

## RUNNING HEAD: ADDRESSING SERVICE UNDERUTILIZATION AMONG MUSLIM YOUTH

### **Abstract**

Despite the need for professional treatment, Muslims tend to significantly underutilize formal mental health (MH) services, with some studies indicating that Muslims represent the most underserved racial/ethnic minority group in terms of service utilization. Muslim youth may be especially vulnerable to mental health challenges, due to a range of sociopolitical (e.g., increased risk for victimization and discrimination post-9/11) and cultural factors (e.g. acculturative stress), in addition to peer pressure to conform to mainstream norms that may be in conflict with individual and family religious/cultural values and practices. The current study employs a community-based participatory research (CBPR) approach to partner Rutgers youth-based MH clinics with a local Muslim parochial school to engage stakeholders who may reduce barriers to MH services. University and community partners will collaboratively develop and implement MH education workshops for teachers based on self-reported needs and repeated assessment after each workshop. The study aims to identify the critical barriers (e.g., stigma, perceived incompatibility between values and MH services) that inhibit service use and to provide educational workshops that might increase critical “gate-keeper” (school teachers) knowledge of services and resources, reduce mental health stigma-related beliefs, and improve attitudes toward treatment-seeking, which may be associated with increased referral propensity. A mixed methods approach will be used to evaluate workshop feasibility, acceptability, and effectiveness in changing attitudes. Project completion is expected by December 2020, with requested funding of \$2,000 (e.g., workshop/outreach expenses, printing costs). Final product will include a summary report of recommendations for building effective community partnerships in marginalized communities.