



**A Guide for
Community Youth
Advocates to
Support Latin@
Survivors**



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Esperanza United has chosen to use “@” in place of the masculine “o” when referring to people or groups that are gender neutral or both masculine and feminine. This decision reflects our commitment to gender inclusion and recognizes the important contributions that women, men, and gender-nonconforming people make to our communities.

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Overview

Community advocates can serve as bridges to navigating healthcare systems and providing support to Latin@ survivors of abuse, especially intimate partner violence (IPV). Latin@ individuals face unique situations when encountering these systems due to various disparities such as language access and identification in healthcare systems (Robinson et al., 2021). Culturally responsive community advocates are able to recognize the immediate needs of the Latin@ survivor and understand the socioecological environment that informs their decisions around disclosure and care.

Community advocates are leaders who provide direct and indirect services and care to the health and well-being of people in their community. They assist survivors as they manage through systems that intersect with their overall health. Advocates can take action to significantly improve the health and well-being of Latin@ survivors of IPV navigating health systems with the use of this tool on **“Community youth advocates: Supporting Latin@ Survivors.”**

This tool will serve to:

- Equip community youth advocates with culturally-responsive strategies to navigate systems to support youth Latin@ survivors of IPV.
- Increase knowledge of barriers to improving the health of Latin@ survivors of IPV.
- Mobilize advocates to promote holistic and sustainable support within families and communities.

Healthcare systems and COVID-19

IPV is described as behaviors within an intimate relationship that causes physical, sexual, or psychological harm (World Health Organization, 2022). These include and are not limited to physical aggression, sexual coercion, psychological and emotional abuse, and controlling behaviors. IPV can occur in any intimate relationship regardless of sex, gender, or arrangement between partners.

The inability to adequately prepare for the COVID-19 pandemic brings attention to the existing gaps within healthcare systems (Futures Without Violence, 2021). For Latin@ survivors of IPV, the pandemic increased the established barriers to healthcare access. The needs of the Latin@ community vary by location, and each Latin@ individual has their own unique barriers to care. Common themes of barriers for Latin@ survivors of IPV include:

- Transportation
- Identification



- Language access
- Compassion from providers
- Awareness of IPV and mandatory reporting regulations

Youth and teen dating violence in Latin@ communities

Teen dating violence (TDV) refers to IPV that occurs between youth in a dating or romantic relationship. TDV includes physical violence, sexual violence, psychological violence, and stalking. TDV can also occur via social media and text messages such as continuously checking location, hacking accounts, and mandating password sharing. TDV can have a serious impact on youth survivors and can increase their risk for substance abuse, eating disorders, and further domestic violence. Nearly 1.5 million high school students nationwide experience physical abuse from a dating partner in a single year (Love is Respect, 2020). Furthermore, Love is Respect, the National Domestic Violence Hotline's specific platform for teens and young adults, had an increase of calls since the start of the pandemic reflecting the shadow pandemic of intimate partner violence. Despite the high frequency of TDV, there continues to be a large gap in strengths-based research that centers the experience of Latin@ youth. When providing support to Latin@ youth survivors of TDV, it is important to consider implementing culturally sensitive practices and using a strengths-based framework.

Strategies for supporting disclosure

Youth disclosure of abuse may either be direct or indirect depending on the intent and desired outcome of the individual disclosing. Most often, disclosure occurs through indirect forms of communication such as replacing the survivor's experience/name with that of a relative or friend (Safe Kids Thrive, 2023). If disclosure is direct or abuse or violence is witnessed, it is the responsibility of the person hearing to take appropriate steps as a mandatory reporter. If disclosure is done directly, including minor to minor, then the conversation must be reported to the indicated adult of the organization.

Table 1. Strategies for supporting disclosure of violence

Situation	Action	Implementation
Direct disclosure	<p>Make survivor aware of mandatory reporting</p> <p>Proceed with mandatory reporting steps by notifying the designated adult</p>	<p>If you are a mandatory reporter, please make the survivor aware of your role and responsibilities as a mandatory reporter, including possible next steps after disclosure.</p> <p>“Before we continue, please know I am required to report any known or perceived abuse to the _____ (principle, authorities, etc.)”</p> <p>Understand it is the survivor’s decision whether to disclose, and how they disclose and share their experience.</p>
Indirect disclosure	<p>Make survivor aware of Mandatory Reporting</p> <p>Proceed with mandatory reporting steps by notifying the designated adult</p>	<p>If you are a mandatory reporter, please make the survivor aware of your role and responsibilities as a mandatory reporter, including possible next steps after disclosure.</p> <p>Responses one can say to indirect disclosure:</p> <p><i>“I’m sorry they are experiencing that, do they have an adult they can talk to at school or at home?”</i></p> <p><i>“One of the ways they can get help is to talk to an adult that they trust.”</i></p> <p><i>“How can I support you or the person experiencing this in sharing this information with an adult?”</i></p> <p>Understand it is the survivor’s decision how and when to disclose.</p>

Situation	Action	Implementation
<p>Bring awareness of violence among Latin@ youth, whether disclosure occurs or not. Awareness for violence among youth and IPV in Latin@ communities</p>	<p>Increase awareness of IPV resources and how health is also impacted by relationships</p> <p>Create safe spaces and discuss healthy relationships</p> <p>Be aware of implications that may impact disclosure such as gender roles rooted in colonialism, racism, and sexism (commonly known in Latin@ communities as machismo and marianismo)¹, collectivism² (familismo)³, and anti-immigrant environments</p>	<p>Normalize asking screening questions, such as if they feel safe in their relationships or have they experienced any unwanted actions?</p> <p>Highlight confidentiality and security in the space, especially if a Latin@ survivor chooses to disclose. Remember to not push for disclosure as that can retraumatize the individual.</p> <p>Avoid negative conversations around the perpetrator. Highlight positive values, strengths, and resistance strategies for individuals and communities. Reduce beliefs of learned helplessness.</p> <p>Encourage youth to explore resources such as Loveisrespect.org which provides guidance to youth on dating, relationships, and survivor support (Love is Respect, 2020). Esperanza United also has a factsheet on teen dating violence (Esperanza United, 2022).</p> <p>Note: Systems can perpetuate trauma as well and impact individual resiliency.</p>

Advocates for Latin@ survivors of violence

Advocacy for Latin@ survivors of IPV begins in the community. To provide adequate support, advocates need to become familiar with the healthcare and legal options available to support survivors of IPV (Sullivan & Goodman, 2019).

Local legal resources	Local healthcare resources
<p>Minnesota DayOne Hotline: (866)223-1111</p>	<p>SafeJourney (North Memorial) https://northmemorial.com/specialty/safejourney/</p>

¹ Esperanza United recognizes that Latin@ communities use terms such as “machismo” and “marianismo” to describe patriarchal values and gender roles. However, these terms do not recognize the responsibilities and harms of white supremacy and colonization and encourage stereotypes. Patriarchal values are not unique in other cultures, they all stem from white supremacy.

² Collectivism places emphasis on group identity over individual identity.

³ Familismo is a strong cultural Latin@ value which upholds dedication, commitment, and loyalty to immediate and extended family members.

Local legal resources	Local healthcare resources
Minnesota Crime Victim Justice Unit: (800)247-0390	Tubman https://www.tubman.org/get-help/
Safe at Home Program: (866)732-3035 <i>This program assigns a PO box address to forward mail to the person's home address.</i>	Hennepin Health https://www.hennepinhealthcare.org/support-services/violence-assault-and-abuse-resources/
Violence Free Minnesota https://www.vfmn.org/d-h	Ramsey County https://www.ramseycounty.us/residents/health-medical/clinics-services/sos-sexual-violence-services/after-sexual-assault
Hennepin County Attorney's Office - Domestic Abuse Service Center https://www.hennepinattorney.org/get-help/crime/domestic-abuse-service-center	Project Connect - Collaboration between Futures Without Violence and Violence Free Minnesota https://www.vfmn.org/project-connect

Skills for advocacy

Advocacy involves various skills and levels of awareness to support Latin@ survivors. Many of these skills intersect with trauma-informed care (TIC). TIC ensures that the care is centered around the individual and their future health outcomes (Palmieri & Valentine, 2021). Review Table 2 to implement TIC in your advocacy and leadership to support Latin@ survivors of IPV.

Table 2: Trauma-informed care (TIC) to support Latin@ survivors of IPV

TIC components	Skills required	Application
Safety	Mandatory reporting Knowledge of legal and medical support Self-reflection	Disclose if you are a mandatory reporter and what this means for the Latin@ survivor you are working with. Be familiar with medical examinations and legal support available to Latin@ survivors who disclose. Your presence may be called for in the form of a follow-up. Understand cultural perspectives that inform safety (i.e. gender roles, legal status, relationships). Recognize your own biases, connections, and strengths in your work.

TIC components	Skills required	Application
Choice	Centering around the Latin@ Survivor Resourcefulness	Understand that disclosure is up to the survivor. When disclosure happens, be attentive and listen. Certain decisions are up to the individual, such as pressing charges, obtaining testing, or communicating with the perpetrator. Ask the survivor how they would like to be supported going forward
Collaboration	Leadership Engagement	Be open and known in your community as an advocate for Latin@ survivors of IPV. Many times, individuals do not know who they can reach out to for support. This may look like: Volunteering or working <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clinics/hospitals • Domestic violence / sexual assault centers • Community health centers Sharing messages of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preventing IPV • Disclosing IPV • Healthy relationships and gender roles
Trustworthiness	Consistency Communication Solutions-based	Center care around the self-identified needs and wants of the individual. Ask the survivor how they would like to be contacted and followed up with. Be present, informed, and active. Your presence and actions are impactful in supporting positive health outcomes.
Empowerment	Upholding sustainable change Compassion Diligence Alliance	Follow-up and comfort are vital to aiding survivors attending medical appointments. Work with health professionals to develop a list of resources that includes information on safe houses, legal support, and support after disclosing. Ensure this information is available in languages other than English.

Youth and parents: Navigating conversations

Discussions around experiences and change can provide different perspectives. Often, navigating these conversations may bring up emotions that will halt the progress of the conversation. For strategies to uplift dialogue, view Table 3:

Table 3: Navigating conversations

Navigating	Example
<p>Intentionality The purpose or meaning of the conversation.</p>	<p>“I would like you to hear me out on...” “I need your advice on...”</p>
<p>Space Having a mutual space that feels safe.</p>	<p>“Can we go to a space that is quieter?” “I’d like to sit next to you rather than across from you.”</p>
<p>Patience Change can be challenging, and processing new information and knowledge requires compassion and time.</p>	<p>“I know that times have changed” “New information is coming out every day, it may take some time.” “I am taking time to learn about...”</p>

Violence awareness with parents and guardians

Conversations around violence may be uncomfortable and challenging. Ensuring the survivor’s health and safety is vital to support disclosure. If your child discloses, it is important to create a space for conversations to continue if and when they are ready. Below, parents and guardians can implement these strategies to support their child’s health and well-being if they experience TDV.

Table 4: Conversations of violence with parents and guardians

Strategy	Action	Implementation
<p>Compassion</p>	<p>Provide compassionate care through active listening skills, especially during a disclosure of IPV experiences.</p>	<p>Survivors want parents, guardians and providers to listen, be non-judgemental, offer information and support, and not push for disclosure (Futures Without Violence, 2021 English CUES).</p> <p>Give validation of their experiences by listening and asking if it is okay to give them more information.</p> <p>Ask permission before physical contact is made.</p>

Strategy	Action	Implementation
Emotional well-being	Be mindful of reactions	<p>You may be shocked to learn your child is experiencing violence. Understand that verbal and non-verbal reactions can change the conversation. Negative reactions can prevent further conversations. Positive or neutral reactions can support a positive space if disclosure occurs.</p> <p>“I am processing what you are saying.”</p> <p>“Please give me a moment, I want to give you all of my attention.”</p>
Communication expression	Verbal or written Space	<p>Maintain open body language, practice grounding, and breathe.</p> <p>Offer options to communicate with your child such as writing their experiences and coming back to it once you have read it.</p> <p>Remember to center the survivor, especially when they disclose, in order to prevent further feelings of shame or guilt.</p> <p>“I’m sorry that happened to you/ was your experience.”</p> <p>“How can I support you?”</p> <p>“What makes you feel safe right now?”</p> <p>Prevent the normalization of violence, regardless of age or experience.</p> <p>Comparisons may bring up feelings of shame or guilt for the survivor.</p> <p>“I’m glad you are safe now.”</p> <p>“I support your healing journey.”</p> <p>“Thank you for trusting in me to talk about this/disclosing”</p>

Community youth advocates can impact the health and well-being of Latin@s in their community. Esperanza United also encourages community members to provide support to Latin@ survivors. With consent, please connect survivors to an advocate and provide resources about your local rape crisis center and / or domestic violence program. There are also national resources available to provide support and guidance as well such as the National Domestic Violence Hotline and love is respect. **With meaningful collaborations, we have a stronger impact and can one day eliminate gender-based violence.**

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