COLLABORATION AND CAPACITY BUILDING: SUSTAINABLE METHODS FOR PROMOTING RESILIENCE AND ADDRESSING MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS IN A POST DISASTER SETTING.

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The prevalence of mental health problems among Gulf Coast residents has increased dramatically due to the Katrina and Rita disasters, with one third of those affected experiencing symptoms of depression or posttraumatic stress disorder.¹ REACH NOLA, a new community-academic partnership of entities engaged in hurricane recovery efforts including Tulane University School of Medicine, created the Mental Health Infrastructure and Training Project (MHIT) to address the tremendous need for mental health services in New Orleans by building community capacity to deliver high quality, culturally appropriate care and examining through community--partnered research the impact of associated interventions. Since 2008, MHIT has trained over 400 clinical and non-clinical personnel in evidence-based methods of treatment and supported service delivery for over 80,000 client contacts. The project represents an innovation in mental health care training and delivery because it builds on evidence-based treatment models²,³ while expanding roles for nontraditional providers such as lay care managers and community health workers, which may be underutilized resources in addressing mental health concerns in low resource settings. The initial, capacity-building phase of this project has served as the foundation for several current community-based participatory research projects, including evaluation of implementation of a manualized program for cognitive behavioral therapy, assessment of adoption of collaborative care for depression treatment by local community health clinics, and examination of depression outcomes when a community health worker is added to a collaborative care team.

