



National Resource
Center for Hispanic
Mental Health®

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Alliance for Latino Behavioral Health Workforce Development

Background History:

In an effort to address the Latino behavioral health workforce crisis, the United States Department of Health and Human Services (US DHHS) Office of Minority Health (OMH), and its grantee, the National Resource Center for Hispanic Mental Health, convened the nation's first-ever roundtable discussion on developing a mental health workforce for Latinos, titled *Movilizandonos por Nuestro Futuro: Strategic Development of a Mental Health Workforce for Latinos* on July 8-10, 2009 in San Francisco, California.

Nearly 50 leaders in Latino behavioral health participated, including representatives from US DHHS leadership, national health and mental health associations, national guild organizations, national Latino advocacy organizations, Latino mental health leadership, state and national foundations, public and elected officials, universities and professional schools, researchers, students, providers, and health and mental health promoters. The goal of this event was to formulate a plan that included consensus statements and recommendations specifically aimed at increasing the diversity of our nation's behavioral health workforce and leadership. Addressing these areas are critically important in order to address Latinos' underutilization of behavioral health care, eliminate disparities in the availability of, access to and the provision of quality care, and to address Latinos' overrepresentation in many of the nation's most vulnerable populations.

The expert group of attendees developed consensus statements, recommendations, and action items, which will serve as a blueprint and guide for improving the Latino behavioral health workforce crisis facing the nation.

The five consensus statements are:

- 1. The Latino population in the U.S. is facing a public health crisis due to poor or unmet behavioral health needs.** As Latinos continue to grow in numbers throughout the nation, this crisis will impact the quality of life for all Americans. Failure to address the behavioral health needs of this large and significantly growing population will result in severely negative health, social, and economic consequences across the nation.
- 2. The lack of a bilingual and bicultural behavioral health workforce plays a significant role in disparities across all three key areas of behavioral health care service delivery: a) availability of; b) meaningful access to; and c) the provision of quality care.**

3. **Meaningful access to behavioral healthcare for Latinos in the U.S. is a social justice issue.** Disparities in availability, access, and provision of quality, culturally and linguistically competent behavioral health care for Latinos must be adequately addressed and supported by public and private entities. These services will provide a fair opportunity to live meaningful, independent and productive lives, while eliminating Latino overrepresentation in high-need and vulnerable populations.
4. **Latinos deserve a diverse, multidisciplinary, bilingual, and bicultural behavioral health workforce.** This is critical in order to experience better treatment outcomes, patient satisfaction, and overall improved quality of care.
5. **The time for action is NOW!** Latinos can no longer afford the negative impacts of a fragmented and culturally irrelevant and insensitive behavioral health care system.

An immediate outcome of the roundtable event was the formation a Steering Committee to ensure the success of the recommendations. A later full-day committee meeting was convened, resulting in the formalization of the Alliance for Latino Behavioral Health Workforce Development.

Mission Statement of the Alliance for Latino Behavioral Health Workforce Development:

The Alliance for Latino Behavioral Health Workforce Development is a strategic partnership of the leading national Latino behavioral health professional organizations, and other key leaders in the Latino health and behavioral health professions, and workforce development. The mission of the Alliance is to ensure that the recommendations contained in the OMH *Movilizandonos por Nuestro Futuro: Strategic Development of a Mental Health Workforce for Latinos Consensus Statements and Recommendations Report* are widely disseminated and seriously considered by the array of stakeholders who are needed to successfully address this critically important issue. The NRCHMH will spearhead the development and operations of the Alliance with the guidance, direction and leadership of the inaugural members of its Steering Committee.

The Alliance will lead and implement the final consensus recommendations, and be charged with creating a process for developing and monitoring an action-oriented, educational awareness and advocacy plan, while engaging multiple stakeholders from across the nation. Yet, with so many obstacles to overcome and so little support, a report and an Alliance is understandably not enough to achieve all goals. To successfully achieve the goals of this initiative and create long-standing change there will need to be careful examination of the recommendations, investments in education, support from the public-private partnerships, and a full commitment to parity.

For further information on the Alliance for Latino Behavioral Health Workforce Development, please contact:

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