



National Hispanic and Latino

MHTTC

Mental Health Technology Transfer Center Network
Funded by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

Structural Barriers in Mental Health Care among Latinx Populations:

Means, Strategies, and Resources to Improve Access and Services



We would like to acknowledge Héctor Colón, M.D., MRO, for his contribution to the development of this product.

Health Disparities

Health disparities are preventable and unjust differences in health status, outcomes, and the impact of disease that adversely affect socially disadvantaged populations.

Hispanic/Latinx communities face disparities in mental health treatment, which increase the risk of severe and persistent medical and mental health conditions.

Furthermore, data indicate that:

- Hispanic/Latinx adults are less likely than White adults to receive mental health treatment or counseling.
- In 2020, less than fifty percent of Latinx/Hispanic adults with serious mental illness received treatment (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2021).
- Suicidal ideation, plans, and attempts are increasing among Latinx/Hispanic young adults.



Barriers to Treatment

Individual, societal, and community barriers can impact mental health care services, access, and outcomes for Hispanic and Latinx communities.

Language Barriers: Can make communication between patients and health professionals difficult, particularly when having to articulate concerns and distress regarding mental health symptoms and treatment.

Cultural Differences: Can lead mental health professionals to misinterpret and misdiagnose. Mental health conditions can be difficult to identify. One contributing factor is that Latinx/Hispanic individuals tend to focus on physical rather than psychiatric symptoms during medical visits.

Stigma and Poor Mental Health Literacy: Hispanic/Latinx individuals may not seek treatment because they may not recognize the signs and symptoms of mental health conditions, do not know where to find help, or hold negative beliefs and attitudes about experiencing or receiving treatment for mental health conditions.

Immigration Status: The fear of deportation and separation can prevent Hispanic/Latinx individuals from seeking help.

Lack of Health Insurance and Poverty: 17% of Hispanic/Latinx live in poverty and about 30% of those between 18 and 64 years of age do not have health insurance (Cohen et al., 2021; Schrider et al., 2021).

Shortage of culturally and linguistically **appropriate services and providers**.

(National Alliance for the Mentally Ill, 2022)

Strategies for Providers

Participate in **community events** to raise awareness of services, develop trust, build relationships, and gain further knowledge of local cultural groups and community activities.

Develop **local outreach** and educational programs on mental health in multiple languages.

Establish **partnerships** with traditional healers and faith-based organizations.

Provide **family education** on substance use patterns and mental health issues in Spanish in community centers.

Implement **peer-to-peer strategies**, such as peer support and mentoring programs on culturally responsive practices for the Hispanic/Latinx population.

Ask yourself and your peers about their level of cultural awareness:

- Have you treated other Hispanic/Latinx members of the community before?
- Have you received training in cultural humility or in Hispanic/Latinx mental health?
- Reflect. How do you think our cultural backgrounds influence our communication and decision for treatment?

Resources

- **Talk Mobile App**

Helps parents and caregivers prepare for some of the most important conversations they may ever have with their kids.

Helps communities prepare to implement and promote campaigns supporting the needs of students who may be struggling with substance use, mental health, or school-related issues.

- **Mental Health America**

Provides general mental health resources, materials and screening tools in Spanish. Links to its Center for Peer Support and its Advocacy Network.

- **Therapy for Latinx**

National zip code directory of therapists who provide culturally and linguistically appropriate services for Hispanic/Latinx individuals.



References

- American Psychiatric Association. (2017). Mental Health Disparities: Hispanics and Latinos. <https://www.psychiatry.org/File%20Library/Psychiatrists/Cultural-Competency/Mental-Health-Disparities/Mental-Health-Facts-for-Hispanic-Latino.pdf>
- Aguilar-Gaxiola, s., Loera, g., Méndez, I., Sala, M., Latino Mental Health Concilio, and Nakamoto, j. (2012). Community-Defined Solutions for Latino Mental Health Care Disparities: California Reducing Disparities Project, Latino Strategic Planning Workgroup Population Report. Sacramento, CA: UC Davis, 2012
- CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention). Community Health and Program Services (CHAPS): Health Disparities Among Racial/Ethnic Populations. Atlanta: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; 2008.
- Cohen, R. A., Terlizzi, E. P., Cha, A. E., & Martinez, M. E. (2021). Health insurance coverage: early release of estimates from the National Health Interview Survey, January–June 2020.
- Jiménez, D. E., Barthel, S. J., Cardeñas, V., & Alegría, M. (2013). Stigmatizing attitudes toward mental illness among racial/ethnic older adults in primary care. *International journal of geriatric psychiatry*, 28(10), 1061–1068. <https://doi.org/10.1002/gps.3928>. Accessed from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3672370/>.
- National Alliance for the Mentally Ill, U. S. (2022) National Alliance on Mental Illness NAMI. United States. [Web Archive] Retrieved from shorturl.at/firsZ
- SAMHSA. 2018 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH): Hispanics, Latino, or Spanish Origin or Descent. https://www.samhsa.gov/data/sites/default/files/reports/rpt23249/4_Hispanic_2020_01_14_508.pdf
- SAMHSA (2021). Key substance use and mental health indicators in the United States: Results from the 2020 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (HHS Publication No. PEP21-07-01-003, NSDUH Series H-56). Rockville, MD: Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Retrieved from <https://www.samhsa.gov/data/report/2020-nsduh-annual-national-report>.
- Shrider, E. A., Kollar, M., Chen, F., & Semega, J. (2021). Income and poverty in the United States: 2020. US Census Bureau, Current Population Reports, (P60-273)