



## Unallocated Prevention and Early Intervention Funding Request

### *Latina Youth Program*

**Funding: \$337,500.00**

#### Program Goals:

- To promote prevention and early intervention for youth to decrease substance use and depressive symptoms which are major risk factors for suicide.
- To increase youth awareness of high-risk behaviors and provide immediate assessment and treatment services.
- To increase access to services while decreasing barriers and stigma among youth in accepting mental health services.
- To increase family awareness about high-risk behaviors and empower families through education about the benefits of prevention and early intervention and health promotion.
- To enhance awareness and education among school staff and community members regarding substance abuse and depression.

During Fiscal Year 2013-14, the program provided services to 142 students and their families, who had open cases. Additionally, the program's staff provided crisis and urgent services as well as preventive activities such as outreach and education to 2,664 contacts, for a total of 2673 contact hours. With regard to open cases, participants ranged in age from 7 to 22 years of age, with the greatest number of participants being between 13 and 18 years of age. With regard to gender, 37% of participants are male and 63% are female. The students were distributed among grades 2<sup>nd</sup> grade through 12 with most of them being in the 8<sup>th</sup> through 10<sup>th</sup> grades. With regard to health insurance coverage, all participants are uninsured.

#### *Engagement of clients and family members using culturally relevant concepts:*

- **Familismo** recognizes the immediate and extended family as the backbone of the Latino community. Positive relationships among family members are highly valued. And these relationships are viewed as preventive and protective factors which reduce the incidence of high-risk behavior in youth. The program emphasizes this value by directly discussing strategies to improve communication skills and mutual respect in all aspects of the work with participants and their families, as well as actively engaging families in all areas of decision making and service delivery.
  
- **Collectivismo** extends the value placed on positive working relationships out into the community. The literature indicates that Latinos prefer to work in groups and generally live in close knit communities. Latino students have been known to do better in goal attaining activities, when working in groups with other students. The program incorporates this value by emphasizing the involvement of the entire community in identifying and addressing the stressors which lead to high-risk behavior and suicide in youth. School staff, as well as staff in other agencies is engaged in learning about high-

risk behavior identification. Strong collaborative relationships with schools, community and government agencies helps students and their families access the program readily. Likewise, program staff is better able to refer and advocate for program participant in other agencies because of the trust and respect the program has earned in the community.

- **Respeto** as a value places emphasis on social status and bestows ultimate decision making power on authority figures. The value of mutual respect as well as respect for elders is taught to youth participants. Parents and other authority figures are taught about the developmental needs of youth in establishing autonomy. Additionally, parents are supported in becoming empowered by gaining new parenting tools which help them regain their appropriate place as authoritative leaders of their families. This happens through family therapy and parenting groups. Parents are encouraged to explore their own issues and supported in increasing their skills and confidence with regard to parenting their children at different developmental stages.

- **Personalismo** as a value highlights the importance placed on interpersonal relationships. Latinos use relationships as the context within which information is obtained and goals are attained. Young people, particularly those in middle school, are more likely to turn to family for advice, as opposed to unfamiliar others. Research has found that young Latinas state that they turn to their mother, father or sister when they have a problem. By becoming an integral part of school communities and integrating the family into treatment, the program builds on this value. By being available to the entire family in a proactive and practical manner, the program builds strong relationships and becomes an important resource for participants, their families and the community.

#### *Risk Factor Analysis*

The program identified ten risk factors, which were targeted for treatment in addition to diagnosed mental health illnesses. The risk factors include: Presence of substance use or abuse, suicidal ideation, past suicide attempts, running away from home, communication problems at home, poor school functioning, difficulty regulating emotions, involvement with the legal system, negative peer relations and issues related to sexual identity.

The variables that most seemed to impact decreased severity of symptoms, were found to include the risk factors Difficulty Regulating Emotion and Communication Problems. Thus, program participants who endorsed one of these two risk factors within the moderately severe to very severe range at intake and who experienced a significant degree of symptom relief, were more likely to experience greater reduction in severity of other risk factors and increased functioning. Risk factors associated in the literature with research on suicide, were targeted for prevention and intervention. The program has been consistently successful at preventing suicide in the participants. As supported by the findings listed above, participants who endorsed suicide ideation as a significant problem at intake decreased in severity after participating on treatment, based on participant and parent report.

Pacific Clinics is in the process of developing a template to collect outcomes for the outreach presentations they currently do in the schools and community.