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## Interdisciplinary Integrated Primary and Behavioral Healthcare (I2PBH) Initiative

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## **Interdisciplinary Integrated Primary and Behavioral Healthcare (I<sup>2</sup>PBH) Initiative**

Ronnau J., Deepu G., Hernandez M., Arellano III S., Ruiz M.

### **Purpose**

The Interdisciplinary Integrated Primary and Behavioral Healthcare (I<sup>2</sup>PBH) Initiative will train University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV) mental health graduates to deliver high quality, evidence-based Integrated Behavioral Health (IBH) services in the Rio Grande Valley (RGV) – a high-need, high-demand, medically underserved Hispanic region along the US-Mexico border. Specifically, the I<sup>2</sup>PBH initiative will train 24 UTRGV mental health graduates annually to deliver high-quality IBH clinical services through the evidence based Primary Care Behavioral Health (PCBH) model. With a training emphasis on basic/advanced theory and clinical skills in the PCBH model, students will serve as Behavioral Health Consultants (BHC) to meet practicum/internship requirements while working alongside healthcare professionals in a primary care setting. The I<sup>2</sup>PBH initiative increases the presence of culturally concordant, primary care competent BHCs on the front lines of four rural clinics to function as primary care providers (PCP) extenders for all behaviorally informed needs of patients, increasing access and delivering whole-person care.

### **Description**

The I<sup>2</sup>PBH initiative will train 6 graduate students each year from 4 mental health disciplines in basic and advanced theory and clinical skills through the evidence based PCBH model. As BHCs, these Behavioral Health Workforce Education and Training (BHWET) stipend recipients in Social Work (SW), Clinical Mental Health Counseling (CMHC), Rehabilitation Counseling (RC), and Psychology (PSY) will work alongside healthcare providers and other health profession trainees in three (3) Area Health Education Center (AHEC) Primary Care Clinics (PCC) and one (1) mobile clinic, located in four rural counties of South Texas. Academic training for PCBH-focused courses and PCBH oriented advanced clinical supervision will be delivered through in-person classes, role-playing, digitally enhanced training using Mixed-Reality Simulation (MRS), and asynchronous distance learning via virtual platforms (e.g., Blackboard, Zoom). All BHWET stipend recipients will complete the trauma-informed, culturally adaptive PCBH-focused courses – Foundations of IBH; Clinical Skills for the BHC; and Latinx Health Issues in IBH. Based on a discipline-agnostic approach, this teaches PCBH specific competencies while also providing concurrent, primary-care focused clinical experiences, resulting in a behavior health workforce that is primary-care ready and trauma-informed.

### **Partners**

The I<sup>2</sup>PBH initiative coordinates these experiential training opportunities with three (3) Area Health Education Center (AHEC) Primary Care Clinics (PCC) and one (1) mobile clinic to promote community-based partnerships in four rural counties in South Texas.

### **Looking Ahead**

By the year 2025, the I<sup>2</sup>PBH initiative will have:

- 96 students complete three PCBH courses and an associated internship and practicum experience in a UTRGV rural AHEC or Mobile Clinic PCC.
- Implemented PCBH-focused education and clinical supervision for BHWET stipend recipients and faculty facilitators from different disciplines.
- Collaborated with community partners to increase access for behavioral health services and connect trainees with potential employment opportunities.
- Integrated technology to facilitate learning/teaching and enhance community reach and impact.