



## **How do you start the conversation?** *Talking to immigrant families about mental health.*

Before you start: How do you “show up”?

How are you presenting yourself? What message (verbal and nonverbal) are you sending?

### **□ Note your own biases.**

- Are you placing your own values on the client?
- What assumptions are you making?
- What is the core ‘task’ that needs to be accomplished?
  - Do you have a game plan for multiple possible outcomes?
- Are you curious, asking questions and prepared to have your assumptions challenged?

### **□ Are you prepared?**

- Do you know the facts (correct pronunciation of names, age, language)
- Do you know the background about the situation you are addressing (avoid having to ‘phone a friend’ and consult with someone else at the agency mid conversation)
- Do you know about the community you are engaging with? How might they perceive a person in your role? What meaning might they make or explanation may they have of the situation or presenting problem? (Do they consider it a problem?)
- Do you have background about the client/student? (how long they have been here, who guardians are, has there been a family separation?)
- Do you have supplies that you need? (consent forms, referral information, pens, fidget items, coloring pages for kids, snacks?)

### **□ Are you present?**

- Do you have time?
- Are you engaged and focused on the conversation?
- Are you observing and listening for what’s not being said?
- Are you balancing safety with meeting needs?
- Are you authentic and genuine?
- Are you taking good notes- collecting the relevant information?

### **□ Are you effectively meeting needs?**

- Have you explained your role and why you are meeting?
- Are you asking meaningful questions?
- What can you offer the client/family/student? What creative solutions are there?
- What you can you comprise on?
- Are you prepared if the situation escalates?
- Are you prepared with local, appropriate resources and support?

***Remember to keep the conversation brief, direct but kind and solution-focused.***

***Humor and sarcasm are often lost in cross cultural communication.***

***Remember to use best practices with an interpreter if interpretation is required (avoid using younger children to translate!)***



# What do you say?

My name is \_\_\_ I work for \_\_\_, my job is to \_\_\_.

Example: My name is Ms. Sarah. I am the social worker at Las Americas. Do you know what a social worker does? ...Yes, I do that...I am a special social worker/ I have the best job in the whole world because, I get to listen when you are having a bad day and help solve problems together.

## Defining your role

Role: My most important job is to help keeps students safe so that they can learn, grow...

Clear boundaries: The things we talk about our private, but I have to keep you and your child/family safe so sometimes I have to ask other helpers...

I do not ever report things to immigration. I do not have any contact with immigration. A school is a safe place.

## Clarifying and validating:

I have worked with families from other countries for many years. I would love to learn more about your family.

I understand that many families are new to the country and may feel...or may be...or may need...

## Clarify your role

I can:

- Accompany
- Support
- Navigate
- Help
- Teach
- “fight for” or advocate

My job is to keep you and your family safe.

What I can do is...

Lets figure out what steps we can take...

## On mental health

I know that mental health is different in many different cultures and countries. People in the United States also have many different thoughts and beliefs about mental health.

However/but, this is about safety.

OR

However, what we are talking about is dangerous behavior or behaviors that can have serious consequences.

## On behavior:

Behavior and expectations are different in different cultures and countries. In the United States...

However, this is about

The things that \_\_\_ is doing, will have consequences.

