



**Supporting Latin@
Student Survivors of
Domestic and Dating
Violence, Sexual Assault,
and Stalking**



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Esperanza United 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.

Introduction

For many students and administrators, working through institutional structures and implementing policies related to domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking on campus is a very difficult and daunting job, especially given the diversity of students, perspectives, and tasks associated with protecting the rights and well-being of all students. Institutions of higher education seek to ensure that all students can learn and thrive in an environment that is safe and supportive. To accomplish this, faculty and staff must delicately balance institutional culture, the recruitment of new students, changing student demographics, and implementing new policies that impact students, staff, and faculty while also creating a positive learning and working space.

Domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking impact individuals across all races, ethnicities, socio-economic levels, genders, sexual orientation, and levels of education. Therefore, it is important to be aware of the impact on different populations and explore ways to improve prevention and response efforts, while taking into consideration different factors that can impact diverse student populations. Data published by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) indicate that one in three (34.4%) Latinas experienced physical violence, sexual violence, and/or stalking from an intimate partner in their lifetime. The same report indicated that 18.5% of Hispanic men had experienced sexual violence during their lifetime.¹ The Association of American Universities conducted the 'Campus Climate Survey on Sexual Assault and Misconduct' in 2019 in which 14.9% of Hispanic or Latino students (22.6% women and 6.2% men) reported that they had experienced nonconsensual sexual contact by physical force or inability to consent,² which was slightly higher than the rate of non-Hispanic students. The Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU) 2019 fact sheet includes the following statistics:³

- 3.5 million Hispanic students were enrolled in higher education institutions in 2017. There were approximately 3,266,000 Hispanic undergraduate students, making up 19.5% of undergraduate enrollment.

1 Smith, S. G., Basile, K. C., Gilbert, L. K., Merrick, M. T., Patel, N., Walling, M., & Jain, A. (2017). National intimate partner and sexual violence survey (NISVS): 2010–2012 state report. Atlanta: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control.

2 Report on the Association of American Universities Campus Climate Survey on Sexual Assault and Misconduct. (January 2020) Available here: [https://www.aau.edu/sites/default/files/AAU-Files/Key-Issues/Campus-Safety/Revised%20Aggregate%20report%20%20and%20appendices%201-7_\(01-16-2020_FINAL\).pdf](https://www.aau.edu/sites/default/files/AAU-Files/Key-Issues/Campus-Safety/Revised%20Aggregate%20report%20%20and%20appendices%201-7_(01-16-2020_FINAL).pdf). See page 32-33 for more information reference in this document.

3 Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU), Office of Policy Analysis and Information. Updated 07/11/2019. 2019 Fact Sheet for Hispanic Higher Education and Hispanic Serving Institutions. Available here: <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED600629.pdf>



- Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs) are defined by the Higher Education Act as degree-granting institutions with full-time equivalent undergraduate enrollment of at least 25% Hispanic.
 - ▶ In 2017, 523 institutions met the federal HSI enrollment criterion, enrolling 66% of all Hispanics undergraduates.
 - ▶ They comprise over 15% of nonprofit colleges and universities, and their number has increased on average 20 institutions per year since 2009.

Given these statistics, this document is intended to foster a greater understanding of Latin@⁴ students and the barriers they may face when seeking resources for help and healing after experiencing domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking (DVSAS). This guide provides background on Latin@ cultures and Esperanza United approaches working with culturally specific survivors of DVSAS from a strengths-based approach.

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About Esperanza United

When the “battered women’s movement” was still young in the late 1970’s, a small group of Latina activists gathered in St. Paul, Minnesota, to educate their communities and advocate for Latinas and their families. In 1982, four courageous Latina activists created Esperanza United in St. Paul, Minnesota to provide a culturally welcoming shelter for Latinas experiencing domestic violence that also sought to address gaps and barriers to safety and services that Latina survivors faced. From the beginning, Esperanza United drew on the values, strengths, and resilience of Latinas to create change within our own community.

Today, Esperanza United continues to serve the local Minnesota community and works on the national level which was launched in 2009. Esperanza United provides training and technical assistance to nonprofit organizations and government agencies, leads national and state level policy advocacy, and conducts research that addresses issues of gender-based violence among

⁴ Latin@ - The diversity of our community is reflected in the language used throughout the public policy agenda, especially as it concerns the terms “Hispanic,” “Latino,” “Latina,” and “Latinx.” When these terms are used throughout this document, we intend them to represent all persons of Latino/a/x or Hispanic heritage, and those who consider themselves Hispanic or Latino/a/x.

Latin@ communities. Esperanza United is a national culturally specific resource center funded under the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA), as well as a national TA provider through grants provided by the Department of Justice's Office on Violence Against Women (OVW).

Since 2016, Esperanza United has worked closely with OVW to support minority serving institutions and provide technical assistance on enhancing cultural responsiveness and improving access to services and safety for diverse student college populations. To enhance our work and ensure comprehensive technical assistance for grantees, over the years, we have partnered with Alteristic, Inc., Black Women's Blueprint, Clery Center, University of Colorado Denver, East Central University, Futures Without Violence, the Mississippi Coalition Against Sexual Assault, the National Organization for Victim Assistance, Red Wind, Monsoon Asians & Pacific Islanders in Solidarity, Safe Havens InterFaith Partnership Against Domestic Violence and Elder Abuse, Soteria Solutions, Ujima, Inc., the Vera Institute of Justice, and the Victim Rights Law Center.

Latin@ Cultural Context

Latin@s who live in the United States are not a monolithic group, representing people who can trace their heritage to more than 25 different countries. There is a wide range of diversity within the Latin@ population, including where individuals were born (either within and outside of the U.S., which may impact how they prefer to identify), their English-language proficiency (about 38% of Latin@s speak mainly Spanish⁵), and how they identify racially and ethnically (while often categorized as one group, Latin@s have a variety of experiences and histories that they bring with them).

There is also a diversity of opinions in terms of what terminology to use to describe this population. The U.S. government began using the term "Hispanic" in the 1970's to describe this group as "Americans of Spanish origin or descent." This includes 20 Spanish-speaking nations from Latin America and Spain itself, but not Portugal or Portuguese-speaking Brazil. Others prefer to use the term "Latinos," which has been described as people from Latin America (which includes Brazil and excludes Spain). Many people use the terms interchangeably and both terms are included in the U.S. census. Additionally, many people prefer to describe themselves from their specific country of origin, rather than use a broader term. The term "Latinx" has emerged in recent years as an alternative to Latino, to be a more gender and LGBTQ-

5 Krogstand and Gonzalez-Barrera. (2015). A Majority of English-speaking Hispanics in the U.S. are Bilingual. Pew Research Center. Available at: <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/03/24/a-majority-of-english-speaking-hispanics-in-the-u-s-are-bilingual/#:~:text=Hispanics%20in%20the%20United%20States,most%20likely%20to%20be%20bilingual>



inclusive (like Latin@), although it is still not widely known in Latin@ populations.⁶

The U.S. Latin@ population reached 60.6 million in 2019, up from 50.7 million in 2010. Latin@s now comprise approximately 18% of the U.S. population, up from 16% in 2010 and just 5% in 1970. Four in five Latin@s in the U.S. (approximately 80%) are U.S. citizens. This includes those born in the U.S. and the territory of Puerto Rico (since those born in Puerto Rico are U.S. citizens at birth), as well as immigrants who have become naturalized citizens. The share of U.S. Latin@s who are immigrants is declining and varies by origin group, with the overall share of foreign-born Latin@s in the U.S. decreasing to 33%.⁷

People of Mexican origin account for slightly over 60% (37 million) of the nation's overall Latin@ population. Those of Puerto Rican origin are the next largest group, at 5.8 million (another 3.2 million live on the island), followed by those with origins from other countries in Latin America or Spain.⁸

While Latin@s share some general commonalities, it is helpful to keep in mind that Latin@s are not a monolithic racial or ethnic group, but rather have vast life experiences. It is critical to recognize that there are often significant differences in the experiences, perspectives, and lived realities between students of Latin@ origin whose family has been in the United States for several generations, students whose parents are immigrants, students who themselves are immigrants, and international students from Latin America or Spain.

Cultural Context

It is critical for on-campus advocates working with Latin@ students to be knowledgeable of Latin@ cultural contexts – their experience, reality, and consciousness - and to allow each survivor's cultural context to inform their advocacy.

Experience

Key considerations in understanding Latin@ students' experiences include: 1) if they were born in the United States or their age when they immigrated; 2) whether they are from a family with mixed immigration status; 3) whether they are an international student who has come from Latin America or Spain to study at a college or university in the United States; 4) the educational attainment and socio-economic situation of their family, both in the United States and in their country of origin; 5) spoken and

⁶ Lopez et.al. (2020). Who is Hispanic? Pew Research Center. Available at: <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/09/15/who-is-hispanic/>

⁷ Krogstad and Noe-Bustamante. (2020). Key facts about U.S. Latinos for National Hispanic Heritage Month. Pew Research Center. Available at: <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/09/10/key-facts-about-u-s-latinos-for-national-hispanic-heritage-month/>

⁸ Id.

written language fluency in both Spanish and English; and 6) level of trust in institutions and systems, based on past individual or familial experiences. Each of these factors impact the experience of Latin@ students as they navigate higher education.

Sometimes Latin@ international students or Latin@ students from immigrant families face challenges helping members of their family understand the system of higher education in the United States, especially regarding laws, policies, and procedures that impact student conduct cases. As an on-campus administrator, it is helpful to consider the student's situation from various points of view. For example, consider whether there would be a different outcome for the survivor if their family resides in the United States or in their country of origin, and the implications of not having nearby family support. An added layer of challenge might be the student's immigration status in the United States (e.g., do they have a student visa or do they have a permit through Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)). Also, consider whether they are the first in their families to go to college and whether they are dependent on a scholarship and/or student loans.

Some Latin@ students may bring their parents or family members to campus and school officials should be prepared on how to handle these kinds of situations. It might be necessary to have off-campus, community resources available to distribute to parents or family members. A list of interpreters and perhaps the contact information for a local advocate might be good to have on hand. While it is necessary to provide information to the enrolled student, it may also be helpful to think through and practice interacting with parents or family members who are not familiar with U.S. higher education institutions.

- As mentioned previously, about 30-40% of Latin@s speak mainly Spanish, so language is an important factor to consider for student survivors. For instance, when students seek services or participate in a campus adjudication or criminal process, they must complete and/or sign documents that may include complex wording because of the legal nature of the documents (e.g. statement of confidentiality, information release form, and complaints). As a result, students for whom English is a second language may encounter additional challenges understanding some of the legal vocabulary. Some student survivors may also prefer to communicate and/or receive services in Spanish since the trauma may make it difficult to communicate in a second language. Providing services in a survivor's preferred language is a trauma-informed practice.

Furthermore, it is important to think about how past experiences with systems and individuals in the United States and/or their country of origin, may impact their willingness to seek services or engage with different systems and the way services are received. It may be difficult for a Latin@ student survivor to reach out when formal systems do not include alternative resources (restorative



justice, language access, nontraditional healing therapy, etc.) and when they may not trust systems based on previous experiences that have impacted them or members of their family.

Reality

By “Reality,” we mean the different cultural characteristics that may influence Latin@ students’ “way of living,” in terms of their perceptions of family, community, including faith and spirituality, and how they may respond to traumatic events. Familia (Family) is often a primary consideration for Latin@s. Familia is often made up of nuclear and extended members, as well as close friends and members of the community. A student may refer to many people in their age cohort as “cousins,” though they may be referring to second- or third-degree cousins, such as the cousins of their parents. Familia may also include grandparents, uncles or aunts, and godmothers or godfathers, their godparents’ children, and close family friends. In many cases, Latin@ students will be from multi-generational homes, in which they share their living space with members of the extended family, creating very close relational bonds.

The familia’s expectations for the student may be of great importance, not only to the student as an internal motivation, but also in relation to a familia’s ability or willingness to financially and/or emotionally support the student. For example, if the student/survivor is the first in their family to attend college, each of their mistakes may be under a microscope since they are expected to set a positive example for their younger siblings and cousins. Additionally, the family may have made significant sacrifices to be able to send them to college. Another example may be that the survivor/student feels pressure to over-enroll in college coursework so that they can graduate early and start earning money right away or they may have to carry a heavy workload while attending college. Additionally, the familia may have chosen the survivor’s major and their school, expecting their student to produce high grades and pursue other accolades, such as scholarships, honors, awards, or distinctions.

Furthermore, concerns about harming the familia’s name or reputation may heavily impact a student/survivor’s decisions. They may resist engaging in activities or processes that could potentially backfire against the familia without having certainty of the outcome or consequences of their actions. For example, undocumented or Deferred Action for Childhood Arrival (DACA) students may choose not to report being victimized for fear that it could jeopardize their situation and that other undocumented family members or friends might be exposed to an investigation of their immigration status as well. In fact, some perpetrators actively use this fear to prevent a survivor from seeking support. The survivor may also fear reporting an incident of abuse if they are concerned that the person who perpetrated harm could

risk significant consequences because that individual is also an immigrant or dependent on financial assistance. Daily decisions for Latin@ students are often based on the good of the “whole,” not the “individual,” as there tends to be strong loyalty with family members, as well as other individuals from their race and culture. This is especially the case when they perceive that they belong to a race or ethnic culture that already must deal with negative stereotypes and systemic harms.

Faith and spirituality may also be a fundamental influence on Latin@ student survivors of DVSA. These elements are embedded in Latin@ culture and rituals, and may affect emotions, like victim-blaming, guilt, or feelings of shame that go along with experiencing DVSA. Some examples of traditions include Catholicism, Santeria, and indigenous faiths, which may be a meaningful part of Latin@ survivors’ experience.

Latin@ survivors who hold religious beliefs may be very concerned about the implications of having experienced sexual assault or intimate partner violence. This may stop some Latin@s from reporting the incident or requesting services because they believe in the “sanctity of marriage” or purity codes and fear the implications for their own future and the shame that may be brought to their families. For married students who are experiencing domestic violence, negative and/or uninformed reactions of faith and spiritual leaders often result in Latin@ survivors feeling responsible for making their marriage work regardless of the violence they are experiencing.⁹ In addition, among Latin@ survivors of violence, negative religious coping styles are associated with increased symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

While it is important to be aware of the way that religion may add to the barriers and stress that a survivor is facing, at the same time, it may also be a protective factor for dealing with trauma and healing. A survivor may feel more comfortable confiding in a religious advisor as opposed to a school official, law enforcement officer, or an institutional employee. Additionally, they may rely on their faith practice as a positive coping mechanism to work toward healing and hope.

Consciousness

Latin@ consciousness is a “way of thinking,” which is often rooted in the cultural and spiritual values present in many Latin@ communities. Much Latin@s place importance on traditions, cultural celebrations, sharing of food, music, art, and dance. Being collaborative and pleasing may be part of the student/survivor decision-making process, so it is very important to allow the student survivor to take their time and think for themselves as they go through the healing process.

9 Perilla, J.L., Religious teachings and domestic violence: From roadblock to resource 2009.



It is also necessary to understand Latin@ history both in the United States and how it relates to campus life. While the Latin@ community is incredibly diverse, there may be some similarities around colonization, political revolution, immigration journeys, and experiences with natural disasters that have proven that the future can be uncertain. A Latin@ student survivor's life experience in their home country and/or migration journey may make it difficult for the individual to plan.

Among Latin@s, storytelling is a method of sharing information. Using stories to share difficult or emotional information is a coping strategy to avoid re-traumatization. After experiencing intimate partner violence or sexual violence, a student/survivor may need to tell their story multiple times before revealing all the details of the incident. It is important to let the student survivor tell the events in an order that makes more sense to them.

Experience, Reality, and Consciousness

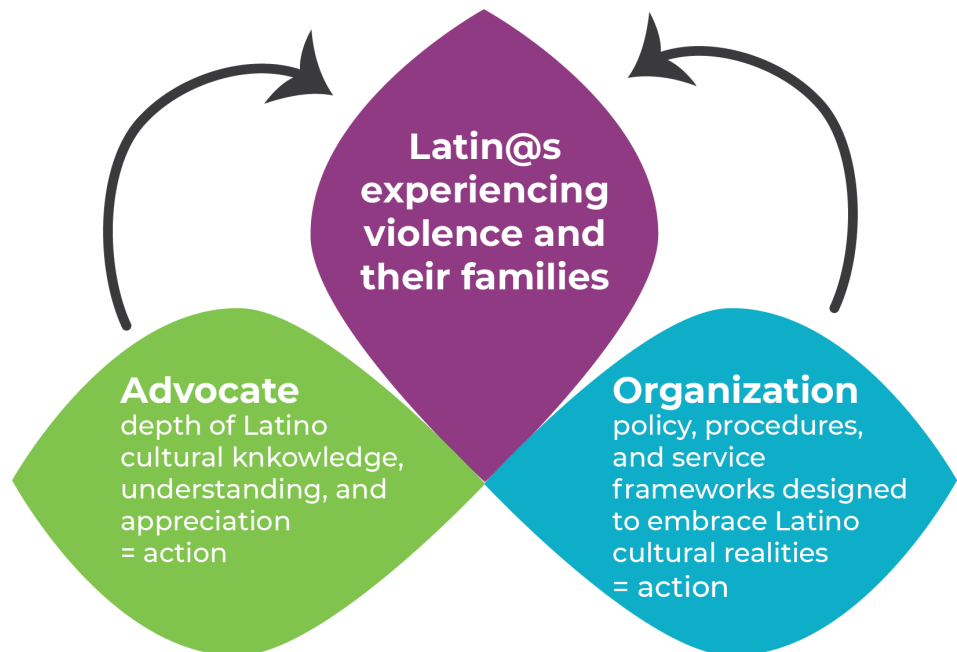
The above three factors – experience, reality, and consciousness - are the lens through which Latin@s may see the world. This culture lens informs how Latin@s feel about and respond to their successes, challenges, goals, and needs. Understanding Latin@ students' experience, reality, and consciousness can help service providers better understand how Latin@s navigate their institution of higher education. Remember that Latin@ students are not linear nor monolithic, therefore additional context related to their lives, as well as the context of your campus community is critical to understanding the intersections of the Latin@ culture, campus community, and DVSAS.

Cultural contexts shape the type of support, advocacy, and services that Latin@ survivors are likely to seek, as well as the choices these students are more likely to make with regard to engaging in services and participating in a university or criminal investigation. These cultural realities must, therefore, influence how DVSAS advocates work with, support, and advocate on behalf of Latin@ survivors; develop new initiatives; and work with Latin@ student populations. School administrators must also understand Latin@ students' realities and other intersecting social identities to enhance and strengthen their response to DVSAS. For example, Latin@ individuals who belong to additional marginalized groups (e.g., race, sexual orientation, immigration status, or disability) may experience poly-victimization and must navigate layers of intersecting barriers when seeking to access effective services and care.

Latin@ Student Advocacy Framework

The following section represents the framework of Esperanza United's Latin@ Advocacy and is based on more than thirty-five years of advocacy with Latin@ survivors.

The role of an effective advocate is to listen to the student, support their decisions, and be creative with the resources and solutions offered to survivors. These components to effectively advocate can be summarized by the four P's: be patient, proactive, positive, and a problem-solver. Latin@ student advocacy is much more than speaking Spanish, being Latin@, or understanding cultural differences. It is a mindset and a framework for approaching advocacy with Latin@s.



In addition to understanding cultural differences and Latin@ student values, campus service providers and community partners should also follow a strength-based approach, which includes understanding:

- Every student is the expert in their own life.
- They have individual autonomy and need to make their own decisions – they know what is best for them.
- A service provider's role is not to "save" the victim.
- Successful services are based on the individual's needs.
- Service providers should be trauma-informed and ensure that policies and practices do not cause additional trauma.

Successful Latin@ advocacy is a combination of both institutional and individual commitment to providing quality, culturally specific services. Quality Latin@ advocacy is not possible without both components.



Working with Latin@ Student Survivors

Imagine a student who is scared, unsure of where to turn and in need of medical and mental health services after experiencing sexual violence over the weekend. This scenario, while too common, is never easy to maneuver and needs to be handled with care, discretion, and compassion. This scenario can become increasingly more complicated for students of color, as indicated by research.

Research on sexual violence often ignores the complexities and histories of race, gender, ability, class, and other social identities, and how they interact.¹⁰ Through the work of Dr. Kimberlé Crenshaw,¹¹ we begin to understand the concept of “intersectionality,” a term she coined to describe the ways privilege and oppression scale, transform, and overlap depending on a person’s multiple identity markers (e.g. their nationality, educational level, religion, spirituality, sexual orientation, race, gender, class, ability, body size, health, wellbeing, addictions etc.). It is critical to center the intersectional identities of all survivors, understanding how systems may fail to address the way those identities further a person’s experience of oppression.

The report “Not Alone” (White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault, 2014)¹² suggests different areas for campus educators to focus on to end sexual violence. This includes effectively responding when a student reports an incident of sexual assault, including through the provision of confidential advocates; a comprehensive sexual misconduct policy; trauma-informed practices; a more responsive disciplinary process; and partnerships with community-based organizations. It may also be helpful to review the U.S. Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights Appendix on the Title IX Regulations on Sexual Harassment which was released in July 2021.

It is important for higher education institutions to ask themselves the following questions when interacting with Latin@ student survivors of DVSAS:

1. What are the barriers that Latin@ students may face when seeking advocacy services on campus?
2. What are the obstacles that may prevent staff from providing effective and accessible advocacy services to Latin@ students/survivors?
3. What does effective Latin@ student advocacy look like for survivors?

Answering these questions and developing strategies to integrate Latin@ students’ perspectives can be key to understanding their

¹⁰ Harris, J. C. & Linder, C. (2017). *Intersections of identity and sexual violence on campus: Centering Minoritized students’ experiences*. Sterling, VA: Stylus.

¹¹ Williams, K. C. (1994). *Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color*. In: Martha Albertson Fineman, Rixanne Mykitiuk, Eds. *The Public Nature of Private Violence*. Routledge: New York. pp. 93-118.

¹² https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/sites/default/files/docs/report_0.pdf

realities in your unique context as an institution, as well as to plan how to assess, enhance, and expand services for Latin@ survivors of DVSA.

This work should be driven by the need to determine what best supports Latin@ students who have experienced gender-based violence so they can make the best decisions for themselves with support from advocates and institutions. It starts by honoring the collective orientation and family-centered lives of Latin@s. It is also worth noting that developing social capital among Latin@ survivors decreases DVSA. Social capital is achieved when meaningful relationships are built on trust, reciprocity, transparency, cooperation, and sharing of information/resources.

Latin@ Student Survivor Concerns Diagram

It is difficult to predict what resources each student will need because, like all other survivors, Latin@ survivors are not a monolith and each person faces a unique situation. There is not a one-size-fits-all model of providing care to survivors. Some students have better support systems at home or at school and may have fewer systemic concerns or obstacles to getting institutional and community support. However, other students will be in school with limited financial or emotional support, and they may become lost within a system that does not recognize or respond to their culturally specific needs. Be mindful that

some campus social groups may increase students' sense of isolation and work against their best interest, while other social groups may be helpful in reducing anxiety, isolation, and barriers to services.

We at Esperanza United developed the next diagram as a result of what we have learned in the journey working with OVW Campus Grantees and their Coordinated Community Response Teams (CCRTs), especially minority serving institutions and Hispanic Serving Institutions. This diagram provides areas that might intersect in the lives of Latin@ DVSA survivors, and which may be helpful to incorporate in your institution's intake forms and/or build into your direct service providers assessment protocols.





Safety

It is always critical to assess safety when serving a DVSAS survivor, and that should be amongst the first priorities of the intake process. Exploring safety and reducing danger implies assessing alleged perpetrator access to firearms or other weapons, the use/abuse of drugs and/or alcohol, and available resources to increase survivor safety, such as orders of protections. It is essential for advocates and service providers to ensure that DVSAS Latin@ student survivors understand their legal rights and options. All persons, including immigrants, are not only eligible for police protection and protection from the courts, but also to shelter, orders of protection, custody, child support, forensic health examinations, and emergency medical care.¹³

There are additional safety concerns for Latin@ survivors regarding systems like immigration and criminal justice. It is necessary to support them as they consider whether they want to engage with these systems.

Immigration status

Some immigrant students may have additional concerns about interacting with systems because of having temporary or unauthorized status or coming from a family with mixed immigration status. Some students who were brought to the United States as children with unauthorized status may be eligible or may have qualified for the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrival (DACA) program. However, since DACA does not currently include a pathway to citizenship in the United States¹⁴, this situation creates added stress and uncertainty for DACA students.¹⁵ Additionally, while these students may have been able to access deferred action and work authorization as DACA recipients, they may have parents or other family members who are undocumented. As a result of increased entanglement in some jurisdictions between local law enforcement and federal immigration enforcement agencies or based on mistrust of the police and courts, a Latin@ student survivor may be fearful of contacting law enforcement or pursuing charges through the criminal justice system process.¹⁶

¹³ Orloff, L., Olavarria, C., Martinez, L., Rose, J. & Noche, J. (2013). Battered immigrants and civil protection orders. In K. Sullivan & L. Orloff (Eds.) *Breaking Barriers: A Complete Guide to Legal Rights and Resources for Battered Immigrants*. National Immigrant Women's Advocacy Project, Washington College of Law at American University, and Legal Momentum.

¹⁴ White House Memorandum for the Attorney General on Preserving and Fortifying Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals

¹⁵ Osberg, et. al. (2014). *Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA): How is it Helpful for Immigrant Crime & Violence Survivors?*

¹⁶ Esperanza United. (2016). 31 Facts About Domestic Violence in the Latin@ Community; Advocate and Legal Service Survey Regarding Immigrant Survivors, available at: <https://www.tahirih.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/2017-Advocate-and-Legal-Service-Survey-Key-Findings.pdf>; Immigrant Survivors Fear Reporting Violence, available at: <https://www.tahirih.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/2019-Advocate-Survey-Final.pdf>

International Students

The past decade has seen a significant increase in the number of students from around the world who have come to the United States to study, with more than one international million students in the 2018/19 academic year. While a significant majority come from Asian nations, the past decade has also seen an increase of international students from Latin America. Many of these students rely on student visas and often have additional concerns of losing their visa if they engage with the criminal legal system or if they must take time off from their studies to deal with trauma or health issues.¹⁷

Housing

Students may have a variety of housing situations including living with roommates, with family members, or on campus. It is helpful to consider whether the student and their family live in a safe place. Assess who else lives in the home and if public transportation must be taken to get to and from campus. Also think through some of the safety barriers faced by the survivor's support system. For example, if law enforcement shows up at the student's home, what will the impact be on the student's safety and on their support system? How would confidentiality be addressed? What happens if family members are unaware of the DVSAS situation? Are there other people in the home who are undocumented and might be deported if law enforcement discovers their status? Who will be harmed if a member of the family or community is deported because of law enforcement responding to a report of DVSAS?

Culture, Family, and Social Norms

Cultural practices are very important to healing, but these same practices could also keep a student survivor from reaching out for help.¹⁸ What are some cultural practices that will help the student find the best solutions for their situation? As mentioned in the Latin@ Cultural Context, there are cultural elements related to sense of community, religion, ancestors, and trauma that impact a Latin@ students' response, and that may be used as tools and strategies in their healing process. Latin@ students may also face additional pressure from family members and/or systems of oppression that make autonomous decisions difficult and further traumatizing for them.

¹⁷ More information can be found at "When Foreign Students or Their Family Members are Sexually Assaulted: Immigration Implications of the Student and Exchange Visitor System" by Lin, et. al. Available at: <http://library.niwap.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/IMM-Man-Ch13-ForeignStudentsFamMembersSexuallyAssaulted.pdf>

¹⁸ See Busch-Armendariz, N.B., Sulley, C., & Hill, K. (2016). The Blueprint for campus police: Responding to sexual assault. Austin, TX: Institute on Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault, The University of Texas at Austin page 25 for a brief explanation of how culture may impact reporting of sexual assaults to police. Available at: https://nccpsafety.org/assets/files/library/Blueprint_for_Campus_Police.pdf



Each of us has explicit or implicit biases that play a role in how we provide Latin@ student survivors with assistance. For example, people may encounter and internalize the stereotypes that Latin@s are sexual, dependent, submissive, prideful, and hardworking – none of which are helpful to understanding and addressing the unique case of each Latin@ student survivor. Without knowledge about the historical connections and implications these social beliefs have on Latin@s, more harm maybe caused. One tool that is helpful is the Project Implicit that provides a variety of free tests to gain a better understanding of an individual's personal biases.

Food Insecurities

An increase in food insecurity is plaguing college and university campuses. According to data from the College and University Food Bank Alliance, 30% of college students are food insecure.¹⁹ When assisting a student survivor, it is important to ask them whether they have enough to eat. Additionally, it is important to determine if they are avoiding going to the dining hall for fear of seeing the person who caused them harm. Conversations about food access and hunger should be an initial part of safety and wellness planning. Students frequently lose their appetite after experiencing DVSAS and should be encouraged to seek out comforting and nourishing foods. If appropriate, advocates can assist survivors in addressing food insecurity concerns by helping them get groceries.

Economic Resources

Students may be concerned about losing their scholarship or financial aid if they report DVSAS because they think it may impact their financial future. They also may not know about crime victim compensation and that there are resources to assist victims of crime. Latin@ students may also be working on or off campus to supplement their education and cost of living expenses. If the harm or assault occurred at their workplace, or if too much time will be taken away from work to testify in court for example, the student may jeopardize both their financial security and education. This might be a substantial barrier to Latin@ students reporting or engaging in an investigation, especially if the family is relying on the student's job to help with expenses.

Health and Healing

It takes a lot of courage for a victim to make the decision to report and seek help, and this is especially true for students from historically marginalized communities. Once they do seek help, they may be under the assumption that the issue will be solved

¹⁹ Otero-Amad, Farah. Dec. 1, 2019 "Hunger on campus: The fight against student food insecurity." NBC News. Available at: <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/hunger-campus-fight-against-student-food-insecurity-n1063291>

quickly, when reporting is only the beginning of a long process. The advocate should be transparent with students about how long investigations can take and provide realistic examples of resolutions that might be offered through both the university and criminal process.

It is important to honor the student's wishes when providing services. Work towards seeking their safety, stabilizing their environment/routine, providing unconditional support, and supporting them to recover at their own pace. Be gentle while reminding them of their options and connecting them to other information and resource offices that can support their journey. Remember that the process of confronting DVSAS is overwhelming and that Latin@ student survivors may not put themselves first - they may need gentle reminders while slowly discovering or regaining autonomy.

Academic Performance

Latin@ students may have familial expectations about having high grades or certain achievements on campus. A student may need to keep a certain grade point average to keep scholarships or other academic opportunities. This may cause an additional barrier to report DVSAS. Connect students to counseling services and the accessibility office so that they can determine if they qualify for academic accommodations based on a temporary or long-term mental health condition. Keep in mind that survivors of gender-based violence have high rates of PTSD, which is often a qualifying condition for accommodations under the American Disabilities Act (ADA).

Language Access

While students may be studying in English, a traumatic event like DVSAS might prevent them from communicating in a language other than their primary one. They may want to communicate and heal through another language. To best support a survivor, it is helpful to have a language access plan that includes developing materials in the languages most relevant to the student population. It is best to have documents translated by a community-based organization so they can make the language culturally and linguistically appropriate. It is also helpful to remember that language evolves quickly and differs from region to region, so documents need to be modified often. To provide language access, it is necessary to continuously update a language access plan and work with local, Latin@ community-based organizations in the process. It may also be necessary to have a list of interpreters, perhaps already maintained by a community-based organization, for in-person meetings with the student survivor.²⁰

²⁰ See Esperanza United's Language Access Toolkit for more information or contact us for assistance with developing or updating your language access plans.



Tips for Providing Trauma-Informed Care to Latin@ Student

A trauma-informed approach is an important framework for how a program, agency, organization, or community should think about and respond to those who have experienced or may be at risk for experiencing trauma. The term implies a change in the organizational culture to ensure that all its components incorporate a thorough understanding of the prevalence and impact of trauma and the complex and varied paths in which people recover and heal.²¹

Below are tips for providing trauma informed care to Latin@ student survivors of DVSA:

- Understand collective and historical trauma such as the origins of historical, collective, structural, and intergenerational trauma, and recognize Latin@ survivors' resiliency, wisdom, and strength. To learn more about the different kinds of traumas, read Trauma Informed Principles through a Culturally Specific Lens.
- Avoid making assumptions and be prepared to challenge your own beliefs about Latin@ culture. If you make a mistake, rather than providing justification, acknowledge the impact, and learn from your mistake. Have a process of self (and institutional) reflections when these situations occur.
- Do not ask for social security or immigration documents of student survivors seeking your services. The immigration status of a student seeking any service including DVSA is irrelevant to accessing these support systems. Understand that students may not want to seek support from the police in every case, as this may put them or family members in danger of deportation.
- Help families establish a safety plan. For marginalized communities, rapidly changing laws provide more stress. Staying informed about national and local law enforcement policies and practices is essential to safety planning with survivors and their families. For up-to-date information on safety planning tips and changes in immigration law, visit the Immigrant Legal Resource Center.
- Keep the realities of Latin@ survivors and their families central to your work. Take into consideration the subgroups present within the community and identify their values and interests. Use inclusive language. Develop policies that reflect inclusivity, implement, and assess them. For example, incorporate and periodically review a language access plan and train staff regularly on implementing it.

²¹ For more information, see the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration website on trauma and violence available at: <https://www.samhsa.gov/trauma-violence>

- Educate yourself about intersectionality. Do not assume that DVSAS is the most pressing need in every survivor's life. Seek guidance from knowledgeable and culturally competent experts to learn about the common elements of trauma and oppression and how they intersect in the lives of Latin@ survivors and survivors from different cultures. Do not expect survivors and communities of color to teach you about their identities. Be proactive and seek information about culturally responsive practices by researching, attending trainings, and engaging in rigorous and routine self-reflections.
- Promote cultural healing. For Latin@s, healing often takes place within the context of community, which might look different from a mainstream model that emphasizes individualistic therapy. Instead, self-care for many Latin@s happens in the company of others. As an advocate, uplift emotional and collective healing that values holism such as meditation, imagery, and other connective states.
- Develop power-conscious support services for survivors.²² Given that students with marginalized identities frequently develop relationships with staff in identity-based offices (i.e., multicultural center, disability office, etc.), it is crucial that staff in those programs and offices understand the dynamics of DVSAS and the resources available on and off campus for students. Developing these networks of support services for students requires institutions to assess their mandatory reporting options on campus and the establishment of clear policies and procedures on DVSAS, including staff roles and responsibilities.

Strengthening Services and Advocacy for Latin@ Students who are Survivors of DVSAS

What else can higher education institutions do to make a difference? Below are some strategies and considerations that can enhance your outreach and services for Latin@ students/survivors of DVSAS.

- Ensure that Latin@ students/survivors have a safe place to turn by continually assessing services and gaps in the process. Use this as a learning opportunity to educate your campus community on your findings. Develop communication strategies to increase outreach efforts on the availability and description of services on and off campus.
- Expand services. As mentioned in the Latin@ Student Survivor Concerns Diagram, students need long-term support in other areas that may go beyond what services can be offered on campus. Identify your local and state agencies that traditionally

²² Linder, C. (2018). Sexual Violence on Campus: power-conscious approaches to awareness, prevention, and response.



provide these services to the larger community and reach out to learn more. Determine what partnerships can be put into place to expand the range of services that could be offered to students. Encourage communication, coordination, problem solving, referral protocols, etc., amongst campus offices and community partners. Also consider targeting funds to create and expand culturally specific services for Latin@s on your campus.

- Seek and use Latin@ students'/survivors' input. Firsthand feedback on how to enhance services is critical to develop strategies that include survivors in the design, evaluation, and enhancement of your work. Encourage and support their participation, as well as include the victim advocates, in your CCRT.
- Inform policymakers. Expand efforts to educate campus administrators, key decision makers, and policy makers about the impact of DVSAS on Latin@ students. It is very important for institutions to take all the necessary steps to protect confidentiality and privacy and have clear and accessible policies and procedures to address DVSAS – including campus staff roles and responsibilities. Ensure that interventions are grounded in being responsive to Latin@ victim needs in addition to holding offenders accountable for their actions.

This guide is to be used as a tool to inform your efforts in enhancing services for Latin@ students who are survivors of DVSAS. We hope to have provided you with a foundation for better understanding Latin@ students and some of the obstacles and barriers they may face after experiencing DVSAS.

Please reach out to Esperanza United at campus@esperanzaunited.org for questions about the content of this guide, technical assistance, and trainings.



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