

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, has been created and is being pilot-tested at public mental health agencies in the San Fernando Valley region of Los Angeles. Over the past two years, several groups of families of adolescent clients at each of two agencies have been run successfully, using both professional and peer family advocates as group facilitators. The manual includes basic information on Latinos and mental health, cultural adaptations needed for the MultiFamily Group to be successful with Spanish-speaking Latino families, and resource materials.

In its second phase (2010-2012), a refined manual for the LMFG Program will be prepared for wider use in the Valley, and nationally. Additional pilot tests also will be conducted, and evaluation of this Program will continue. A consultative session hosted in October 2009 by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, funder of this project, identified some of the challenges to wider dissemination of the LMFG. Now a national plan is being developed to approach partner organizations, such as the Latino Behavioral Health Institute, that can support this dissemination effort. The first step in carrying out the dissemination plan is a workshop on the Latino MFG at the September 2010 national conference of the Latino Behavioral Health Institute.

The Latino MFG Project is part of Valley Nonprofit Resources (VNR), a capacity-building project serving the more than 4,000 nonprofits in the San Fernando Valley region of Los Angeles. From 2007-2009, VNR also conducted the Raising the Bar Project which assisted local nonprofit mental health agencies in learning about and implementing the MFG for the families of adults with severe mental illnesses, leading to a number of successful implementations.

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 are working in partnership with mental health agency staff throughout the Valley, as well as with new national dissemination partners such as LBHI.

For more information, contact the LMFG Project Coordinator, Diana Medina Wiley, at dianahiri@aol.com, or go to www.valleynonprofitresources.org