

AUGUST 2024



## Personalismo, Advocacy, and Latino Mental Health



LOS ANGELES COUNTY  
**DEPARTMENT OF  
MENTAL HEALTH**  
hope. recovery. wellbeing.

  
**LatinoUsCC**  
Cultivating Healthy Communities  
Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health

# ABOUT THIS PROJECT



The following report presents the key findings of the Personalismo, Advocacy, and Latino Mental Health Equity project. The project involved a collaboration between Carmen Perez, MSW, MBA and the Latino Underserved Cultural Communities Subcommittee of the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health (LACDMH).

## CURRENT STATE OF LATINO MENTAL HEALTH

Recent Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health data indicates that among Latinos, the estimated Medi-Cal Enrolled Population with SED and SMI was 393,839. However, there was an estimated unmet mental health service need of 334,048 (86%) Medi-Cal Enrolled Latinos with only 56,791 (14%) unduplicated consumers served. Across California, MHSA-eligible Latinos accounted for nearly 55% of the mental health need but were less than 40% of service recipients. Therefore, a consultant was hired for the purpose of outreaching to the Latino community County-wide to provide them with the knowledge and skills for the Latino community to advocate the local public mental health system on issues of mental health inequities as well as inadequate quality of mental health services received by the community.

The objective of the Personalismo, Advocacy, and Latino Mental Health Equity Project is to strengthen knowledge and advocacy skills to elevate the voices, identify the needs, and increase genuine participation of Latino stakeholders to drive truly equitable transformative change of Los Angeles County's Public Mental Health System (PMHS).

# Project Goals

3

## Latino Mental Health Equity Personalismo Project:

1

To provide mental health education to the Latino community via culturally responsive interactive trainings:

- Curriculum offered a general education on mental health and navigating the Public Mental Health System.
- Exploring the specific impact of the pandemic on mental health.



2

To educate the Latino community on how to participate and advocate in the Public Mental Health Systems stakeholder process with the goal of mental health equity:

- Exploring cultural factors within the Latino community that can serve as sources of strength but also act as barriers to accessing support.
- Distinguishing between mental health conditions and providing guidance on when it is essential to seek professional assistance.

3

To improve overall health outcomes by strengthening the mental health literacy in the Latino community, so they know how to ask healthcare professionals questions about their mental health and understand answers commonly given.

4

To build and strengthen resilience in the Latino community so that they can be better equipped to face the challenges and barriers associated with experiencing mental health difficulties and challenges associated with receiving help:

- Providing individuals with effective strategies and coping mechanisms to navigate when facing personal or family mental health difficulties.

# DELIVERY OF PROJECT

The Latino Mental Health Personalismo, Advocacy, and Equity workshops were conducted in-person and virtually reaching individuals in SPA 2, SPA 3, SPA 4, and SPA 7. A total of 6 workshops series were carried out ensuring broad access and engagement within these regions. In each SPA, dedicated community outreach efforts were undertaken; these targeted outreach initiatives were designed to effectively engage and involve mental health providers and advocates from within the Latino community and ensure their active participation. All 6 workshops series were conducted in English with Spanish interpretation as needed.



# MEASURING IMPACT

A pre and post survey was developed specifically for evaluating the effectiveness of the project among the participants who attended the workshops. By conducting this survey, valuable insights could be obtained regarding the participants' knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors before and after their involvement in the workshops. This allowed for a general assessment of the project's influence on the participants, highlighting areas of improvement and success.

The surveys comprised of six statements in English and Spanish presented in a Likert scale format. The 6 statements are listed below:

**1. I know the signs and symptoms of common mental health conditions affecting Latinos.**

2. I have a good understanding of how the Public Mental Health System works.

**3. I understand mental health inequities in the Latino community and know how to talk about them with others.**

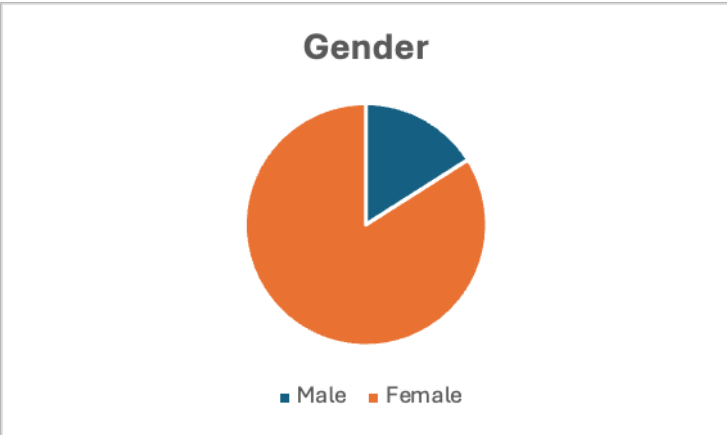
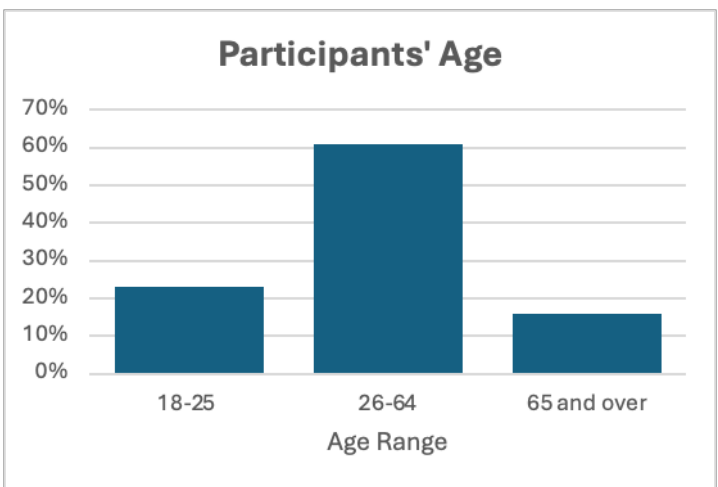
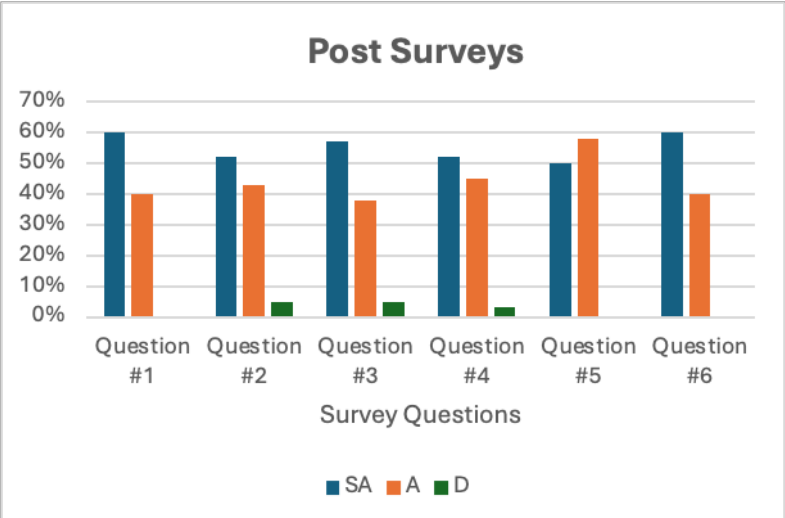
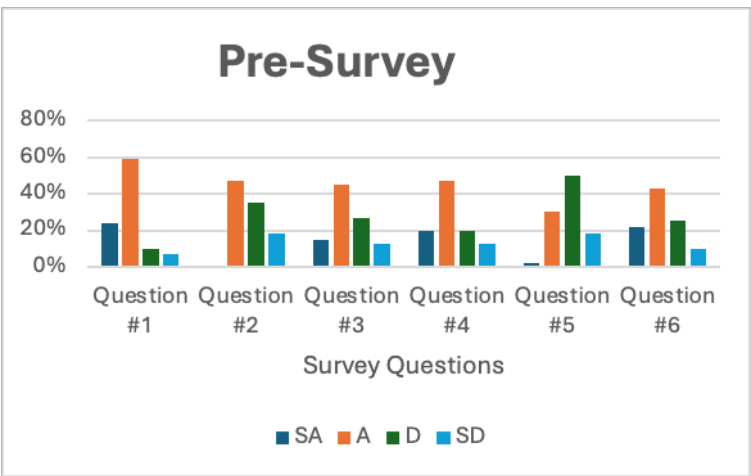
4. I know where to find mental health services and resources for myself and others.

**5. I know where and with who I can discuss concerns or recommendations for improvement on mental health issues impacting Latinos.**

6. I feel confident talking to Latino about the topic of mental health conditions in a non-stigmatizing way.

Participants had an opportunity to complete the 6 statements using the Likert scale from "*Strongly disagree*", "*Somewhat disagree*", "*Undecided*", "*Somewhat Agree*" and "*Strongly Agree*". After the workshop, participants indicated that they had learned about the different opportunities to have their voices heard in the Public Mental Health system and how to advocate more efficiently.

**The following is the data from the trainings that started on May 20<sup>th</sup> 2024 and ended August 23<sup>rd</sup> 2024:**



The results from the survey indicate that there was significant increase in participants understand of the public mental health system after the training shown in the pre and post survey data. Most participants were female and age range 26-64.



## **Virtual Mental Health Workshops**

To foster a sense of connection and active participation, participants were encouraged to keep their cameras on during the workshop, considering the sensitive nature of the topic. All participants of the virtual workshops chose to keep their cameras turned on the entire time they participated in the workshops.



## **Sharing Personal Experiences:**

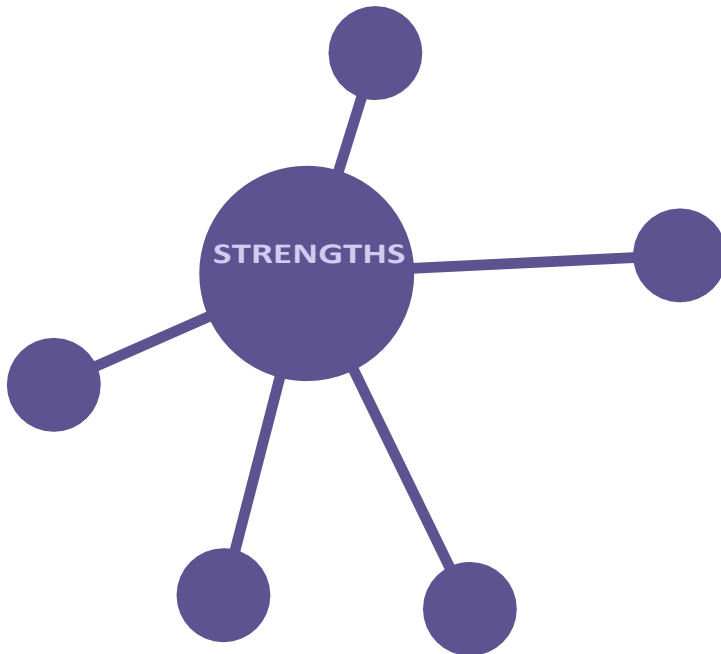
Throughout the workshops, participants were encouraged to share their personal/family experiences with mental health issues. However, it was noted that only a few participants felt comfortable enough to openly share their experiences. In some instances, participants preferred to solely listen to the material without actively contributing their own stories despite being encouraged to share from the very beginning to improve learning of the material.



## **Attendance**

Those who attended the workshop varied in profession, age, and lived experience. We had people who represented indigenous communities, had mental health diagnosis, and worked as caregivers. Some participants worked in health care and mental health fields. Everyone who participated wanted to comprehend the public mental health system and understand how to access services: They found the system overwhelming and confusing. The training provided solutions and answers to the issues and questions participants wanted clarified.





### Stigma around Mental Health

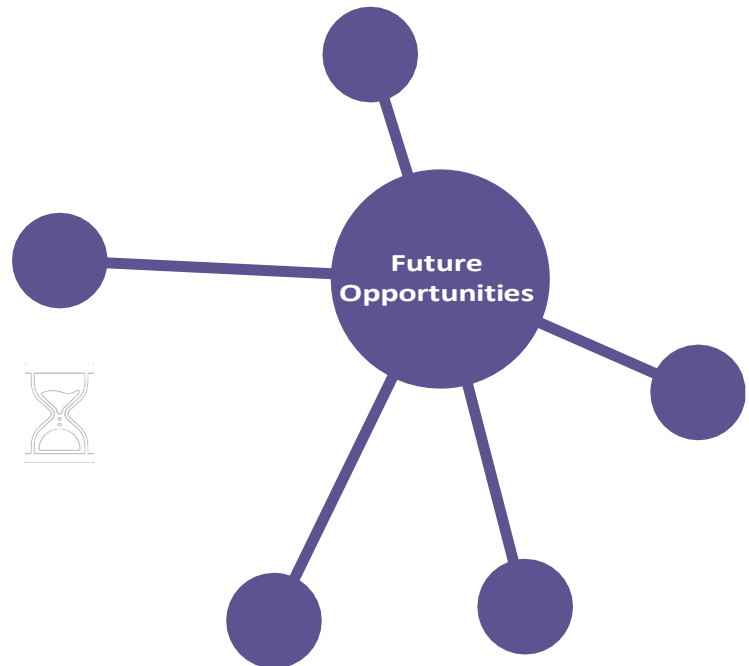
Mental health difficulties became even more apparent due to the deep-rooted stigma associated with seeking support and actively addressing these issues.

### Virtual Platform

While the virtual workshop offered increased accessibility to individuals who might not have been able to attend an in-person event, it also presented limitations for those who were less comfortable with technology.

### Completion of Surveys

Administering surveys posed a challenge as some individuals had initial difficulties understanding the pre-surveys and completing them.



### Family

Family played a pivotal role in this context, as cultural values emphasized the importance of familial support. It was observed that some participants had colleagues/co-workers present in the same room, sitting together, further highlighting the significance of collective support in navigating through mental health issues.

### Referrals to Mental Health Services

The workshops provided interested individuals who are experiencing mental health difficulties with an opportunity to establish a connection with mental health services and support. This allowed them to feel more confident in their ability to receive services and felt less ashamed of doing so.

# FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS



## **In Person Mental Health Workshops**

In-person mental health support groups provide participants with the opportunity to participate in a warm, safe, and intimate environment after having a basic understanding of the Public Mental Health System. It fosters connections and fellowship with other individuals who are also navigating through mental health challenges, allowing for the exchange of contact information and meaningful interactions among participants.



## **Workshop Series**

By offering a variety of workshops throughout the year, each focusing on different themes/topics related to mental health and the Public Mental Health System, participants are provided with valuable resources to navigate various aspects of their mental health system experiences. These workshops can offer support in coping with significant events such as holidays and other memorable occasions, while also guiding participants in maintaining a meaningful connection with their loved ones. Participants gain knowledge and strategies to effectively cope with their difficulty situations while helping them navigate the challenges of the mental health system.

# THANK YOU



Carmen Perez, MSW, MBA

[ciperez567@gmail.com](mailto:ciperez567@gmail.com)

