

# Norma Mercado, LMSW, Recognized by Influential Women, Advances Community-Driven Solutions Through Bastrop County Cares

BASTROP, TX, UNITED STATES, June 8, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Executive Director, Educator, and Researcher Champions Strengths-Based Approaches to Address Systemic Barriers and Empower Vulnerable Communities in Bastrop, Texas

Norma Mercado, LMSW, is a Licensed Master Social Worker, educator, and nonprofit leader dedicated to empowering individuals and communities through strengths-based, community-driven approaches. With a Master's Degree in Social Work from Texas State University and ongoing doctoral studies in Adult, Professional, and Community Education, Norma combines academic expertise with more than 24 years of professional experience in social work, education, and community development.



Her work is grounded in a deep commitment to addressing systemic inequities while elevating the voices and strengths of the individuals and families she serves. Norma's research interests include immigration, resiliency, adult learning theories, and community development, reflecting her long-standing dedication to understanding and addressing the complex social factors that impact vulnerable populations.

As Executive Director of Bastrop County Cares, Norma leads initiatives focused on the non-medical drivers of health, with a strong emphasis on community voice and collaboration. Under her leadership, the organization works to identify and address root causes of social challenges

such as housing instability, transportation barriers, and access to resources. Her approach prioritizes engaging residents directly in the process of identifying needs and developing sustainable, community-led solutions.

Throughout her career, Norma has worked extensively with highly mobile and at-risk student populations, including youth experiencing homelessness, children in foster care, and teen parents. She has developed and implemented programs that not only provide immediate support but also empower families to take active roles in creating change within their communities. Her professional experience spans Head Start case management, K-12 school social work, and nonprofit leadership, demonstrating a comprehensive commitment to both individual and systemic impact.

In addition to her executive leadership role, Norma serves as a lecturer and field instructor at Texas State University. In this capacity, she mentors future social workers, emphasizing the importance of cultural humility, trauma-informed care, ethical practice, and strengths-based supervision. She is deeply committed to preparing students for real-world challenges in social work, ensuring they are equipped to serve diverse populations with compassion and professionalism.

Her contributions to the field have gained national attention, including recognition in major media outlets such as The New York Times and Univision. These features have highlighted her advocacy for homeless youth and her innovative approach to community-led problem-solving. Through both practice and education, Norma continues to influence how social services are delivered and how future professionals are trained.

Norma attributes her success to never losing sight of her personal and professional purpose. Her commitment to social work is rooted in lived experience, including her journey as a pregnant teenager navigating systems that often felt devaluing and unsupportive. She also draws strength from her family's history through the Bracero Program, which shaped her understanding of resilience, sacrifice, and perseverance in the face of adversity.

These experiences continue to inform her work, reinforcing her belief in turning challenges into opportunities for meaningful change. Norma emphasizes the importance of empathy, reflection, and purpose-driven practice, noting that staying grounded in one's "why" is essential for long-term impact in social services.

A significant influence in Norma's professional development has been her academic mentorship under her dissertation chair, Dr. Larrotta, at Texas State University. Dr. Larrotta encouraged her to pursue research aligned with her personal experiences and values, ultimately shaping Norma's dissertation on the resiliency of undocumented immigrants. Her research highlights the strengths, contributions, and often underrepresented narratives of immigrant communities, reinforcing her commitment to equity and representation in academic and professional spaces.

Norma credits this mentorship as a defining force in her career, noting that consistent encouragement and belief in her potential played a critical role in her academic and professional advancement. This support helped her navigate moments of doubt and remain focused on her long-term goals, including contributing meaningfully to the field of social work and higher education.

In guiding the next generation of professionals, Norma encourages young women entering social work to remain grounded in their purpose. She emphasizes the importance of remembering one's "why," particularly when facing the emotional and structural challenges inherent in the field. Drawing from her own experiences, she encourages others to transform lived adversity into tools for empathy, advocacy, and solution-building.

Norma identifies a significant ongoing challenge in the social work field as the gap between available funding and the root causes of systemic issues affecting families. While resources may exist, she notes that they often do not fully address underlying challenges such as housing insecurity, transportation barriers, and economic instability. The increased strain on social systems following the COVID-19 pandemic and community tragedies has also contributed to burnout among professionals working in high-need environments, influencing her decision to focus more broadly on community-level impact.

Despite these challenges, she sees strong opportunity in community-led solutions. Norma believes that families and residents often already understand the solutions to the challenges they face but require support, collaboration, and access to resources to bring those solutions to life. By centering community voices and building collaborative partnerships, she sees the potential for long-term, sustainable change that is both responsive and effective.

At the core of Norma's work are the values of humility, trust, and honesty. She approaches each professional relationship with the belief that individuals are the experts of their own lived experiences and emphasizes the importance of honoring their strengths. Trust, she notes, must be earned and maintained, while honesty ensures transparency and accountability in all aspects of her work.

In her personal life, faith and family remain central pillars. Her involvement in church has provided a source of healing, growth, and purpose, while her long-term partnership with her high school sweetheart reflects her belief in mutual support and resilience. As a mother of five, Norma views family as both a grounding force and a continuing source of motivation in her professional and personal journey.

Through her leadership at Bastrop County Cares, her academic contributions, and her ongoing advocacy, Norma Mercado continues to advance a vision of social work rooted in dignity, collaboration, and community empowerment. Her career reflects a lifelong commitment to transforming lived experience into meaningful action and creating systems that better serve those most in need.

Learn More about Norma Mercado:

Through her Influential Women profile: <https://influentialwomen.com/connect/Norma-Mercado>

Influential Women

Influential Women provides a platform where women from all backgrounds can connect, share their perspectives, and create content that empowers themselves and others. Through storytelling, thought leadership, and creative expression, Influential Women amplifies voices that inspire change.

Editorial Team

Influential Women

[email us here](#)

---

This press release can be viewed online at: <https://www.einpresswire.com/article/918159225>

EIN Presswire's priority is source transparency. We do not allow opaque clients, and our editors try to be careful about weeding out false and misleading content. As a user, if you see something we have missed, please do bring it to our attention. Your help is welcome. EIN Presswire, Everyone's Internet News Presswire™, tries to define some of the boundaries that are reasonable in today's world. Please see our Editorial Guidelines for more information.

© 1995-2026 Newsmatics Inc. All Right Reserved.