



Community Health Workers and UT Rio Grande Valley Collaboration on Maternal Health Research in South Texas

Candace Robledo, PhD, MPH
Community Health Worker Advisory Committee Meeting
April 15, 2025



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Maternal Health Research Center

Background

The UTRGV Maternal Health Research Center was established in fall 2023

The Center is funded by a five-year grant from the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA)

UTRGV is one of **16** research centers funded in the United States

UTRGV is one of **4** research centers in Texas

The Maternal Health Research Coordinating Center is located at Morgan State University in Baltimore, Maryland

The other 3 maternal health research centers in Texas are housed at Texas A&M Corpus Christi, Texas Southern University, and University of Texas Arlington

This is one of our logos! It was the winning entry in the student logo competition sponsored by the Maternal Health Research Center. This winning logo was designed by students Carlos Botello and Clarissa Falcon at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley. Each student received a \$250 scholarship for their winning entry.



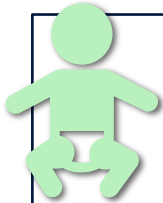
What do we know?



The number of teens (15-19 years) giving birth is higher



The number of Hispanic women experiencing long-lasting depression after delivery is higher



The number of babies born too early (<39 weeks gestation) is higher



The blood pressure of pregnant women is too high



Pregnant women do not get checkups from a doctor or wait to get one until their second trimester



The amount of body fat among pregnant women is too high

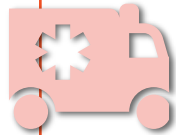
Why does it matter?



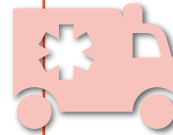
More moms die in Texas than anywhere else in the developed world at birth or within 1 year of delivery



Moms who are of lower socioeconomic status die more



Moms in Texas who are 40 years or older are 27 times more likely to die at birth or within 1 year of delivery



Moms who have higher body fat, diabetes or high blood pressure die more



Common causes of death in pregnancy include drug overdose, cardiac events, homicide and suicide



Moms with depression after delivery die more

UTRGV Maternal Health Research Center



- How do we train promotoras to help women better cope with crisis and life stressors?
- What is the best way to engage Hispanic women in behavioral health interventions and connect them to resources?
- How do we design research studies whose findings can help improve maternal health and promote health equity among Hispanic women?

Research Project



Designing and evaluating a promotora-led approach to increase psychological flexibility among women who are pregnant or within two years of delivery in community settings.



Promotoras(es) are best for this work because they are peers, trusted messengers, have cultural insight and possess the knowledge and tools to effectively link women to needed resources.



Psychological Flexibility is the superpower of mental health and well-being. It is a factor we can change to decrease a woman's risk of depression and anxiety, improve her quality of life and lessen the impact of trauma experienced during childbirth and after delivery.

Community Health Workers and Promotoras(es) are key partners!

The UTRGV Maternal Health Research Center partnered with the South Texas Promotores Association (STPA) to participate in study design, research activity planning, outreach planning and coordination, participant recruitment, and intervention delivery.



Maternal Health Research Projects

Community Needs Assessment

- Integral partner in development of needs assessment
- Recruitment of survey takers

Healthy Starts Here! Coalition

- Coalition based in the Rio Grande Valley
- Active members of the coalition focused on maternal health

Mindful Mother Intervention

- Integral partners in the development of the intervention
- Assured cultural and linguistic appropriateness of the intervention

Trainings Completed or Planned

Advancing Research Best Practices

- 5 modules
- Diversifies and amplifies the CHW skillset for research teams

The Mindful Mother Intervention

- CHW-delivered intervention to moms or moms-to-be
- Specializes CHW skillset

Study Structure / Data Collection

- Overview of encounters with moms or moms-to-be
- Overview of data collection points and follow-up visits

Training Modules

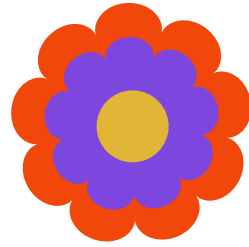
Module 1: Research and Communities

Module 2: Recruitment

Module 3: Informed Consent

Module 4: Privacy and Confidentiality

Module 5: Community Health and Well-being



ADVANCING RESEARCH BEST PRACTICES For CHWs & Promotoras

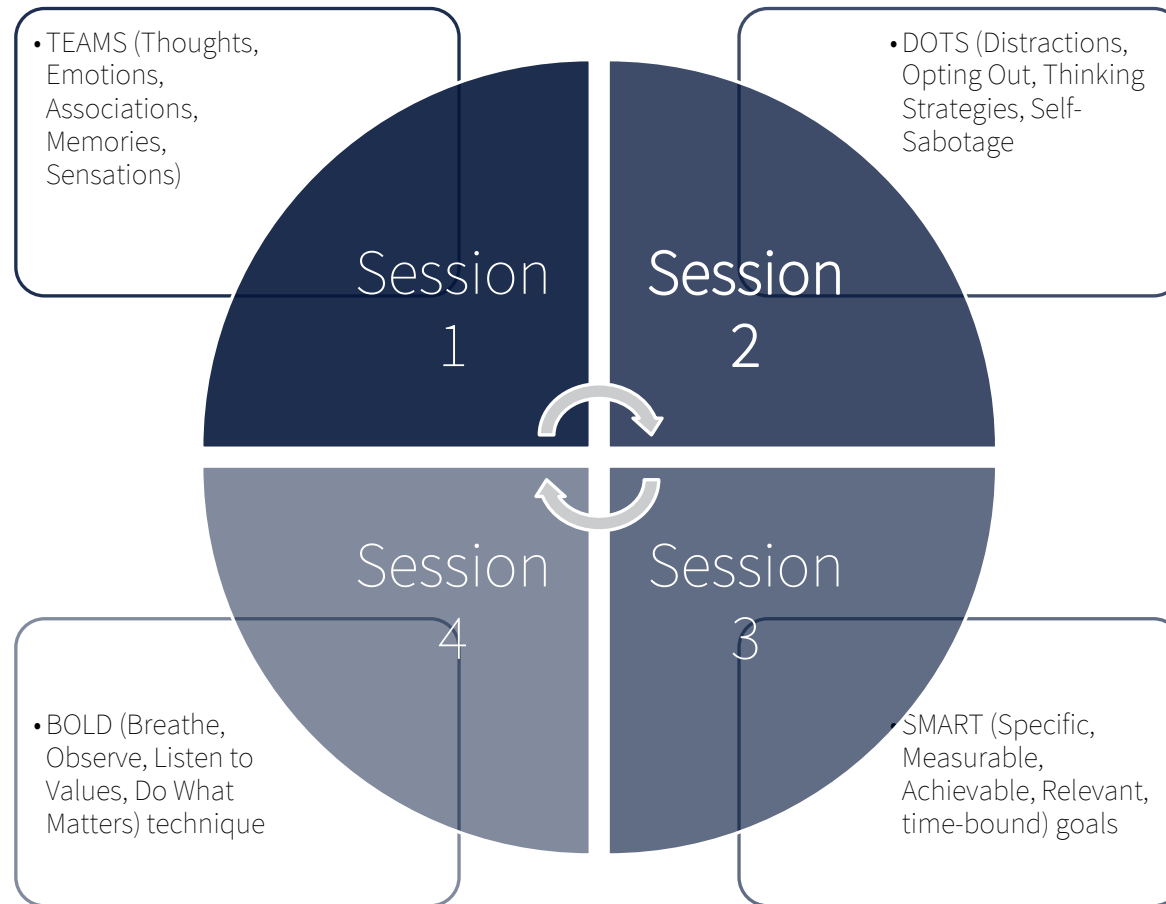
The Advancing Research Best Practices for CHWs and Promotoras was developed in English and Spanish by the University of Michigan, the University of California Davis, and the University of Florida in partnership with CHW organizations and community-based organizations across the U.S.

11 Community Health Workers and Promotoras(es) from the South Texas Promotora Association participated in an all day in person training session in July 2024.

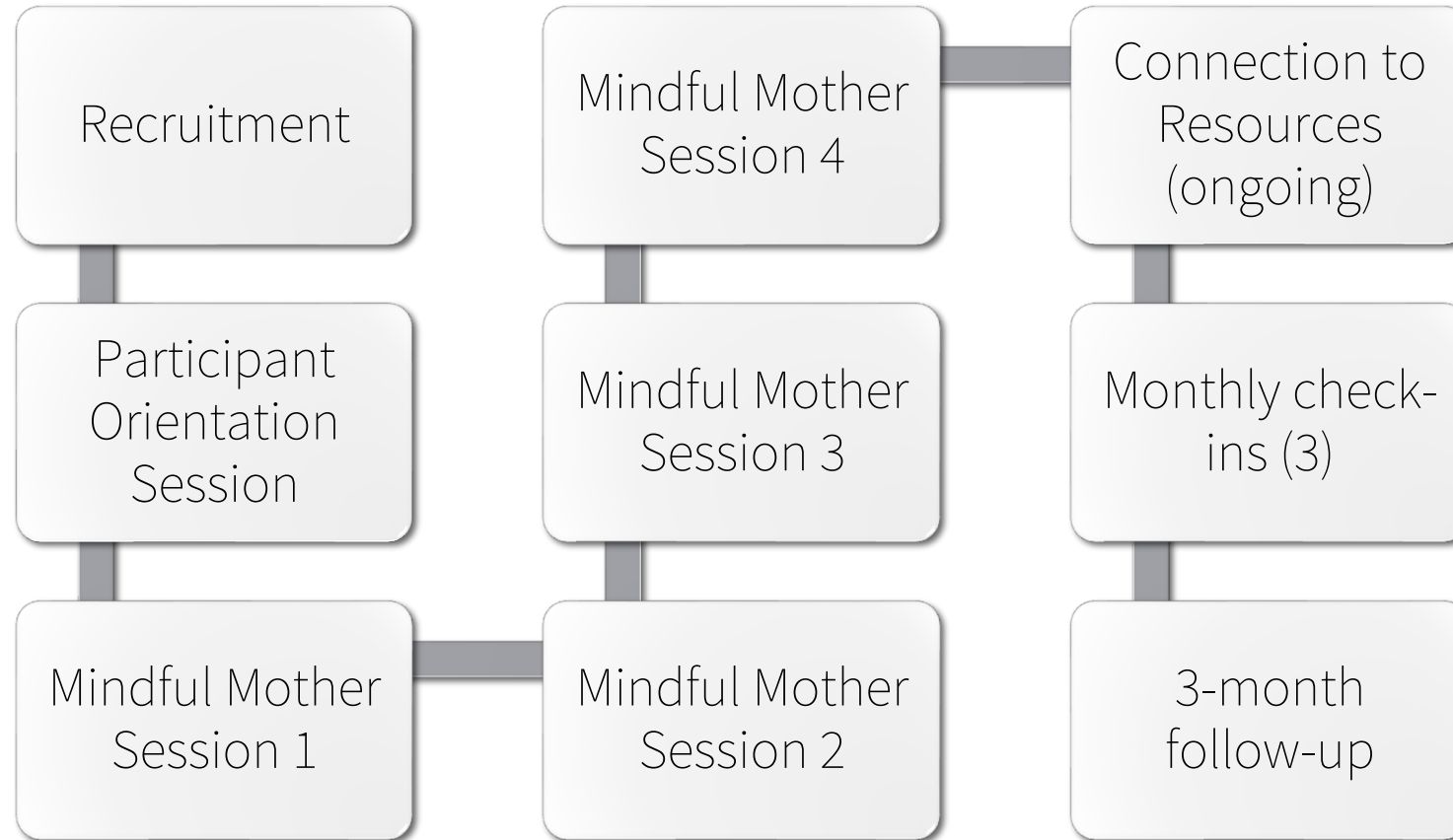
The training is available free of cost to CHWs and Promotoras nationwide at: <https://www.chwresearchtraining.org/>

The Mindful Mother Intervention

Community Health Workers will be trained to deliver “The Mindful Mother” intervention which is designed to increase psychological flexibility. The intervention will be delivered in sessions over a 4-week period.



Study Structure



Next Steps

- Begin recruitment and enrollment into the research study
- Schedule data collection and/or session delivery visits with moms or moms-to-be
- Execute regular check-ins with Community Health Workers to assist with issues that may arise during intervention delivery, concerns, challenges, and general support

**Visit our
Website!**

<https://www.utrgv.edu/school-of-medicine/departments/maternal-health-research-center/index.htm>

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THANK YOU!

Candace Robledo, PhD, MPH
Principal Investigator
UTRGV Maternal Health Research Center

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