



Building the cultural and linguistic competencies of mental health professionals to adequately serve California's diverse communities

“Health and mental health inequities are created by the underlying social, economic, geographic, political, and physical environmental factors that shape health, are systemic and avoidable—and therefore unjust and unfair.”¹

Visión y Compromiso has been collaborating for the last five years with MHSOAC to increase the knowledge and improve the cultural competence of mental health workers to meet the needs of immigrant and refugee families experiencing challenges in mental health and emotional well-being.

Created by, for, and with promotoras, Visión y Compromiso has consistently centered grassroots community leadership while becoming a sought-after partner to diverse organizations, agencies, and institutions seeking to adopt the Promotora Model to advance community well-being.

Promotoras are local community leaders at the forefront of reaching those most in need. Promotoras consistently rank the mental health needs of Latino families as a high priority.

The COVID-19 pandemic elevated mental health disparities.¹

- » One in three adults in California had symptoms of anxiety and/or a depressive disorder.
- » Access to quality health care: Racial and ethnic minoritized groups are less likely to receive quality care and less likely to have health care insurance.
- » Frontline essential workers: In California, 55 percent of Latino workers are employed in frontline essential work.
- » Latino people constitute 38 percent of the state's population but make up only 6 percent of the active physician workforce.



IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE MENTAL HEALTH COMMUNITY NEEDS

Identified by promotoras

Because promotoras identify with the same mental health and wellness needs as the community they represent, they know how to lift these experiences and articulate the service gaps in the communities where they live.

- » **The pandemic:** Mental health challenges increased tremendously during the pandemic and were exacerbated.
- » **Lack of awareness about services:** There is a need for more understanding and awareness about mental health services that includes cognitive-behavior therapy, group therapy and education.
- » **Understanding how mental services work:** Individuals in need of mental health services do not always understand how referral systems work or that “being denied” is not the same as rejection.
- » **Faith and mental health:** Some community members expressed interest in culturally specific approaches that could integrate faith and spirituality as part of therapy and healing.
- » **Stigma:** There is stigma among among Latino immigrants and refugees about mental health issues and mental health treatment services.
- » **Fear and privacy concerns:** There is fear and ear and distrust of mental health services and institutions due to concerns about immigration status.

Identified by mental health providers

Mental health providers identified different themes during conversations and roundtable discussions hosted by Visión y Compromiso.

- » **SUPPORT FOR LATINO CAREGIVERS:**
There is insufficient support for caregivers in the Latino community who care for their loved ones at home with mental health and/or physical health conditions.
- » **CULTURAL AND LINGUISTIC COMPETENCY:**
There is a need to improve language access by providing culturally and linguistically appropriate services that are inclusive and demonstrate understanding of and respect for immigrant and refugee populations.
- » **MYTHS IN MENTAL HEALTH:**
There is a lack of understanding about how to debunk myths related to mental health services in immigrant and refugee communities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

✔ Visión y Compromiso asks for your support to recognize, legitimize, and integrate promotores into culturally and linguistically specific mental health and wellness programs to increase access to services, reduce disparities, and promote health and economic equity.

✔ Visión y Compromiso asks for your support to build culturally competent services for our communities by increasing the number of Latino mental health providers representing and serving our communities.

