

Latino MFG Project - Valley Nonprofit Resources

Involving Spanish Speaking Families in Mental Health Services

PROJECT SUMMARY

A manualized *Multifamily Group Program for Latinos (LMFG)*, with sessions presented in Spanish and culturally-adapted, will be developed and pilot-tested at public mental health agencies in the San Fernando Valley region of Los Angeles. Two groups of families of adolescent clients at each at two agencies will be run, using both professional and peer family advocates as group facilitators. The manual will include learning activities related to effective implementation and sustainability of this program, as part of institutional capacity building for mental health agencies.

Based upon success with the pilot implementations, a refined manual for LMFG will be prepared for wider use in the Valley, and nationally. A consultative session hosted by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, funder of this project, will be convened to address challenges of wider dissemination (including how to prepare and disseminate a version of LMFG for adults, how to implement evidence-based programs for children's mental health services rigorously but cost-effectively, and how to sustain LMFG). A report based on the pilot study and the session will be distributed to the mental health, evidence-based program/implementation, and philanthropic communities.

The Latino MFG Project is part of Valley Nonprofit Resources' *Raising the Bar Project*, which is helping mental health agencies and practitioners in the San Fernando Valley region of Los Angeles learn about and implement research-based mental health practices in the areas of *family psychoeducation* and *medication management*. The project addresses an increasingly urgent need in mental health today: *to build the capacity of service agencies to identify, rigorously implement, evaluate and sustain EBPs.*

Throughout the health and human services field, these research-validated practices have increasingly become the "gold standard" – and in fields like mental health, funders are starting to require their use as a condition of funding support. However, for many mental health agencies, identifying appropriate EBPs is difficult, and so is high-quality implementation of them. Also, agencies need to address challenges of long-term sustainability for these practices once they're set in place.

Leadership for both projects is provided by Human Interaction Research Institute President Dr. Thomas Backer, who has studied EBPs and mental health services for many years; and San Fernando Mental Health Center Medical Director Dr. Alex Kopelowicz, who also is funded by the National Institute of Mental Health for research on use of a family education EBP to improve services for Latino clients. They will work in partnership with mental health agency staff throughout the Valley, under the umbrella of Valley Nonprofit Resources, which provides capacity-building information and services for the more than 4,000 nonprofit organizations in the San Fernando Valley.