

# Latinos and Mental Health: Examining Our Needs, Exploring Our Resources

Issue Brief

June 2008



## Background

- Mental health is a leading cause of disability, incarceration, and lost productivity, and is as disabling as cancer or heart disease.
- Almost a third of all Americans have had a serious mental health disorder in their life.
- One out of every two children born in the state is born to a Latina mother, and the Department of Finance predicts that by 2042, Latinos will represent a full majority of California's population.

## Latinos Face Structural Barriers in Access to Care

- Over half of California's uninsured population is Latino, and more than one in four Latinos ages 0 to 64 are living without insurance, less likely to have access to basic and preventive healthcare services and a medical home.
- Community and hospital clinics are the source of primary care for more than half of Latino children who live under 100% of the Federal Poverty Levels.
- Lack of health insurance is closely correlated to lower levels of receiving mental health services.
- Latinos comprise over half of beneficiaries in California's Medi-Cal and nearly half of children enrolled in the Healthy Families Programs.

## Disparities Persist in Awareness and Treatment

- Over 88% of insured Whites receive mental health coverage compared to 67% of insured Latinos.
- Whites are more than 3 times as likely to see a health professional for mental or emotional problems when compared with Latinos.
- Whites are more than twice as likely to take prescription medications for mental and emotional problems than Latinos.
- Only 1 in 11 Latinos with mental health disorders contact mental health specialists for treatment.
- Latino youth engage in higher levels of activities that put them at risk for mental health issues, such as substance abuse or delinquency.

## Cultural and Linguistic Barriers Create Problems

- Latino physicians are two to three times more likely to practice in underserved areas.
- For every 100,000 Latinos, there are only 29 Latino mental health professionals.
- Non-Latino mental health providers can have trouble diagnosing Latinos, who report mental health problems differently than how they are described in diagnostic manuals. This leads to non-treatment and delays in care.
- Latina adolescents have become the group most likely to contemplate or attempt suicide when compared to their African American or White counterparts.
- Episodes of severe depression are highly prevalent among Latinas.
- Latino immigrants are significantly less likely to seek help or treatment, with only 1 in 20 doing so.

## At a Glance

### Latinos and Mental Health in California

- ◆ Represent a third of the state's population, Or 11 million Californians
- ◆ Over half of California's uninsured population is Latino
- ◆ Only 1 in 11 Latinos with mental health disorders contact mental health specialists for treatment
- ◆ Latino immigrants are significantly less likely to seek help or treatment, with only 1 in 20 doing so.

## How Can Public Policy Address These Needs?

In November 2004, Californians approved a measure to provide long-term funding for primary and preventive mental health services. The Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) has the potential to significantly increase Latinos' access to mental health care by promoting non-traditional service delivery, public education, and improving the state's mental workforce.

- **Community involvement:** Latinos must be involved in the planning and implementation of services in their communities. Latino representation in stakeholder groups must reflect the demographics of the area.
- **Same-day billing:** Currently, primary care facilities cannot be reimbursed for 2 visits with 1 patient in the same day. This means patients who present mental health problems cannot be referred to mental health specialists in the same clinic that day.
- **Co-location of services:** Latinos often seek services in community-based settings, such as family resource centers, community clinics, and schools. Some funding is available via subcontract with county departments of mental health, where mental health specialists are based in these locations. These have proven to be highly effective in increasing services to underserved groups.
- **Increasing a culturally and linguistically competent workforce:** Develop loan repayment programs for mental health practitioners who demonstrate cultural and linguistic competencies and practice in underserved areas.
- **Community-based outreach:** Invest in innovative strategies to increase Latino awareness of mental health through promotores de salud and Spanish-language media campaigns.

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For additional copies of this report, or for any questions, please contact Vanessa Cajina, Regional Networks Coordinator at: [vcajina@lchc.org](mailto:vcajina@lchc.org)

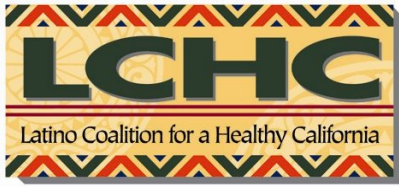
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# JOIN THE LATINO COALITION FOR A HEALTHY CALIFORNIA

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The Latino Coalition for a Healthy California, a non-profit, public policy and advocacy organization dedicated to improving the health of Latinos, invites you to become a member. As a member, you will become part of a larger movement of professionals, medical providers, legislative staff and others interested in advancing the health of Latinos.

## LCHC Membership

Benefits of dues-paying members of the Latino Coalition include the following:

- Subscription to monthly LCHC newsletter
- Discounts on registration fees to all LCHC events, including the biennial conference
- Invitations to all LCHC events, including legislative and community briefings
- Monthly electronic updates on legislative and budget issues
- Inclusion in the Rapid Response Network, LCHC's email listserv regarding pressing legislative issues
- Advanced release of select LCHC policy briefs
- Technical assistance with questions regarding legislative and budget issues
- Opportunity to participate in local health forums, such as the LCHC Regional Networks
- Inclusion in a Latino professional's online directory (Community Rolodex)
- Building a long-term relationship with companies and organizations that support Latino health
- Sharing information and collaborating in projects with other health professionals.

## Affiliate Membership – Rapid Response Network

Affiliate members of LCHC do not pay dues and are included in the Rapid Response Network, LCHC's email list serve that provides up-to-date information regarding pressing health legislation and events. Affiliate members do not receive the other benefits of dues-paying members.

**Check the following**

**I would like to become a dues-paying member of LCHC.**

**I would like to become an affiliate member and be added to the Rapid Response Network (free).**

### Membership Fees

- \$35 Student       \$50 Individual       \$150 Non-Profit       \$1,500 Corporate

If you would like to become an LCHC member or an affiliate member, please email, fax or call with the following information:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Name on Credit Card: \_\_\_\_\_ Credit Card Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Credit Card Type: \_\_\_\_\_ Security Code (3-4 digits on back of card): \_\_\_\_\_ Expiration Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**OR SIGN-UP ONLINE AT [WWW.LCHC.ORG](http://WWW.LCHC.ORG)**

**Please make all checks payable to the Tides Center/LCHC.** The Latino Coalition for a Healthy California does not share its lists.

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