

# BRIDGES TO HEALTHY MINDS

EVALUATION REPORT



Prepared by The Family Center/La Familia  
In partnership with Valley Research & Evaluation  
September 2021

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## PURPOSE

During December 2020 through September 2021, The Family Center/La Familia (TFC/LF) partnered with Valley Research & Evaluation to evaluate a series of trainings delivered as part of its Bridges to Healthy Minds program and learn about Latinx community members' experiences and needs related to behavioral health resources and services in Larimer County. The evaluation also sought to identify gaps and opportunities in culturally and linguistically attuned behavioral health programming to inform future Bridges to Healthy Minds programming and recommendations to Larimer County to better serve Latinx community members.

The evaluation included document and resources reviews, interviews with Latinx community members, and surveys of community members and organizations (see page 9 for more details about the evaluation approach). The evaluation purpose and activities were developed with guidance from the Bridges to Healthy Minds External Advisory Board comprised of Latinx community members with lived experience and mental health professionals.

## KEY FINDINGS

Bridges to Healthy Minds training participants increased their knowledge and skills related to parenting adolescents, Mental Health First Aid, responding to trauma, talking with children about grief, self-care, and family communication.

Evaluation participants cited social determinants of health as both the biggest sources of concern and well-being as well as needed supports among the Latinx community members in Larimer County.

Existing Spanish-language mental health promotion and treatment services are at capacity, have wait-lists, and need additional Spanish-speaking staff.

To better promote the mental health and well-being of Latinx community members in Larimer County, evaluation participants recommended expanding Spanish-language mental health promotion and prevention efforts and treatment services. In particular, they saw a need for more programs that help support mental health while meeting basic needs as well as social programming and healthy living activities for people across the lifespan.

## SOURCES OF WELL-BEING, CONCERNS & NEEDED SUPPORT

Social determinants of health were most commonly cited as both the biggest sources of concern and well-being as well as needed supports among the Latinx community members in Larimer County who responded to TFC/LF's online survey in May 2020.

### Sources of Well-Being

When asked what supports their well-being most, survey respondents cited:

- Strong relationships and support from loved ones
- Having basic needs, met such as having stable affordable housing, employment, and a living wage to pay bills
- Having access to health care including mental health support
- Physical activity
- Faith
- Mindfulness

### Biggest Concerns

When asked about their biggest concerns, survey respondents described issues related to:

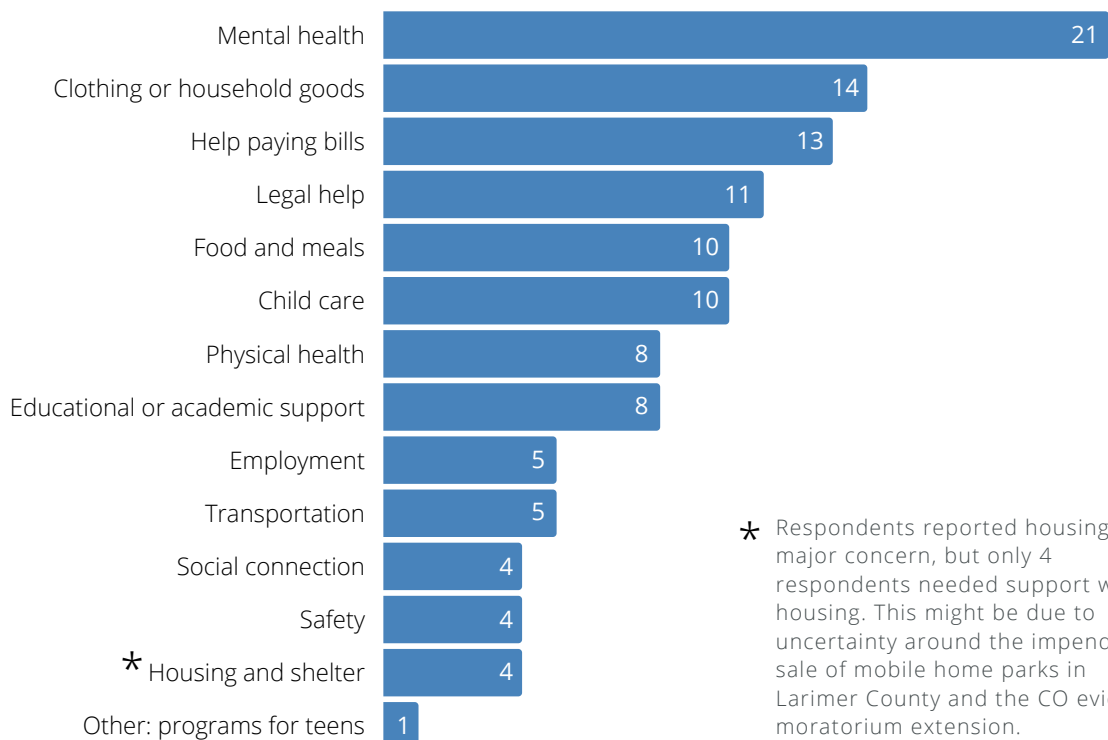
- Challenges meeting basic needs
- Uncertainty of children's education within the context of pandemic constraints
- Equity and social justice
- Safety and security
- Access to health care including mental health support

*"[My biggest concerns right now are having] access to information and fear of being treated differently because I am part of a less privileged community and because I do not have the financial resources to receive help."*

-Evaluation participant

### Needed Supports

Mental health support was the most needed support among survey respondents, followed by support to meet basic needs such as clothing, help paying bills, child care, and food. See the chart below with the number of respondents who cited needing each support.



\* Respondents reported housing as a major concern, but only 4 respondents needed support with housing. This might be due to uncertainty around the impending sale of mobile home parks in Larimer County and the CO eviction moratorium extension.

## AVAILABLE MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORTS

Existing mental health resources and services that support Latinx community members in Larimer County were identified by evaluation participants and resource mapping. The description of supports in this report is not meant to be exhaustive and instead provides examples of the resources available. Examples are grouped into mental health prevention & promotion and treatment services on this page and page 4, along with illustrative quotes from community organization leaders.

### Prevention & Promotion

**Mental Health Educational Campaigns:** There are a few mental health education campaigns that include Spanish-language versions or are specifically tailored for Latinx communities that are publicly available and encourage discussing challenges and stressors with others who can help. For example, a recent Colorado-specific mental health campaign responding to COVID-19 stressors called [Let's Talk](#), has materials in Spanish and offers resources to support organizations in promoting the campaign.

**Larimer County Community Organizations that Promote Well-being:** A survey of 22 organizations in the county reported that they provide some of their services and resources in Spanish and have bilingual staff and volunteers who speak Spanish. Programs vary widely in content and promote well-being by focusing on areas including early literacy and education, summer and after-school programming for children, financial and legal support, emergency preparedness and response, housing, community engagement, and mental and physical health promotion across the lifespan. Community organizations shared similar challenges and needs to better serve the Latinx community. In particular, they reported needing more funding to support staff, ways to connect with community members and get the word out about programs, additional translation and interpretation support, and strengthened collaborations with organizations across Larimer County.

*"We firmly believe that financial stability and assistance during a family crisis/hardship reduces toxic levels of stress that otherwise greatly increase mental health distress. We also believe the advocating to reduce barriers (cumbersome, tech heavy online platforms, requests for excessive documents etc) can improve mental health and well-being of families facing a crisis or hardship. Finally, we believe that equipping people to know and assert their rights and feel empowered in navigating resources is a key component of mental health which leads to hope and positivity and feeling that one has control over decisions and access to resources."*

-Evaluation participant

## AVAILABLE MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORTS CONTINUED

### Treatment Services

The mental health provider directory through [Connections](#) lists 21 mental health treatment providers or organizations that offer counseling services in Spanish. These organizations range from individual providers to organizations with 10 bilingual therapists on staff. Services are offered through a mix of in-person and telehealth options. The extent the providers are culturally attuned to the diverse Latinx community within Larimer County is unknown. Leaders of community organizations that specialize in providing mental health treatment services to the Latinx community reported operating at capacity, having waitlists to see clients, and in some cases being short-staffed. This evaluation didn't learn about acute mental health care services available.

*"COVID exacerbated the need for mental health services. In the summer of 2020, we saw more people living with stress and depression. Before the pandemic [our organization] had a waitlist, but it has increased, and as of today people need to wait four weeks before they can see someone. We prioritize cases that have a higher need for services. [...] We are working at capacity. What helps clients on the waitlist is to attend group sessions we offer. That way people can connect with the agency while they can be individually seen."*

-Evaluation participant

*"People have adapted well to telehealth therapy. For those lacking reliable transportation, mobility, or income, teletherapy is an advantage."*

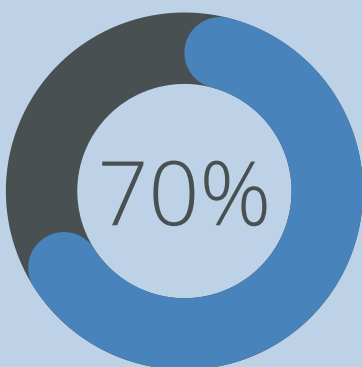
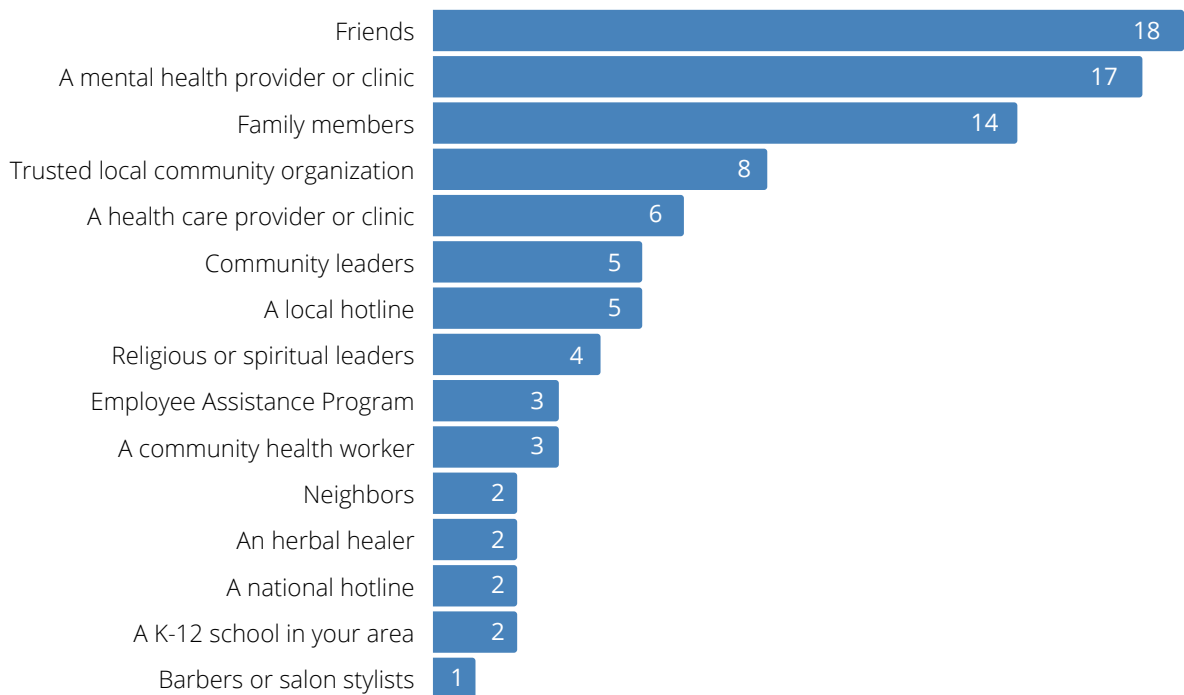
-Evaluation participant

*"[Larimer County] needs more providers of color and Spanish-speaking therapists. Connections will always attempt to match a patient with a local therapist; however, when one is not available, Teletherapy has opened up the referral base to include state-wide therapists. More Spanish speaking providers. When choosing search filters that include type of insurance, therapeutic specialty, and Spanish speaking, patients have very little options."*

-Evaluation participant

## MENTAL HEALTH PREFERENCES & BARRIERS TO TREATMENT

When asked where they would go if they or a loved one was very down, stressed, or needed mental health support to heal, Latinx survey respondents prioritized personal trusted connections such as friends and family members as well as formal health care providers. See the chart below with the number of respondents who selected each option. Similarly, when asked where they seek mental health resources and information, respondents emphasized their preference for personal connections or anonymous channels such as information through websites and social media.



70%  
of Latinx survey respondents reported they would prefer to remain anonymous when seeking mental health information, resources, or support

### Barriers to Accessing Mental Health Care

Language and cost were the biggest barriers to seeking and accessing mental health treatment cited by Latinx community member survey respondents and interviewees. In particular, participants described limited bilingual counselor options and the challenges of navigating complex and often English-language only services. When describing barriers related to cost, respondents cited the high hourly rates of mental health treatment. Several participants described how their immigration status prevented them from receiving insurance coverage.

Additional barriers to accessing mental health services cited by evaluation participants included:

- Not knowing where to go
- Stigma and discomfort discussing mental health
- Difficulty accessing transportation or technology needed to attend appointments
- Disjointed and overly complex paperwork and processes.

## EXPERIENCES WITH MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Six Latinx parents who sought mental health treatment for their children were interviewed about their experiences. Their descriptions of how they sought treatment services, the challenges they encountered, and their treatment outcomes are outlined below grouped by the quality of their experiences.

	POSITIVE	MIXED	NEGATIVE
ENTRY POINT	Trusted person referred and coordinated care	School, health clinic, Dept. Human Services	Friend recommendation, school referral
CHALLENGES	Eased by connection and coordination	Language, payment, cost, overly-complex system, transportation, waitlists	Language, lack of options, payment, cost
OUTCOMES	Accessed and tried multiple treatment options, received needed support, felt heard	Continued seeking counseling, some services were not a fit, mental health issues persisted	Felt frustrated and uncomfortable, did not receive needed support

*"The support they gave me at The Family Center got me where to go, and I wasn't alone in the search. [...] I didn't have as much challenges, because I was well oriented. I was able to go straight to where I needed to go, and they spoke my own language."*

-Evaluation participant

*"I'm still living my problem. [...] It helps me a lot to have someone to listen to me apart from my therapy. [...] The waiting list is always very long, I have been looking for therapy for myself since last month, and I do not start until July, and for my son there are still about 3 months of waiting. The process is very long and requires many documents."*

-Evaluation participant

*"[My experience has been] very frustrating and difficult. My daughter only went to therapy and no longer wanted to return. She didn't like it. There was no connection, and the therapist didn't know how to treat children's problems, nor did she know how to capture my daughter's attention. [...] I did not like the situation we went through at all, because we didn't get the support we needed. [...] There are no places to go. Language and cost [were challenges]. There are not enough options."*

-Evaluation participant

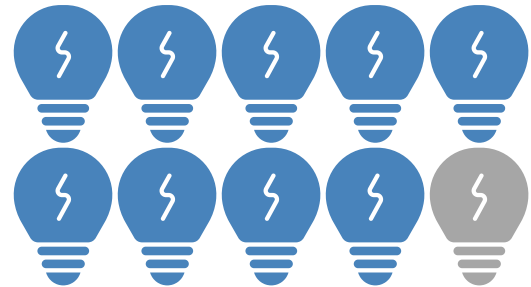


## TFC/LF MENTAL HEALTH TRAINING EVALUATION

Between April and September 2021, TFC/LF hosted seven mental health courses on topics including: parenting adolescents; Mental Health First Aid; trauma & mental health; grief & children; self-care; and family health & communication.

Of the 66 attendees, 60 completed post-course surveys. Of those, over 90% reported they:

- Learned something new about the topic covered in the course
- Received materials and support to act on the topic covered in the course
- Left the course feeling motivated to support their or others' mental health.



9 of 10 Latinx course attendees learned something new that they could apply to improve their or others' mental health

Attendees across courses valued the training because:

- They learned useful information presented in Spanish along with memorable examples
- Courses were facilitated by expert and approachable Spanish-speakers
- They had a safe space to share with others, ask questions, and knowing they are not alone
- They left the training with information and skills to support themselves and others.

To improve the mental health training in the future, participants recommended TFC/LF host classes in person. All of the courses were held virtually as a public health safety precaution.

*"[Because of the Mental Health First Aid training] I understand more about depression, stress, anxiety, panic attacks, psychosis and how to talk about it in time; how to talk about it with our children, educate them and give them the information in case they or someone else around them needs help; how to be able to find solutions and the resources that exist and in Spanish. I liked the real examples and the experiences that were discussed in class and that there is always a solution for all these issues."*

-Evaluation participant

*"The presenter was an expert on the subject and explained very well with easy-to-understand words and powerful examples and speaks Spanish."*

-Evaluation participant

*"Knowing how to identify symptoms and behaviors and now feel able to help other people that is very satisfying for me."*

-Evaluation participant

## RECOMMENDATIONS

To better promote the mental health and well-being of Latinx community members in Larimer County, Bridges to Healthy Minds evaluation participants, Advisory Board Members, and TFC/LF staff recommend expanded Spanish-language mental health promotion and prevention efforts and treatment services.

Specifically, they recommended:

- Expanding programs that support meeting basic needs alongside mental health
- Hosting more social programming and healthy living activities for people across the lifespan, including:
  - After school and summer programs for school-aged children
  - Group programs for teens
  - Programming for parents and youth
  - Programs for older adults
- Developing community centers for Latinx community members and LGBTQI community members to strengthen belonging and sense of community and provide multiple social services in a common location
- If developing mental health educational campaigns:
  - Focusing on reducing stigma
  - Presenting relatable and if possible humorous content
  - Discussing mental health as critical to overall health
  - Not implying that counseling is the only option for seeking and receiving mental health support
- Recruiting more accessible and culturally attuned therapists to serve the Latinx community before focusing on efforts that encourage the Latinx community to seek therapy
- Expanding mental health supports for specific groups of people who have been underserved and under-resourced, including:
  - Those who have experienced immigration trauma
  - Individuals with intersectional identities within the Latinx community
- Providing mental health services and resources through trusted, personal connections and networks
- Simplifying processes to access mental health treatment
- Improving and expanding school resources to address mental health needs and promote well-being, because schools are a common entry point to mental health services
- Strengthening collaborations between community organizations to support mental well-being across Larimer County.

*"I would like to see health activities for parents and young people. More access to legal services and other services being provided in the same place would be ideal in a community center where they speak to me in my language. [...] It would be a center for Latinos where we could have everyone who helps us. [...] Keep schedules and funds accessible to people who don't have resources."*

-Evaluation participant

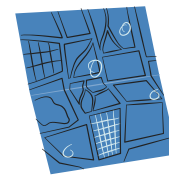
## EVALUATION APPROACH

The Bridges to Healthy Minds evaluation approach consisted of a mixed-methods approach drawing on the strengths of multiple data sources. The evaluation aimed to learn about Latinx community members' experiences, assets, and needs related to behavioral health resources and services in Larimer County as well as identify opportunities to develop and refine culturally and linguistically attuned behavioral health programming to better serve Latinx community members in Larimer County.

The evaluation purpose and activities were developed with guidance from the Bridges to Healthy Minds External Advisory Board comprised of Latinx community members with lived experience and mental health professionals. The evaluation included the methods outlined below and was conducted between December 2020 and September 2021. The community member survey used snowball sampling to reach Latinx Spanish-speaking respondents. The findings from the survey are not meant to be generalizable to the broader community and should be interpreted within the context of the small group of Latinx community members who shared their important insights and recommendations.



MENTAL HEALTH EDUCATIONAL  
CAMPAIGN & LITERATURE SCAN



RESOURCE MAPPING



ONLINE SURVEYS OF  
COMMUNITY MEMBERS (N=33),  
COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION  
LEADERS (N=22), & TRAINING  
ATTENDEES (N=54) CONDUCTED  
IN SPANISH & ENGLISH



6 SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS  
WITH LATINX COMMUNITY  
MEMBERS CONDUCTED IN  
SPANISH BY TFC/LF STAFF

## CONTACT US



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