



Casa de Esperanza
2012 Listening Sessions Process
Summary of Findings

**Conversations with 122 Latinas from across the
Twin Cities and surrounding suburbs**

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Organizational Background

Casa de Esperanza is a Latina organization founded in 1982 to provide emergency shelter for Latinas and their children fleeing from domestic violence. Today, we are a national organization that remains grounded in our local communities as well as being a national resource to organizations and communities across the United States.

In October, 2011, Casa de Esperanza was awarded the Family Violence Prevention and Services Discretionary Grant from the Department of Health and Human Services, which designates the organization a National Culturally Specific Special Issue Resource Center whose focus is working within Latin@¹ communities. As a national resource center, Casa de Esperanza is a member of a nationwide network that works to support prevention and intervention efforts across the country to end domestic and dating violence. This work falls under a division of the organization called the National Latin@ Network for Healthy Families and Communities and consists of

- A research center, based in Atlanta, GA, that conducts culturally relevant research to inform the creation of new strategies for engaging Latinas and their communities in ending domestic violence.
- A public policy initiative, based in Washington, DC, that takes Latin@ realities to legislative tables. Casa de Esperanza also translates policy decisions into information and tools that enhance the work of organizations throughout the country.
- Training and support. Casa de Esperanza is also a Technical Assistance (TA) provider for the Office on Violence Against Women, US Dept. of Justice. TA is provided to Latin@ and domestic violence organizations; mainstream agencies that work with Latinas and their families; and organizations that serve other culturally specific communities.

Locally, we continue to provide Latina-based advocacy services that include working with women and children who find safety at our shelter, *El Refugio*, and with Latinas where they are—at home and in the community. Our 24/7 bilingual crisis line provides support and information to thousands of callers each year. Our community engagement initiatives focus on mobilizing local community members to end domestic violence by cultivating their leadership and facilitating connections and resources. We train Latina women and teens to provide peer education opportunities for other Latin@s in the community. We also operate two neighborhood Information and Resource Centers—in St. Paul and Minneapolis—to provide access to technology and information that are critical to Latin@s' daily lives.

Casa de Esperanza is guided by the voices of Latinas and to that end, we are committed to ensuring that Latinas are able to give us information that reflects their realities and hopes and dreams. In 2012

¹ Casa de Esperanza has chosen to use "@" in place of the masculine "o" when referring to people or things that are either gender neutral or both masculine and feminine in make-up. This decision reflects our commitment to gender inclusion and recognizes the important contributions that both men and women make to our communities.

we conducted a series of listening sessions and heard from 122 Latinas across the Twin Cities and surrounding areas. This is the third comprehensive listening process conducted with Latinas since 2000.

This Summary Document

This document provides a summary of the listening process and the work completed between May 2012 and February 2013. With the support of Latinas from the community we have:

- Gathered information from 122 Latinas about their goals, challenges, dreams, and source of pride
- Translated, sorted and analyzed what we heard
- Presented our findings to a group of 21 Latinas who participated in the listening sessions to verify that we understood what we had heard, and to listen to any other insights and suggestions they provided

In March 2013, we shared the results of the listening process with key organizational partners and allies that may also be interested in utilizing the findings to help shape their programs and services.

Goals of the Listening Sessions Process

We implemented the listening process to accomplish the following:

1. To understand the current realities of Latinas including their hopes, dreams and challenges
2. To inform and guide our community engagement work
3. To identify opportunities for our organization and others to improve or change services provided to Latin@s in the Twin Cities
4. To use what we learned to develop new tools for others interested in utilizing the listening session approach in their communities

The Listening Sessions Team

The primary team included:

- Casa de Esperanza's Community Initiatives Manager and Community Engagement Coordinator
- A group of 11 Latinas from across the Twin Cities Metro Area trained to facilitate the listening sessions

Our Community Engagement Coordinator also served as the note taker and provided support for the participants and facilitators during the listening sessions.

The Listening Sessions

A total of 16 listening sessions were facilitated—in St. Paul, Minneapolis, Woodbury, Richfield, Shakopee and Maple Grove. Sessions were held at a variety of locations, including:

- Churches—Santo Niño Episcopal Church, Woodland Hills Church, and Sagrado Corazon Catholic Church
- Organizations that hosted listening sessions during their regular group times with Latinas—Crossroads Elementary, Modulo de Información Recursos y Ayuda (MIRA), Discapacitados Abriendo Caminos (DAC), Su Familia, and Centro, Inc.
- Homes of some of the participants

Participant Demographics

We spoke to 122 Latinas. The typical respondent:

- Was between 35 to 54 years old
- Was Married
- Moved From Mexico
- Had been here more than 9 years and less than 16
- Had 2 to 3 children per household
- Reported Spanish as their primary language

However, it is important to note that the 122 respondents were very diverse and included Latinas that:

- Are single, married, widowed, divorced or separated from their partners
- Come from varied cultural and socio economic backgrounds
- Come from Mexico, El Salvador, Peru, Venezuela, Puerto Rico, Ecuador, and the Dominican Republic
- Have lived in Minnesota from 1 to 26 years
- Are mothers or single without children
- Are bilingual or monolingual Spanish-speaking

The 5 Questions We Asked

The following questions were asked at all 16 listening sessions.

- What do you spend most of your day doing?
- What are your most important day-to-day needs?
- List one personal achievement you are proud of and why.
- To whom do you turn when you have a problem?
- If you could set a personal goal, realize a dream or wish, what would that be? What would you need to reach that goal?

What We Heard

The most common theme that surfaced was education and learning opportunities, both formal and informal; participants spoke of education and learning as a need, an achievement and a goal. As noted in the following quotes, there is a desire to learn English and to use a computer, pride in graduating from High School, and a dream to be able to finish college.

"Quisiera aprender Ingles y usar la computadora."
"Me siento orgullosa de haberme graduado de High School."
"Mi sueño sería poder terminar la Universidad."

The other three most common themes that emerged were the need for emotional support and connection, childcare issues, and personal development opportunities. The women we heard from spend the majority of their day working, doing house related chores, taking care of their children and family, often ending up not having time to address their own needs. The following quotes highlight their interests in having more personal time, the time to go to school, special time with their husband, time to connect with family, the need for support and someone who will listen, and the opportunity to stop working in order to take care of the children.

"Tiempo para mi."
"Tiempo para ir a la escuela."
"Time para tener un date con mi esposo."
"Mis necesidades no son cosas que necesito, es apoyo."
"Alguien que me escuche."
"Tiempo para conectarme con mi familia y familia para conectarme."
"Deje de trabajar para poder cuidar a mis hijos."

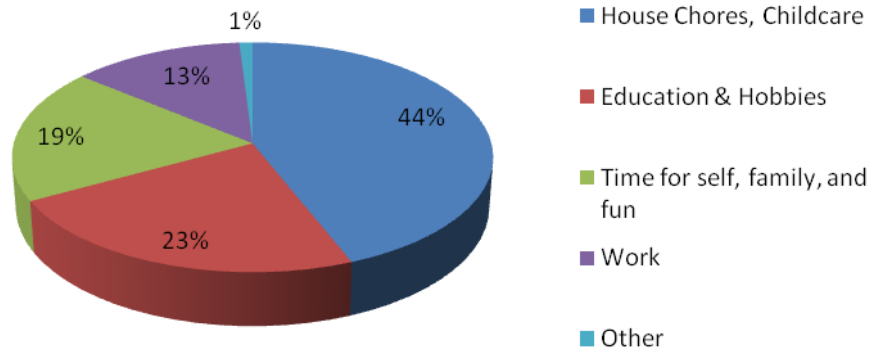
Some women also raised the need or desire to achieve more economic stability, which for a number of them also related to issues of childcare, education and learning.

The Latinas we spoke with have an amazing desire to learn and succeed. They also want to be heard and to be able to express their emotions and feelings. They do not necessarily need advice or to be told what to do. They would also love to have safe and accessible space(s) to get together—to talk, to share, and to learn new things.

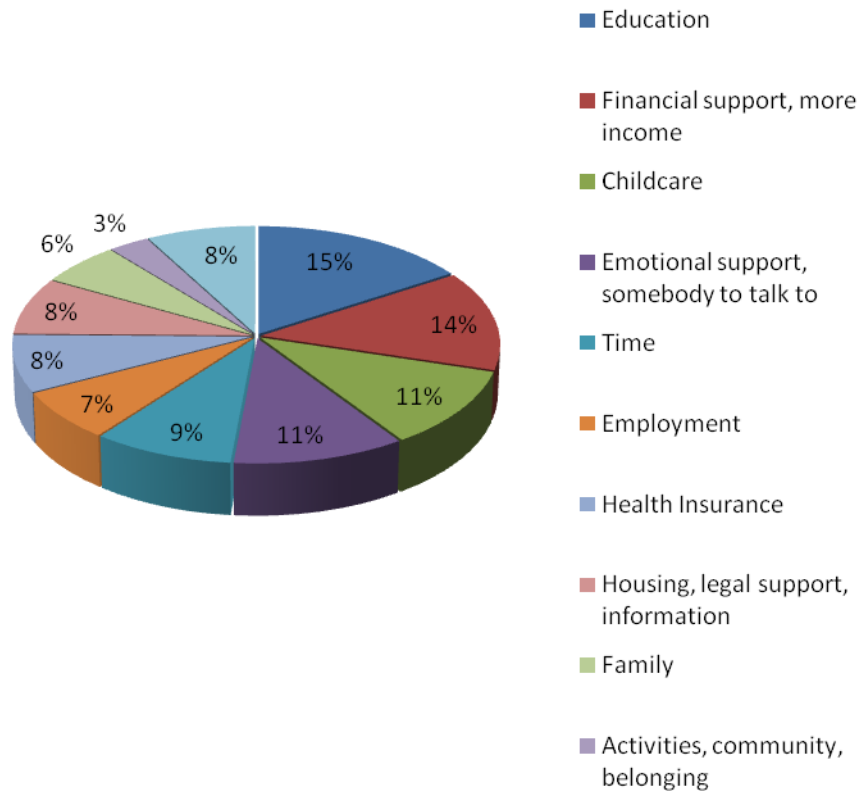
Participants appreciated the opportunity to help shape programs and services that will benefit them and other Latin@s in Minnesota. But there were other benefits that were realized throughout the process. Participants realized that they were not alone, they built new relationships, exchanged a variety of information and resources with each other, and many said they were able to look at themselves differently after having the opportunity to take a close look at their strengths and accomplishments.

Listening Sessions Response Breakdowns, Per Question

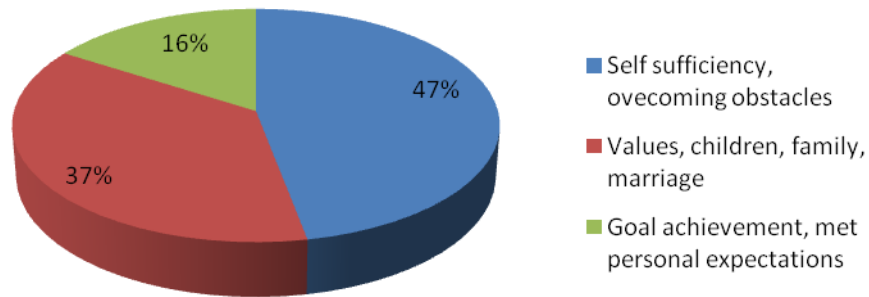
1. *What do you spend most of your day doing?*



2. *What are your most important day-to-day needs?*



3. List one personal achievement you are proud of and why.



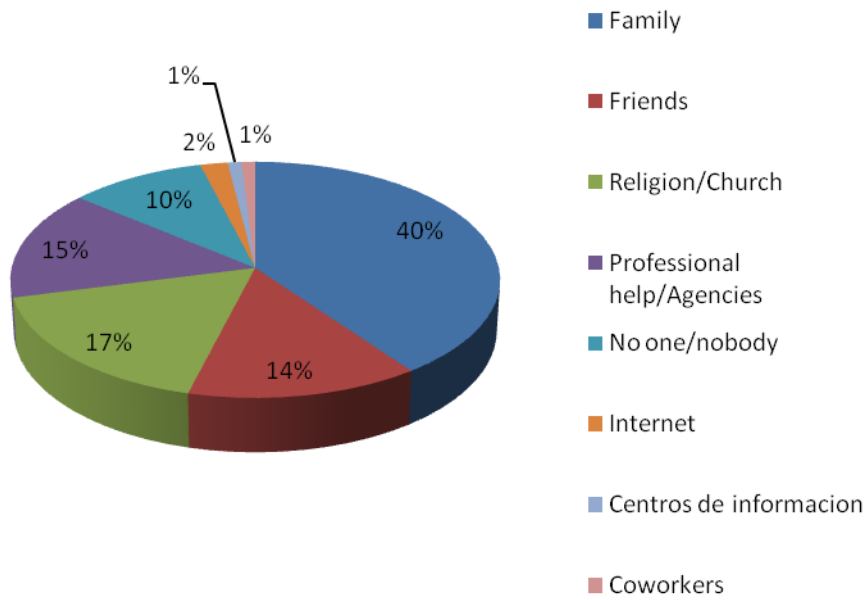
"Me siento orgullosa de haber logrado salir de una relación abusiva, de mis ganas de vivir y trabajar"
("I am proud of myself because I was able to leave an abusive relationship; I wanted to live and work.")

"De la unión familiar, la buena comunicación y de mi matrimonio estable"
("Proud of the strong bond and communication my family has and of my solid marriage.")

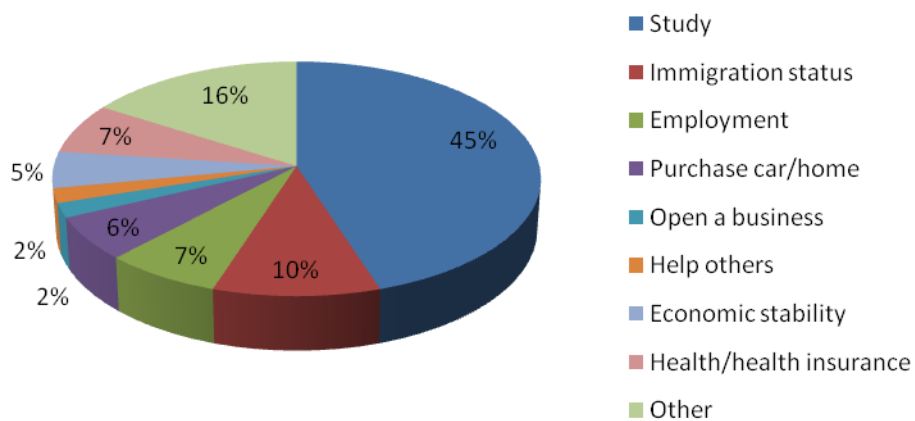
"Orgullosa de haber pasado todos los MCA"
("Proud because I passed all of my MCA tests.")

"Termine mi maestría en mercadeo"
("I finished my Masters in Marketing.")

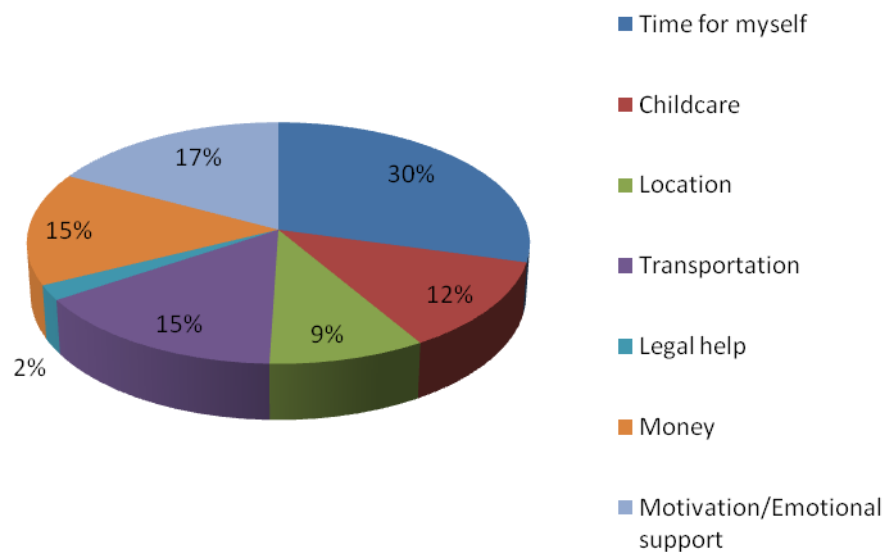
4. *To whom do you turn when you have a problem?*



5. *If you could set a personal goal, realize a dream or wish, what would that be? (part 1)*



What would you need to reach that goal? (part 2)



Validating What We Learned

Throughout the listening process we shared with participants that we would do a follow up meeting once we compiled and analyzed all the data in order to check in with them on what we heard. It was important to be able to validate our findings with those that had participated and understood the information shared. We collected contact information from those that said they would be willing to participate in the validation process. A total of 24 of the women were invited, of which 21 participated. Four of the 21 were trained to help facilitate the sessions. We decided to use the *World Café* approach to host our community check-in conversation with the group.

World Café: Using seven design principles and a simple method, the World Café is a powerful social technology for engaging people in conversations that matter, offering an effective antidote to the fast-paced fragmentation and lack of connection in today's world. Based on the understanding that conversation is the core process that drives personal, business, and organizational life, the World Café is more than a method, a process, or technique - it's a way of thinking and being together sourced in a philosophy of conversational leadership.

(From www.worldcafe.com)

The *World Café* Session focused on the identified common themes: Education, Emotional Support, Personal Development and Childcare. The general sense from the group was that the four common themes we highlighted made sense based on what they shared and heard in the listening sessions.

In addition to some discussions related to the four themes, we also asked participants to respond to the following:

1. What keeps them from utilizing or accessing help and services currently available
2. Share ideas on how community and organizations can work in new, simple, and innovative ways to provide services more effectively
3. Other insights and suggestions they may have as a result of the conversations
4. Key things they heard throughout the conversations

The following are participant's insights:

1. What keeps community members from utilizing or accessing help and services currently available
 - Childcare and transportation are obstacles.
 - Language is a barrier that keeps community members from participating in the Anglo community.
 - Lack of information – what are the services, who provides the services, who qualifies etc.
 - Embarrassed to ask for support.
2. Share ideas on how community and organizations can work in new, simple, and innovative ways to provide services more effectively
 - Understanding of community member's realities is key in reaching and supporting them.
 - Organizations working together - "La unión hace la fuerza." ("Our unity makes us stronger.")
 - Passionate organizational and community leaders are committed to supporting the community.
 - Information about the resources available in the community is shared effectively through social media, public awareness campaigns/announcements, word of mouth, etc.
 - Services, resources and information must reach outside of the Twin Cities and into the suburbs.
 - Organizations should provide more options and access—many limit services by city/county, income, childcare only for certain ages, hours of operation, etc.
 - Organize groups that build the community's capacity to speak and understand English.
 - Take services, resources and information to where community members are – in their homes.
 - Provide leadership opportunities for community members.

3. Other insights and suggestions they may have as a result of the conversations

- Listening is a key to community unity. It strengthens communities and creates a greater sense of community and belonging.
- By listening we learn what the community's priorities are.
- Passion drives community members to reach their goals.
- Fear of being judged, of asking for help, is a barrier that keeps community members from achieving their goals and pursuing dreams.
- Opportunity leadership creates growth in communities.

4. Key things they heard throughout the *World Café* conversations

- There are obstacles like fear of being judged, language, transportation, and lack of information.
- There continues to be a sense of isolation within the community.
- Agencies and organizations need to work together and exchange information, refer to each others' services.
- Fascinating to meet people from my community that are Leaders.
- There is a lot of talent and strength we can find in the community.
- I couldn't believe how much abuse and sexual violence there is despite all the help and information available.
- This experience was very interesting and it showed me that my problems are not that serious or big when compared to some of the things that were shared; this gives us the strength to keep going.
- There are professionals in our community that because of documentation status are not able to make good use of their knowledge.
- Sometimes we limit ourselves because of being women, feeling weak when facing a sexual assault situation regardless of having all the help needed.
- Education, immigration reform needed.
- We have all succeeded and overcome problems. We need to learn to love each other.
- As Latin@s we need to stick together.
- I'm not alone.
- If we talk about our problems with honesty, together we can come up with solutions.
- You can always find something positive from a negative experience.
- Community leaders need to support each other.

Overall, what we heard during the World Café were the same things heard during our listening sessions. It was clear that the group would like to have other opportunities to gather together and to share new information and resources with other Latinas in the community.

In Summary

As an organization we know we are much more effective and can achieve our mission—to mobilize Latinas and Latin@ communities to end domestic violence—when we take the time to listen to the

community and allow ourselves to be guided by the community. Overall, the Latinas that we listened to had a lot to say. This includes the following expectations and concerns:

- They want organizations and community to work together.
- Service providers need to do a better job of reaching the community and getting information to those that need it.
- Families living in the suburbs are not always able to access help in St. Paul and Minneapolis.
- Language, transportation, and childcare continue to be barriers.
- Many Latinas feel alone; they seek a sense of belonging, friendship, somebody to talk to, a person to share their problems and concerns with.
- There is a strong desire to learn and continue to improve; there is a lack of leadership development and learning opportunities.
- Better communication methods are needed that keep up with the realities and changes in community and uses social media to its advantage.
- There is a need for a space(s) where community can gather/be heard without the fear of being judged by others.

We would like to thank all of the 122 Latinas that participated throughout the listening process. Our commitment is to utilize the findings of the listening sessions and the results of the *World Café* check-in session as we plan our work over the next few years.