

MOMS Maternal Mental Health Project (2022-2025) A Circle of Support for Expectant and New Parents

Key Impact Highlights

MOMS set out to provide comprehensive mental health support to vulnerable families in Orange County, where over 40% of babies are born to mothers living in poverty and where low-income women are at a significantly higher risk for perinatal or postpartum mood and anxiety disorders. Serving a primarily Latinx population (over 80%) facing cultural and systemic barriers to mental health care, MOMS successfully mitigated barriers to receiving mental health support through the following achievements:

Breaking Down Barriers to Mental Health Support

One-on-One Therapy Sessions

- **Unprecedented access to specialized care:** From just 91 sessions in Year 1 to 605 sessions in Year 3, MOMS OC vastly exceeded its goal to provide expedited access to therapy for program participants who would otherwise have barriers in accessing mental health care.
- **Reduced wait times for critical services:** Average time from referral to initial intake improved to 33 days in Year 3, helping to address the critical issue of an overburdened mental health system that often means waiting weeks or months for care, especially for individuals who are undocumented or underinsured.¹
- **Enhanced clinical outcomes:** By Year 3, 88% of clients reported increased skills in caring for their mental health and finding support resources, demonstrating the program's effectiveness in using a trust-based intervention to provide therapy for clients.

Among clients surveyed, the top suggestion for improvement (apart from positive feedback) was to increase session duration and quantity. More than half of survey respondents felt that being heard and listened to was the most helpful aspect of participating in one-on-one therapy.

Selected Quotes about Need:

- "The truth is that for me it was so satisfying that after these 6 sessions full of emotional ups and downs, there is only gratitude for Flavia for how professional and humane she was with me, so **I hope that like me, many more moms have the pleasure of having her support and guidance.**"
- "The therapy sessions are good. **I only hope your team can expand.**"
- Sessions are 6 weeks but I feel it needs to be a bit longer :)

Selected Quotes about Impact:

- "What was most helpful to me was being and **feeling heard by a neutral party** without judgment. And the encouragement "

¹ Project offered one therapist, two days per week.

- "Being able to fully open up to someone and not receive negativity back"
- "I found the most helpful simply by just communicating how I felt, my thoughts, and my opinions. There was no judgment, it felt good being about to express everything."
- "Being able to share whatever I wanted to my therapist was beneficial. **Therapy was a way for me to just let go of many things I had in my mind and heart. I felt better knowing that someone was listening to me and provided positive feedback**"
- "Every session with Flavia has helped me so much, in seeing the positive aspect about my environment and in being thankful, and not anxious"
- "Flavia was very helpful in not only listening to my experiences but also helping to correct some of my thinking that was not beneficial to a healthy mind. **I felt supported and heard** as well as learned some things about myself and what I could do to make my relationships better and thankful that I am now feeling more supported by one particular relationship that benefited from these sessions. Thanks Flavia!"
- "Recognizing my present, accepting myself and knowing myself to improve, the tools provided were effective and now **I improve day by day not only in communication with myself but with others**"
- **"It helped me reduce my stress, anxiety and depression"**

Specialized Mental Health Home Visits

- **Supporting maternal well-being:** Home visits increased dramatically from 110 visits in Year 1 to 267 specialized mental health home visits in Year 3; the program reached 66 clients in Year 3, providing crucial support and specialized education to mothers who are experiencing depression and anxiety.
- **High client satisfaction:** 82%-94% agreement with indicators of success in Year 3, showing the program effectively builds resilience, support, and prevention/coping strategies.

Expanding Educational Resources for Mental Health

Healthy Woman/Mujer Sana Classes

- **Expanded educational offerings:** Growth from 15 class series in Year 1 to 23 class series in Years 2 and 3, emphasizing mental wellness and self-care.
- **Increased engagement:** Average attendees per class steadily rose from 3-4 in Year 1 to 5-6 in Year 3, with close to 60% of enrollees completing at least 3 classes in Year 3.
- **Consistent positive outcomes:** Participants reported average ratings of 4+ out of 5 across all metrics for knowledge, skills, and satisfaction, demonstrating the program's ability to provide support and education on self-care, mental health, identifying warning signs, and strategies to improve wellness.

Strong Fathers Program

- **Innovative support for fathers:** Successfully implemented a 6-class series that focuses on understanding anxiety and depression in men, coping and managing stressors, communication, and self-esteem.
- **Transformative outcomes:** In Year 3, 100% of surveyed fathers reported increased awareness about healthy self-care practices and support resources, preparing them

for fatherhood and helping build resilience, support, and prevention/coping strategies surrounding depression and anxiety.

- **Family functioning improvement:** Participants reporting feeling family life is under control increased by 24% from Year 2 to Year 3, demonstrating the program's ability to strengthen resiliency and equip fathers with communication and parenting skills.

About a quarter of clients surveyed expressed a need for more class time and more than a third gave only positive feedback about the program (when asked what could be improved).

Selected Quotes about **Need**:

- "More sessions to allow more conversations"
- "Offer additional or advance classes"
- "With more time per class I think that will be much better"
- "More meetings"

Selected Quotes about **Impact**:

- "Everything was excellent, very grateful for all your support, thank you Efrain for all the information."
- "Everything was excellent. Efrain runs the group wonderfully and I wouldn't change anything."
- "I loved everything, I think the services they offer are excellent."
- "You guys are heading the right way! Great program!"

Addressing Domestic Violence

Thriving Relationships Program

- **Rapid program establishment:** From 14 clients in Year 2 to 50 clients in Year 3, successfully implementing extended and specialized home visits and one-on-one education and support for victims/survivors of domestic violence.
- **Critical support identification:** 100% of surveyed clients reported identifying a trusted person for ongoing support, fulfilling a key outcome measure for clients experiencing domestic violence.