



National Resource Center for Hispanic Mental Health
Changing Minds, Advancing Knowledge, Transforming Lives
3575 Quakerbridge Road, Suite 102
Mercerville, NJ 08619

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Henry Acosta, MA, MSW, LSW
Executive Director; and
Chair, Alliance for Latino Behavioral Workforce Development
(609) 838-5488, ext. 205; (609) 838-5480 - Fax

**United States Department of Health and Human Services Office of Minority Health
Issues Report on Latino Behavioral Health Workforce Development**

MERCERVILLE, N.J. – March 18, 2010 – The National Resource Center for Hispanic Mental Health (NRCHMH) is proud to announce the release of a consensus and policy recommendations report prepared by the United States Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Office of Minority Health (OMH) and its grantee, the National Resource Center for Hispanic Mental Health. The report is a product of OMH’s initiative titled *Movilizandonos Por Nuestro Futuro: Strategic Development of a Mental Health Workforce for Latinos*. The report contains consensus statements, recommendations and action items specifically focused on developing a diverse workforce for Latinos in order to ensure meaningful access to behavioral health care services. The report was developed with input from nearly 50 leaders from the Latino behavioral health community, who participated in a national roundtable discussion on Latino behavioral health workforce over the past year, which were sponsored by OMH and coordinated by the NRCHMH. Participants included leaders 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.

“There is a crisis affecting Latinos in need of quality behavioral health services and in the behavioral health workforce, which can no longer be ignored”, says Dr. Teresa Chapa, Senior Policy Advisor, Mental Health, DHHS OMH. “While at over 15% of the overall population, not including the four million residents of Puerto Rico, Latinos are visibly absent from all areas of the behavioral health professions including medicine, nursing, psychology and social work, and in positions of leadership across the board”.

more . . .

“Addressing diversity and the cultural and linguistic competency of our nation’s behavioral health workforce and leadership is critically important to eliminating disparities in three key areas of behavioral health service delivery: availability of, access to and the provision of quality services”, says Henry Acosta, MA, MSW, LSW, Executive Director of the NRCHMH and Chair, of the newly formed Alliance for Latino Behavioral Health Workforce Development. “The lack of a multidisciplinary, bilingual and bicultural behavioral workforce for Latinos is a social justice issue that must be addressed now, as our lack of presence in leadership and in the workforce contributes to Latinos underutilization of behavioral health care, to existing disparities, and to Latinos over representation in many of the nation’s most vulnerable populations”, added Mr. Acosta.

To ensure that the report’s recommendations 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 newly formed Alliance for Latino Behavioral Health Workforce Development. The Alliance is a composition of leaders representing the leading national Latino behavioral health professional organizations, and other key leaders in the Latino health and behavioral health professions, and workforce development. “The energy and commitment expressed and displayed by the members of both the OMH *Movilizandonos Por Nuestro Futuro: Strategic Development of a Mental Health Workforce for Latinos* Initiative and the Alliance for Latino Behavioral Health Workforce Development is unprecedented, sincerely appreciated and truly needed to make a positive impact on this critical area”, said Dr. Chapa .

“The NRCHMH looks forward to continuing our work with OMH, Alliance members and stakeholders from across the nation to successfully address this urgent issue”, concluded, Mr. Acosta. The full report may be accessed at www.nrchmh.org

* * *

The National Resource Center for Hispanic Mental Health is a private nonprofit charitable organization based in Mercerville, N.J. developed as an outgrowth of the New Jersey Mental Health Institute’s award-winning and nationally and internationally recognized *Changing Minds, Advancing Mental Health for Hispanics* program. The organization’s mission is to promote quality mental health services through policy development initiatives, training, technical assistance, research, data collection, and anti-stigma and anti-discrimination campaigns. The NRCHMH specifically aims to reduce

more . . .

disparities and to increase treatment quality and availability of mental health services for Hispanics throughout the nation. The NRCHMH also aims to heighten awareness, acceptance and understanding of mental illness among the nation's Hispanic population. These goals are accomplished by implementing a number of intervention strategies focused on:

1. Developing culturally competent resources and tools for behavioral health administrators, direct service providers and other stakeholders.
2. Creating and fostering the development and institutionalization of best practice programs.
3. Conceptualizing and implementing high-quality trainings on culturally competent mental health service delivery and on policy development and advocacy.
4. Supporting the planning, development and implementation of policies and systems of care at the local, state and national levels.
5. Developing comprehensive and user-friendly vehicles to disseminate information in English and Spanish on an array of mental health topics, research studies, available resources for consumers, family members and providers and important field related events.
