Network
  - National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices (NREPP)
  - Promising Practices Network
  - Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP)
Robert Wood Johnson
Caring Across Communities
site visitors…

Thank you for time and interest in our work!