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PURPOSE

In 2022, The Family Center/La Familia (TFC/LF) partnered with Valley Research & Evaluation to:

- Identify challenges and opportunities in community mental health and wellbeing to inform future Bridges to Healthy Minds programming
- Seek feedback and refine the mental health education campaign developed by the Advisory Board comprised of community members
- Evaluate a training series delivered as part of its Bridges to Healthy Minds program
- Gather community members’ recommendations for better serving Latinx community members and promoting mental health and wellbeing.

The evaluation included interviews and focus groups with Latinx community members, surveys of community members who participated in training and Advisory Board members (see page 10 for more details about the evaluation approach).

KEY FINDINGS

Latinx community members described the mental health educational campaign materials developed by the Advisory Board and TFC/LF team members as important and relatable. They said the campaign materials normalize mental health, and its tagline underscores the urgency of the issue. Community members plan to share the campaign materials widely among their social networks within the Latinx community.

Bridges to Healthy Minds training participants increased their knowledge and skills and felt empowered to continue to use skills related to Mental Health First Aid; strengthening mental and emotional health in the family; yoga and exercise; parenting children with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder; strengths and opportunities to grow; and family health & communication.

To continue to promote the mental health and well-being of Latinx community members in Larimer County, evaluation participants recommended continuing and expanding upon the Spanish-language group education sessions. In particular, they saw a need for continued educational workshops and training programs for youth and families.
Sources of Strength & Barriers to Well-being

Availability of community support from organizations and through social connectedness and accessible information and resources in Spanish were identified as both key sources of strength as well as barriers that need additional support to promote well-being among evaluation participants.

Sources of Strength & Well-being
When asked about the community’s strengths that support mental health and well-being among the Latinx community, participants cited:

- Organizations staffed by compassionate people who provide resources and support
- Strong relationships and support from loved ones
- Communication and having access to information and content in Spanish
- Community unity
- Resilience, persistence, and a desire to grow and thrive
- Faith

Barriers & Challenges
Participants described barriers and challenges to improving mental health and well-being among the Latinx community as:

- Lack of content and information in Spanish and language barriers
- The stigma around mental health and culture that discourages seeking help for mental health issues
- Difficulties prioritizing time for mental health within busy schedules and competing demands
- Community inequities and lack of access to systems and resources related to adult education and health care
- Expenses and lack of insurance
- Immigration status

“Our community is very united, and there are other resources that can help the community not suffer as much.”
- Evaluation participant

“The high cost of living [is a barrier to well-being], because parents have to spend many hours away from home working. When they get home they are too tired to spend time with their children and help in a more focused way in the development and training of their children.”
- Evaluation participant

“Organizations like La Familia, which offer us these courses, are excellent opportunities for us as parents to have the opportunity to learn.”
- Evaluation participant

“In our Latinx community, it is more difficult to find support. Sometimes they close the door on us because language, documentation, or other reasons.”
- Evaluation participant
The Bridges to Healthy Minds Advisory Board, composed of Latinx community members with lived experience, worked with TFC/LF team members to develop culturally and linguistically attuned mental health educational campaign materials for the Latinx community. The materials were tailored to reach families and aimed to destigmatize and promote mental health among the Latinx community.

Once materials were drafted, eight Latinx community members who had not previously seen the material shared their reactions and feedback during a focus group. Overall, the group described the campaign as important and relatable. They said it normalizes mental health, and the tagline effectively underscores the urgency of the issue. To improve the effectiveness and approachability of the campaign, the community members suggested: using a lighter background; removing unnecessary text and bulleting key points; swapping combative images for illustrations of people of color experiencing major stressors; adding more coping strategies; and using informal language in the images and formal language in the main text.

“I like the message. It shows it’s time for action now and that there is something we should work on now.”
- Evaluation participant

“[This campaign is] helpful, because I see that I’m not alone and other people feel the same way.”
- Evaluation participant
MENTAL HEALTH EDUCATION CAMPAIGN DELIVERY

The Bridges to Healthy Minds Advisory Board and TFC/LF team members developed a dissemination plan for the mental health education campaign to deliver the content in both Spanish and English to the Latinx community in Larimer county. The materials will be shared on flyers, through social media, through community organization partners, and on the TFC/LF website. To improve the reach of the campaign, focus group participants suggested building on the Advisory Board’s dissemination plan. They emphasized the importance of posting campaign content in multiple ways through trusted sources so that community members repeatedly hear and see the campaign.

Where: Multiple social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp) and flyers in places where the community gathers and is represented, such as the library, stores, churches, food banks, bus stops, bathrooms in restaurants and parks, and Salud’s clinic.

How: Through multiple methods that catch attention through relatable images and meaningful text. When sharing through social media, participants recommended that the messenger is a trusted community member rather than an organization. This aligns with the 2021 evaluation findings that the Latinx community prefers receiving mental health resources and information from friends, family, and trusted individuals rather than from less personal sources or organizations.

“This should be everywhere all over the city and county.”

-Evaluation participant

“I would share this with a group through social media. I have one in mind that includes 120 community members. […] I’d say, ‘I recommend this!’ or ‘I invite you to read this and give yourself some time to read this.’”

-Evaluation participant

“If it’s shared a lot, then you notice and wonder ‘what is this?’ Maybe people won’t see it the first time and one day they will notice it after several repetitions.”

-Evaluation participant
Mental Health Training Series

Between March and September 2022, TFC/LF offered eight four-to-six-week group training sessions facilitated by Latinx professionals. The courses focused on topics previous evaluation participants expressed interest in learning, including Mental Health First Aid; strengthening mental and emotional health in the family; yoga and exercise; mindful parenting; Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder; strengths and opportunities to grow; and family health & communication.

Of the 152 attendees, 82 completed post-course surveys for a 54% response rate, which is above average for an online survey. Across all training sessions, 9 out of 10 participants connected with others in the course.

Participants across the training sessions reported gaining insights and takeaways from the courses that will impact their lives, including:
- Recognizing their own needs and strengths and feeling more resilient;
- Gaining an increased awareness and understanding of the importance of mental health; and
- Learning signs and symptoms of mental health issues and learning and practicing specific strategies to address mental health issues and promote well-being personally and within their families and broader community groups.

Most participants (93%) agreed or strongly agreed that they:
- Learned a new skill;
- Feel empowered to try the skills learned in the class;
- Feel better able to support their well-being because of the class; and
- Feel better able to support others’ well-being because of the class.

Attendees across courses valued the training for the same reasons as participants in the 2020-2021 series. Specifically, they valued the course content gave them skills and strategies to support their and others’ well-being, that information was presented in Spanish, the facilitators’ expertise and approachability, and the group’s respect and openness which created a safe space to share with others, ask questions, and feel that they are not alone.

“I learned that I am not alone in this struggle, and that it is okay to seek and accept help from others who have been through similar circumstances.”
-Evaluation participant

 “[I value] the effort of the teacher and the organizers for giving us this opportunity to show us our potential that we can have through exercise and taking time to care for ourselves.”
-Evaluation participant
TRAINING PARTICIPANTS PLAN TO IMPROVE THEIR & OTHERS’ WELL-BEING

Across all training sessions, the majority of participants reported they will use the information learned and resources they gained during the course to support their well-being (89%) and try new ways to overcome challenges (87%).

Because of the training, participants plan to:

- Use class information or resources to support their well-being: 89%
- Try new ways to overcome challenges: 87%
- Use class information or resources to support the well-being of others: 76%
- Connect with others to overcome challenges: 62%

“I learned how to understand and listen to our children when they speak loudly to us, close our eyes and take a deep breath when we are stressed. What I will put into practice is to do the same with them because it feels very relaxing”

- Evaluation participant

“[The course] made me aware of how to improve my communication with my family and how to manage my emotions when talking to my children.”

- Evaluation participant

“I realized how strong and brave I am. I liked the tasks because they motivate me to take action. I also liked the example [the instructor] gave of ‘just for today.’ I will put it into practice.”

- Evaluation participant
PROMOTORAS & MENTAL HEALTH

In 2022, TFC/LF shared educational materials, including materials focused on mental health and community member rights, through Promotora outreach at local mobile home communities. The Promotoras, trusted community members with well-established positive relationships with their neighbors, provided information, referrals, and connections to resources in the community.

In an interview for the 2022 evaluation, a Promotora described how she received thorough and appropriate training on a variety of topics, including mental health and community resources to help overcome common stressors in the community. She stated that she had all of the tools and ongoing support during question and answer sessions with TFC/LF to succeed in her role as a Promotora. She said she brings her own interest and commitment to follow through with her training to promote well-being in the Latinx mobile home community.

After completing training, the Promotoras met with small groups of five to six community members in neighborhood parks. In these small group discussions, the Promotoras have started to build trust and create a dialogue about mental health as part of overall health to try to decrease the stigma associated with mental health issues, among other topics.

“With the changes in ownership in mobile home parks in our community recently, people have been more concerned and worried regarding changes in rent, maintenance, rules, parking, that they keep getting notices. It’s a lot. Every person has a different case. The most recurrent topic in the mobile home park, where I have my home, is that almost for a year, you couldn’t pay rent in the office. It had to be done online and most people didn’t know how to do that. Because of the community organizations [including TFC/LF], we now can pay in the office again. This had a strong impact on the community’s mental health.”

-Promotora

“To be able to pass down need information in the language the community speaks is very satisfying. I provide my community with information regarding many different resources and assistance that is available. [...] I just try to explain the most that I can. I’m informing myself and passing down that information. Many times, it’s not reading or sharing an article, it’s trying to answer questions and explain with the most respect and integrity I can. I provide information that is appropriate for each person. Before I do anything else, I build trust and respect. I create more trust by talking. I don’t arrive with purpose. By interacting with each person, I learn how to bring each topic to that person.”

-Promotora
ADVISORY BOARD MEMBER EXPERIENCES

The Bridges to Healthy Minds External Advisory Board was comprised of nine Latinx community members who worked together to create the mental health education campaign.

When asked to reflect on and assess their experience, all nine Advisory Board members reported that they:
- Felt their input as an Advisory Board member was valued
- Had the opportunity to share their experiences in a safe and a trusted environment
- Connected with others on the Advisory Board

Advisory Board members valued serving on the board because they:
- Learned about mental health issues and ways to address them
- Contributed ideas to the group, listened to each other, and learned from each others’ different perspectives
- Created the campaign that will help raise awareness of mental health among the larger community

Overall Advisory Board members were satisfied with their experiences serving on the board. When asked how to improve the experience of Advisory Board members in the future, no themes or commonalities emerged across recommendations. Individual board members recommended TFC/LF provide childcare during the sessions, use varied meeting times, meet more frequently, and invite more community members to serve on the board.

“I learned about mental health and how other people may experience it and how we could help. I learned to listen to other people’s opinions.”
- Advisory Board Member

“The experience [of serving on the board] was great. We all have different ideas and from there we can come up with other ideas and enrich them with our own families and friends’ lived experiences.”
- Advisory Board Member

“It has been an honor being part of this project. It gave me the opportunity to grow as a community member and provide ideas that contribute to creating awareness regarding mental health.”
- Advisory Board Member

“What I appreciate is that there is a concern about the community’s mental and emotional health, sometimes we think we are alright and we are not, we can identify the signs if we know them.”
- Advisory Board Member
RECOMMENDATIONS

To better promote the mental health and well-being of Latinx community members in Larimer County, Bridges to Healthy Minds evaluation participants and Advisory Board Members recommend continuing to provide educational information and group courses, like the TFC/LF training series, in Spanish.

These recommendations are similar to those listed in the 2021 evaluation report but do not focus on treatment services, which was not the focus of most of the activities.

Specific recommendations include:

- Continuing to share mental health and overall well-being and healthy living information and resources in Spanish;
- Continuing free or low-cost educational group and social programming and healthy living activities for people across the lifespan, including:
  - Youth-focused content and peer-group discussions
  - Increasing reach and participation across the community to include those who haven’t participated as much, such as men
  - Content on substance use, bullying, healthy use of technology, healthy meals, and suicide prevention,
  - English-language courses
  - Exercise classes that share where to access equipment in the community
- Hosting a resource fair at a park;
- Developing a Latinx community center to strengthen belonging and sense of community and provide multiple social services in a common location;
- Improving and expanding school mental health resources and programming to promote well-being among youth and meet them where they are;
- Support services for increasing healthcare access, including referrals, transportation, interpretation, and someone who attends clinic visits; and
- Strengthening collaborations between community organizations and community members to support mental well-being across Larimer County by hosting facilitated discussions between government leaders, health professionals, and Latinx community members in both English and Spanish.

“Let the classes continue. There are also other topics that would help us continue advancing so that our families continue to grow. Thank you very much for all this. It helped me and my family a lot.”

-Evaluation participant

“Our community’s population is huge and we’re growing. We need more support.”

-Evaluation participant
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 identify challenges and opportunities in community mental health and wellbeing to inform future Bridges to Healthy Minds programming and seek feedback and refine the mental health education campaign developed by the Bridges to Healthy Minds External Advisory Board, which was comprised of Latinx community members with lived experience. The evaluation included the methods outlined below and was conducted between March 2022 and September 2022. The findings 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.