



RESEARCH AND POLICY

ROUNDTABLE REPORT

Research and Policy Roundtable Report

As part of our work to mobilize Latin@s to end gender-based violence, Casa de Esperanza's National Latin@ Network convenes interdisciplinary and diverse groups of researchers, community advocates, attorneys, survivors, psychologists, and policy experts to identify and help address the most pressing issues facing our communities. In 2019, we brought together our Research and Policy Advisory Councils to analyze current realities, gaps in services, emerging issues, and culturally-specific strategies to address gender-based violence. Here's what we found:

A New Frame

Bridging Policy and Research: Community-driven research is critical to inform policymakers about best practices, and changes in policy also impact research agendas - so it is necessary for both researchers and policy advocates to collaborate as much as possible. The group emphasized the need to work together and the desire for funds that combine research and policy efforts. We also need to be aware of the short-comings of "evidence-based" standards - too often these models fail to sufficiently address issues impacting underserved and culturally specific groups.

Research on Latin@ Survivors: There is also a need for more community-driven research that centers diverse Latin@ experiences and voices. Research should continue to explore barriers to accessing services and safety among Latin@ subpopulations. Along the way, we must be mindful that methodology and language does not lead to overgeneralizations or further marginalization of Latin@ communities.

The Importance of Culturally Specific Leadership: A topic of continued conversation is the importance of investing in communities of color's leadership and capacity. We should promote the growth of Latin@ leaders who best understand

With nearly forty years of success, Casa de Esperanza builds upon the strengths of the Latin@ community to end gender-based violence. Founded, led, and operated by Latinas, we ground our work in community wisdom, building greater safety, community connectedness, and self-sufficiency for Latin@s survivors, families, and communities.



their communities by increasing their access to training and resources. Among other benefits, this increased leadership can help foster a field-wide strengths-based approach that sees our culture and communities as sources of wisdom and power rather than problems and vulnerabilities

Emerging Issues

Complex Trauma and Increased Barriers to Safety for Immigrants: Immigrant Latin@ survivors experience trauma from abusers and when trying to navigate government systems. Advocates and attorneys reported seeing a significant increase in cumulative trauma with an increasing number of immigrants experiencing abuse in their home countries, while crossing the border, at the hands of government agencies, and again accessing services in their new local communities. Systemic violence includes increased vulnerability to exploitation and discrimination and contributes to fear and distrust among immigrant survivors, making them less likely to contact law enforcement or go to the courts for assistance. For those who do seek help, there are significant backlogs in processing immigration remedies with many having to wait five or more vulnerable years to have their applications adjudicated. During this time survivors cannot work and may live in the shadows as they fear being deported while doing daily activities like dropping their children off at school or waiting at a courthouse to testify or hear about their immigration case. Further limiting the availability of support, a shortage of culturally and linguistically competent professionals places Latin@-serving advocates and attorneys at heightened risk for burnout and vicarious trauma.

In the Workplace and the Pocketbook: Immigrant survivors often face increased risk of gender-based violence within the workplace, impacting their health, safety, and economic prospects. To address this injustice, we need more workplace-specific prevention and intervention programs that are culturally and linguistically accessible for Latin@s and immigrant survivors. These programs should understand how issues of sexual harassment and sexual violence transcend not only race and ethnicity, but also levels of education and socio-economic levels. Flexible



funding was discussed as an essential way to help survivors escape and heal from abusive work environments. In addition to advocating for more flexible funding programs and proving their efficacy, it is also important to note the remarkable strengths demonstrated by Latin@ survivors with limited economic resources. As a field, we should explore ways to address economic justice issues, support entrepreneurship, and foster creative community-level solutions that support the economic stability of Latin@ survivors.

Broadening the Scope of Solutions

The Leadership of Latin@ Communities: Roundtable participants highlighted ways to lift up strengths-based approaches to enhancing prevention and intervention efforts. Specifically, service providers should foster the development of meaningful and equitable collaborative partnerships with community organizations, incorporate the voices and agency of the community, structure opportunities for bidirectional learning, and include bicultural/bilingual staff in the decision-making processes around programming, research, and policymaking advocacy.

Focus on Prevention and Healing: In providing assistance, we cannot solely focus on survivors' most recent trauma, but must also address internalized and compounded trauma along with the larger legacy of historical and systemic oppression. In addition, the field needs more support for prevention, working with youth and engaging the whole family.

Inclusivity of Afro-Latina, LGBTQ, Indigenous Communities: The approximately 60 million Latin@s in the US are not homogenous, and therefore it is important to proactively make sure that this diversity is sufficiently reflected in research and policy advocacy. In particular, participants discussed how people in Latin@ communities who also identify as Afro Latin@, LGBTQ, and/or Indigenous need to be consistently and purposefully included as each has unique challenges and opportunities. We see this diversity as a strength and hope to connect those that specialize in serving different culturally-specific groups so they can share best practices and ultimately respond better to gender-based violence.



Moving Towards Language Justice: Recipients of federal financial assistance must provide meaningful access to their limited-English proficiency (LEP) applicants and beneficiaries. Hiring bilingual/bicultural staff, providing interpreters, translating documents, developing accessible programming, and working cooperatively with community leaders from various racial or ethnic backgrounds are just some examples of how to improve meaningful language access. Participants at the roundtable discussed the need to move beyond the baseline requirements of language access and strive for a broader commitment to language justice. Language justice promotes what is considered a best practice for creating inclusive multilingual spaces, where all languages are valued equally and speakers of different languages can choose to speak in whatever language is most comfortable for them to express themselves fully.

Alternative and Community-Centered Approaches: The development, implementation, and even the very topic of restorative justice programs have historically been very difficult to discuss within the field of domestic violence and sexual assault services because funding is often tied to engagement with the criminal legal system. That said, many Latin@ survivors do not report to the police because they do not want their partner to enter the carceral system or they are scared they themselves may be arrested. Those that do report often feel re-victimized by the criminal legal system, failing to find any healing within its structure. As a field, we need to learn more about different restorative justice approaches and foster survivor and community member input in developing those that are culturally and linguistically accessible.

This Research and Policy Roundtable was made possible through the Administration on Children, Youth, and Families, Family and Youth Services Bureau, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (Grant Number: 90EV0431).