The record-high number of migrant crossings in 2022, Covid-19, and U.S. policy changes have created a humanitarian crisis at the border in which asylum-seekers are being released from custody into communities that do not have the resources to meet their basic needs. Currently, volunteer-run migrant shelters are the primary service provider at the border, yet they lack capacity to provide medical services and collect necessary data to conduct advocacy.

According to Customs and Border Patrol, El Paso has been the leading border sector receiving migrants for the past six months. Migrant flows peaked in December and are expected to surge in May with the end of Title 42, with an expected 13,000 migrants attempting to cross daily. Evidencing the extreme humanitarian need at the border, the number of families encountered in the El Paso sector increased by 623% from last year (49,508, up from 6,844), and the number of unaccompanied migrant children encountered increased 59% from last year (8,059, up from 5,077).

One of the biggest needs identified by various agencies at the border is a need for access to medical services for migrants in transit. El Paso City employees have even had to help staff the shelters to respond to the overwhelming demand for services. Not only do asylum-seekers need access to medical care, but there is also a need for evidence-based advocacy to promote sound public health policies.

The World Health Organization, the Pan-American Health Organization, and the United Nations have all called for an investment in improved data collection regarding migrant health conditions, including data disaggregated according to sex, age, and migratory status. The Pan-American Health Organization has called for the strengthening of national and decentralized health surveillance systems especially in border-transit areas, to capture migrants' health status and needs.
There is scant data on the health care needs of migrant people in transit through South and Central America en route to the US, but during Doctors of the World's exploratory missions in the border region, we identified the following needs:

1- Doctors at the border regularly see migrants with **CHRONIC CONDITIONS** (such as diabetes, asthma, seizures, HIV, and high blood pressure) who had prescription medications confiscated while in government custody without replacement;

2- Many migrants who survive the desert crossing are suffering from **DEHYDRATION** and other heat related health risks. Desert deaths have increased as the volume of migrants passing through the desert increases combined with extreme temperatures related to climate change. There were 557 border deaths in 2021, up from 254 in 2020;

3- Research by the American Medical Association in 2022 shows that since the 30-foot border wall was constructed, there has been a more than five-fold increase in **TRAUMA center admissions** and an increase in **INJURY SEVERITY**. According to a professor of surgery at Texas Tech El Paso, they receive at least one person per day injured from falling off the wall; in 2021, 265 patients in El Paso were admitted as severe "fall-off-the-wall cases," up from 125 in 2020.
The Border Health Program launched in December 2022 after extensive exploratory missions to El Paso, Texas, and Ciudad Juárez, Mexico. The Border Health Program is a private-public partnership between Doctors of the World (DotW), Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center El Paso (TTUHSC El Paso), and local migrant shelters to address the humanitarian crises at the border in which increasing numbers of asylum seekers, particularly women and children, are crossing the border. The program provides medical services to migrants, conducts evidence-based advocacy and research, and builds the capacity of local health systems.

Clinics offering health care services to migrants were held weekly from December 2022 to February 2023 and scaled up to twice weekly in March 2023. We plan to conduct monthly assessments on the feasibility of consistently adding clinic days, with the goal of scaling up the clinic to 5-6 times per week by the end of the first year. Throughout the entire program, data management and analysis will be a primary focus, for use in research, advocacy, and curriculum design for classes related to migration and public health. The Border Health Program takes a comprehensive approach to six core areas listed below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROGRAM CORE</th>
<th>OBJECTIVES</th>
<th>RELATED ACTIVITIES</th>
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<tr>
<td>DIRECT CLINICAL SERVICES</td>
<td>Develop the infrastructure for transitional care for migrants and asylum seekers in transit in El Paso.</td>
<td>Offer a clinic 2-6 days/week in Annunciation House and other shelters, staffed by TTUHSC staff, residents, students, and volunteers. Services will be phased in with four levels of care: 1. Primary Care; 2. Long-term, extended and navigation; 3. Welfare Checks 4. Mental Health. As of March 2023, clinics are twice a week: 1 primary care clinic.</td>
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<td>EDUCATION</td>
<td>Offer medical school faculty, residents, and staff hands-on learning experiences related to migrant health needs and serving populations in transit.</td>
<td>The Border Health program will form part of the residency rotation curriculum for all medical school departments and student elective curriculum. The Pediatrics department will make the program part of its residency rotation in Fall 2023 (and potentially other departments). All service providers will be trained in migration and health and data management.</td>
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<td>ADMINISTRATION</td>
<td>Provide administrative oversight for the daily operations of the BHP.</td>
<td>DotW provides administrative staff, funding, and capacity building in data management and advocacy.</td>
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<td>DATA, RESEARCH, AND DISSEMINATION</td>
<td>Provide data-driven decision making that will inform the development and growth of the BHP and build a foundation for scholarship around migrant and refugee transitional care.</td>
<td>Institute and maintain an electronic medical record and data collection system which form the foundation for advocacy, service provision, and potential research.</td>
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<td>INTERNATIONAL</td>
<td>Promote bilateral and regional information exchange, especially with Médecins du Monde France staff in Ciudad Juárez and establish best practices to improve migrant and asylum seeker health outcomes, particularly for migrants in transit.</td>
<td>Establish a sustainable and evidence-based U.S. domestic program that will provide the foundation for a regional approach with MdM International Network and other program partners; Communicate regularly with Médecins du Monde France regarding their program in Ciudad Juárez to identify opportunities for collaboration in both service provision and advocacy.</td>
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<td>ADVOCACY</td>
<td>Promote sound public health policy by conducting evidence-based advocacy regarding migrant and refugee transitional care and access to healthcare for mobile populations.</td>
<td>Provide international advocacy experience to shelters; track evidence-based advocacy efforts, such as tracking migrant routes and health needs.</td>
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MONICA REYES - BORDER HEALTH PROGRAM DIRECTOR
Monica Reyes, PhD, has 20 years of experience developing and implementing large-scale public health, educational, and clinic-based programs. With a Ph.D. in Public Health and Family and Community Medicine, she has expertise conducting scientific and evidence-based research to achieve organizational and program goals and has worked with U.S. Health and Human Services, with the Centers for Disease Control, and at the Mexico Border Health Commission.

MANUEL DE LA ROSA - BORDER HEALTH PROGRAM MEDICAL DIRECTOR
Manuel De La Rosa, MD, is the Vice President for Outreach and Community Engagement at Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center (TTUHSC) and will be the Medical Director for the BHP. Dr. De la Rosa was formerly the Regional Dean for the School of Medicine at TTUHSC El Paso, and was the Founding Dean for the Paul L. Foster School of Medicine, overseeing the establishment of the first medical and nursing schools in El Paso. Prior to serving as Founding Dean, he was a Professor of Pediatrics, where he oversaw the establishment of various community clinics serving El Paso’s most vulnerable populations. Appointed by former President George Bush in 2003, Dr. De la Rosa continues to serve as a member of the United States-Mexico Border Health Commission.

In addition, clinics are staffed by TTUHSC El Paso faculty and residents, and Texas Tech Physicians. Currently, the faculty listed below have been trained and participated in clinics:

- Jose Manuel De la Rosa, MD - Founding Dean and Professor of Pediatrics, TTUHSC El Paso
- Glenn J. Fennelly, MD, MPH - Chair of the Pediatrics Department, Professor, and Pediatrician with expertise in Infectious Disease, TTUHSC El Paso
- Michael Rytting, MD - Medical Director of the Southwest University Pediatric Blood and Cancer Center, El Paso Children’s Hospital
- Brian Elmore, MD - Emergency Medicine Resident, TTUHSC El Paso
- Danny Vallejo, DNP - Surgery Department Head of Nursing, TTUHSC El Paso
- Mariela Lane, MD - Assistant Professor Department Internal Medicine, TTUHSC El Paso

Learn more or support our work at https://doctorsoftheworld.org/border-health-program/