



WHAT IS A CONVIVENCIA?

Humanidad Therapy and Education Services (*Humanidad*) developed its Convivencia programs specifically to address a nexus of needs and barriers. By offering mental health education, peer support, and group counseling in Spanish within community spaces, the programs meet people where they are—both linguistically and culturally. The Convivencia model deliberately centers **familismo** (family connectedness), **confianza** (trust), and **personalismo** (warm, relationship-based communication) to create the safe, culturally affirming environments essential for engagement, while building resilience and reduce mental health stigma for Latinx families.

In this safe and trusting environment, community members can engage in storytelling, share life experiences, and learn from one another while increasing their understanding of mental health.

The Community Convivencias are one-time events while the Youth Group Convivencias occur over 8 weeks, and have been a main focus of the phase 2 study.

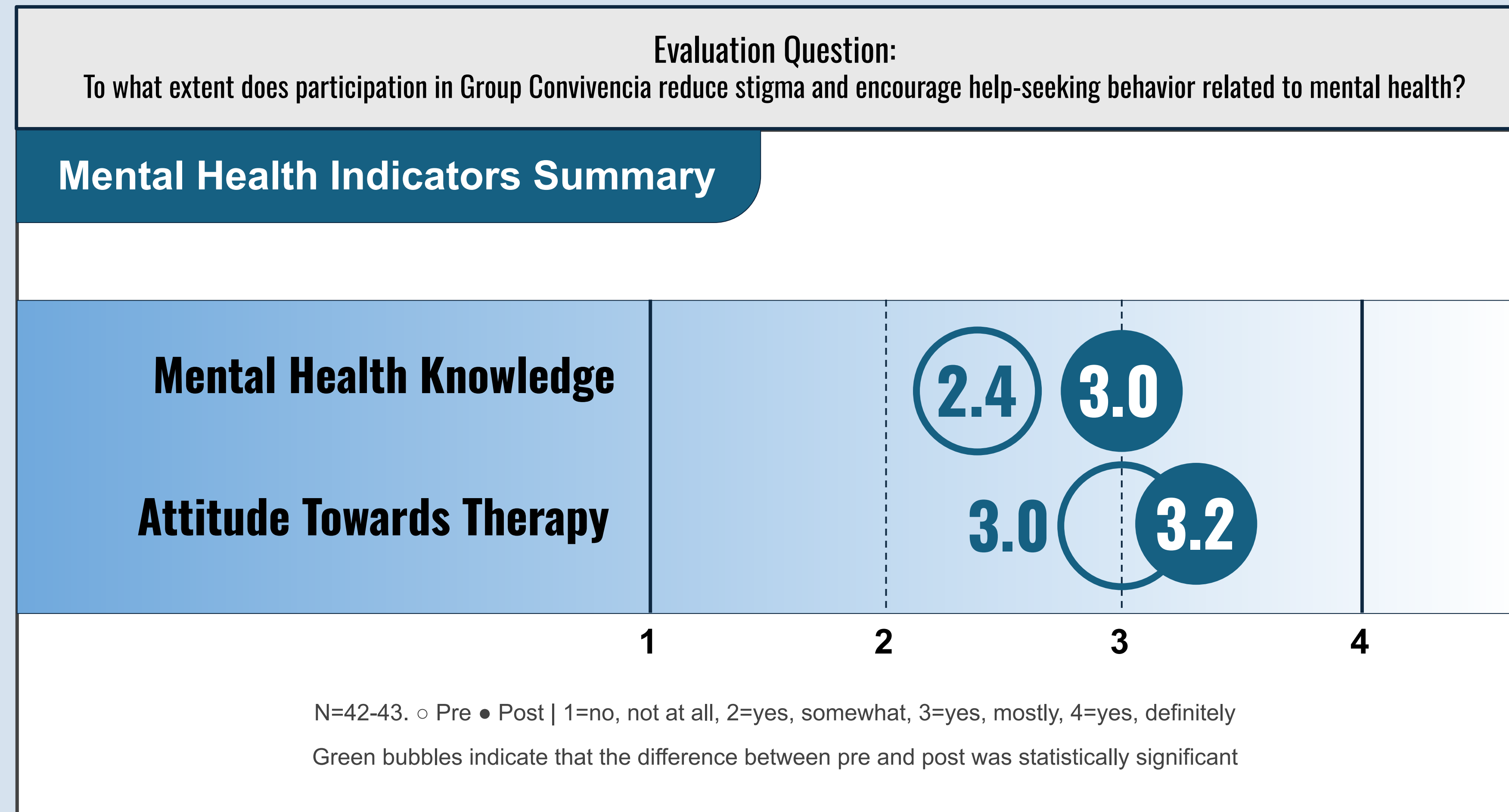


Evaluation Design and Methods

- The local evaluation design used for the Youth Group Convivencia was mixed methods, combining quantitative and qualitative assessment techniques to capture both measurable outcomes and participant perspectives.
- The design included a single intervention group, with pre- and post-program surveys matched for participants who completed both assessments.
- The time period for data collection presented here spans Spring 2023 through Spring 2025.
- Quantitative data were collected via paper-based pre- and post-program surveys including Statewide Evaluation (SWE) measures and locally developed measures assessing self-esteem, social support, emotional regulation, mental health knowledge, and attitudes toward therapy. Paired-sample t-tests were used to assess statistically significant changes between pre- and post-assessments.
- Qualitative data were collected through focus group interviews introduced in 2024, conducted separately with youth participants and therapy teams, audio-recorded, transcribed, and analyzed using NVivo with a grounded theory approach.
- Strategies used to incorporate cultural knowledge included a Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) approach, bilingual instruments and facilitation, use of culturally familiar terms, and engagement of Humanidad staff and community partners in interpreting findings within cultural frameworks.

What The Results Show

- Findings show that participation in Youth Group Convivencia was associated with significant improvements in both mental health knowledge and attitudes toward therapy, suggesting reduced stigma and increased openness to seeking professional help.



- There were statistically significant gains in all three knowledge items: understanding how trauma affects mental health, how to recognize signs and symptoms of poor mental health, and where to access available resources.
- Qualitative data from focus groups shows the program consistently delivers on emotional awareness and regulation skills (62%) and stress management skills (36%).
- There was a statistically significant gain in one attitude item related to viewing therapy positively (“I think therapy is a good way to solve mental problems”).

“A mí me hizo cambiar mi pensamiento porque yo pensaba que la terapia era para gente que se sentía triste y amargada, nada más. Y ahorita siento que no, siento que me gusta.”

[It made me change my thinking. Because I used to think that therapy was only for people who felt sad and bitter. And now I feel that's not the case, I feel like I liked it.]

“Aprendí que está bien tener problemas y que aunque uno no lo crea muchos también sufren en diferentes niveles.”

[I learned that it's okay to have problems and that even though one might not believe it, many others also suffer at different levels.]



Key Takeaways/Next Steps

This evaluation's most significant finding is clear: both Community Convivencia and Youth Group Convivencia successfully engaged highly vulnerable immigrant populations in culturally competent environments that reduced stigma and improved access to trauma-informed mental health care.

- Youth Convivencia addresses a critical gap by providing group counseling in participants' native Spanish, creating space for authentic expression that English-only services cannot offer. Despite an evolving curriculum, sustained requests from multiple schools reflect the program's ongoing relevance and impact. These outcomes position the Convivencia model as an effective Community-Defined Evidence Practice (CDEP)—a culturally responsive approach with strong potential for replication in communities seeking to support immigrant populations and advance mental health equity.
- We intend to extend the program beyond eight weeks or offering graduated levels of support (introduction, continuation, alumni groups) might allow for deeper therapeutic work and sustained symptom reduction.
- We also intend to extend the model to additional high schools across Sonoma County, particularly those serving large populations of Spanish speaking newcomer students.
- As the model continues to demonstrate effectiveness with this vulnerable population, there is potential to share these culturally grounded practices more broadly through documentation and knowledge-sharing with other organizations serving newcomer Latinx youth.

Acknowledgments

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