

Improving Outreach to Underserved Communities in the Proposition 47 Grant Program: Engaging Hispanic and Latino Participants



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Background

The Proposition 47 grant program provides funding to governmental agencies to provide mental health and substance use disorder treatments and diversion programming to people with prior involvement in the criminal justice system. Past research has found that Hispanic and Latino people are less likely to receive mental health and substance use disorder treatments as a result of barriers including, language, lack of medical insurance, legal status, stigma, and finding culturally competent care.

Three Proposition 47 Cohort II grantees had higher than expected rates of Hispanic and Latino participants in their mental health and substance use disorder treatment programs. Focus group interviews were conducted with lead agency staff, staff and managers from the community-based organizations who provided many of the services, and participants who received services from these three grantees. The interviews were designed to better understand what factors contributed to the effectiveness of engaging participants who identified as Hispanic or Latino in the mental health and/or substance use disorder treatment programs.

Hiring Practices and Trust

Two primary themes emerged from the focus group interviews: hiring practices and trust.



Specifically, hiring **culturally competent staff**, including **bilingual staff**, into a culturally competent organization, and hiring **staff with lived experience** were identified as important factors.

Trust, at all levels, also contributed to the successful engagement of Hispanic and Latino



participants, including participant trust, inter-agency trust, and community trust. Participants reported the need to be able to **trust the staff** providing the services and having a **“safe space”** that allowed them to feel comfortable expressing themselves. **Inter-agency trust** led to better communication and collaboration among service providers resulting in comprehensive services provided to participants. When describing inter-agency trust, many staff described using a collaborative governance approach, where all organizations had input in decisions affecting their projects. Staff also noted that **establishing trust with the Hispanic and Latino community** provided a foundation for establishing participant trust.

Recommendations

Based on the evaluation, there are six recommendations for organizations to increase the engagement of people who identify as Hispanic or Latino in mental health and substance use treatment programs:

 **Ensure that the organization is culturally competent in Hispanic and Latino cultures.**

This can be accomplished through training and hiring, including hiring staff who are bilingual. Having an organization that understands and respects the Hispanic and Latino cultures, and that has staff who can provide services in participants' native language can impact program efficacy.

 **Hire staff who are capable of modifying evidence-based treatment programs, so they incorporate aspects of the Hispanic and Latino cultures.**

Clinical staff providing the mental health and substance use disorder programs should have the training to implement evidence-based treatment programs, and an understanding of what components of the program make it effective. This knowledge, in conjunction with an understanding of the Hispanic and Latino cultures, will allow the clinical staff to integrate culture into the program while maintaining the integrity of the evidence-based program.

 **Hire staff with lived experience.**

Participants receiving services reported that having staff who had similar backgrounds and experiences made them more relatable, easier to talk to, and motivated participants to continue in the program because they knew success was possible.

 **Identify and engage strategies that will facilitate participant trust.**

Examples of strategies that can facilitate participant trust include creating a safe space, having mentors with lived experience, and avoiding any discussion of legal status until trust is established. Unlike mainstream mental health services, effective services for people who identify as Hispanic or Latino are ones that work to establish trust with the participant.

 **Use a collaborative governance model with partner organizations.**

A collaborative governance model allows all organizations involved in the program to provide input in decisions affecting their programs. Components of a collaborative governance model include having face-to-face dialogue, a commitment to the process, a shared understanding, trust building, and facilitative leadership (Ansell & Gash, 2007).

 **Establish community trust.**

Community trust, or social capital, can be obtained by engaging in restorative practices, having a positive presence in the community, listening to members of the community, attending cultural events, and supporting local businesses.