FOUR EXAMPLES OF COMMUNITY-BASED PROGRAMS SUCCESSFULLY PROVIDING SERVICES TO LATINO FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

AVANCE Family Support & Education Program
San Antonio, Texas

The AVANCE Family Support and Education Program is an early intervention and prevention program that focuses on holistic and comprehensive services to strengthen the family unit. This early intervention model is family-centered, preventive, comprehensive and continuous through integration and collaboration of services. The program targets hard to reach, high-risk, low-income, single- and two-parent Mexican American families in rural and urban communities with children under age four in its core program. Emphasis is on providing direct service to families so parents and children can realize their fullest. Through AVANCE, families are strengthened, child abuse neglect and educational problems in young children are prevented, and the economic conditions of the family are stabilized. While AVANCE has traditionally focused treatment on Hispanic mothers, the program has expanded to serve older children and fathers. AVANCE’s home base is in San Antonio but programs/services are offered in several cities across Texas. AVANCE’s strong outreach efforts include highly specialized personal support services to enable clients to participate in classes and services. Staffs keep an intense schedule of family and cultural events. Programs include parent education, social support, adult basic and higher education, early childhood education, youth programs, personal development and community empowerment.

Strengths of the Program

- Staff is described as the key to success at AVANCE. Individuals are hired who have a true sense of community and service, treat clients with dignity and respect, exhibit an understanding of the needs of the community and are non-judgmental advocates.
- Staff is bilingual so interpreters are not needed.
- AVANCE has its own curriculum, does its own staff training and has training manuals for each position.
- Strong consumer and family involvement is a priority. Some of the more therapeutic programs are done in partnership with families.
- The Advisory Board reflects the community and families in the community.
- Parent Advisory Council Groups are very active.
- Cross-system collaboration is a critical aspect of the program and includes formal agreements with collaborators and informal relationships. AVANCE communicates with schools, colleges, medical providers, adult education providers, housing authority, and other community agencies to address community needs and services.
Centro de Bienestar
San Jose, CA

Centro de Bienestar is an example of successful integration of a Mental Health Program with a Primary Healthcare Provider, the Gardner Family Care Corporation. Gardner is a non-profit, multi-service community based clinic that had been providing comprehensive health care services to the predominantly Latino and Asian Pacific Islander residents of Santa Clara County since 1972. El Centro was initiated in 1976 by Latino mental health workers who recognized that Santa Clara County was not meeting the mental health needs of its Latino population. The group focused on the Gardner District of San Jose where Latinos were experiencing a high incidence of cultural dislocation, intro- and interpersonal conflicts directly affecting self-image and self-esteem, severe depression, substance abuse, violence, family disintegration and mental illness. El Centro began with a volunteer program that provided psychotherapeutic services on a limited basis. Eventually, through extensive fundraising and proposal writing, the State awarded El Centro seed monies to help establish the program. El Centro is currently well established in the community and is located in its own facility in close proximity to Gardner. Gardner is governed by a Board of Directors composed of individuals from the community, about half of who are consumers of the Clinic's services. Populations served are seriously mentally ill adults, children and families, adolescents and youth, and older adults. Many clients are immigrants. Approximately 72% are Hispanic, 12% Anglo, 10% Asian Pacific Islander, and 6% other. Over 55% of clients are age 17 years and under.

Strengths of the Program

- The makeup and background of staff is a strong factor in El Centro's ability to work effectively in the community. Emphasis is placed on hiring staff from the community and recruiting graduates from local universities for internships at the Center. Many staff are immigrants as are many of the clients, giving staff a deep understanding of the experiences and concerns of the clients.
- El Centro has a consumer staff position; there is significant client, family, and staff participation on the Advisory Council.
- Staff participation in school settings and county and community committees has increased community awareness of the mental health needs of Latinos, particularly of Mexican immigrants.
- Special programs, e.g. Ethno Medicine Project increase staff understanding of cultural values and beliefs regarding health and healing. El Centro has also done much to dispel myths, particularly with the elderly regarding the source and meaning of mental health symptoms, and receiving help from mental health professionals.
- Consumer and family involvement is a high priority. El Centro provides culturally focused projects for Latino youth and elders, peer support activities, and organized community activities. Extensive cross-system collaboration with key community agencies is viewed as critical in meeting individual program goals.
The Roberto Clemente Center is a Latino focused health and mental health care clinic in the heart of the Puerto Rican community serving the entire Latino community of the Lower East Side, as well as Spanish-speaking clients from other boroughs referred for services by centers that do not have bilingual staff. The target population is primarily Caribbean and Central and South American immigrants from low-income families in need of general health services to clients with severe psychiatric difficulties. Many clients are first or second-generation immigrant families. The Clemente Center was the first public facility in New York State that included a family and community orientation as well as cultural sensitivity and proficiency as core principles of care. In its 20-year history, Clemente has doubled its program operating space, increased its productivity tenfold; trained over 100 Latino mental health professionals, and initiated a nationally renowned 6 college credit course at Clemente free to the community. The Clemente Center is part of the New York City Public Health and Mental Health System. Programs include an outpatient mental health clinic with an emphasis on family counseling and family therapy; intensive, structured counseling and rehabilitation services for clients with severe psychiatric difficulties; primary care services; and HIV-Primary Care services. An important component of the Center is the Clemente Institute for Family and Community Care where providers are trained on systems-oriented family therapy with specialization in working with the urban poor, immigrant, and Latino populations.

**Strengths of the Program**

- Its central location in the community provides easy access to services.
- It is as a major training site for Latino and other NYC Social Work students.
- Staff knowledge about culture is incorporated into the practice, intervention, and policies of the Center.
- Strong interest and emphasis in empowerment of the community through respect, *personalismo*, cultural sensitivity, ethnic pride, and education.
- The director recognizes staff as an important, if not the most important, facet of providing therapeutic treatment to clientele. Staff are encouraged to have a voice in programs and services.
- Feedback/data from community referral sources is used to improve services; An active client committee guides clinic leadership in determining programs and services.
- Coalition building with other agencies is maximized for greater program availability including Legal Services, Youth Services, Criminal Justice and Education.
- A Course in the Humanities is offered, in collaboration with Bard College, free of charge to anyone from the community. This provides people who have been marginalized by the mainstream educational system, a vehicle to experience college level education and the possibility of earning college credits.
Yakima Valley Farm Workers Clinic  
Yakima, WA

The Yakima Valley Farm Workers Clinic is a community-based multi-services program in an agricultural community that serves children, adolescents, adults, and families with an emphasis on children and low income, underserved farm workers, the majority of whom are Latino. Mental health services are provided in a manner that is both accessible and acceptable to the Latino population in this area. When necessary, alternate approaches to treatment and service delivery are explored for individual clients. In order to make its services more available and accessible, Yakima has four satellite clinics, operates on a flexible schedule that includes evening hours and Saturdays, and provides home-based services. Forty-seven percent (47%) of the clientele are Mexican American, 48% are Caucasian. The site is largely rural and reservation. Twenty Five percent (25%) of the approximately 52 staff are qualified as Ethnic Minority Mental Health Specialists. Behavioral health psychiatrists, psychologists, mental health specialists, therapists, counselors and case managers work as a team to provide individual and group therapy, assessments, evaluations, medication management and advocacy services.

Cross-system collaboration is a high priority and includes collaboration with primary care service providers to provide holistic care for clients. Yakima has offices in the hospital so that they are able to "cohabitate" with physicians and provide one-stop shopping services to clients. A plan is being developed to improve continuity of client care by establishing and implementing a system that provides feedback and information from BHS staff to the client's Primary Care Provider. Staff presentations educate the community about mental health services, prevention efforts and programs offered at the Clinic.

Strengths of the Program

- Fifty percent (50%) of the YVFWC Advisory Board are consumers.
- High priority is placed on recruitment and retention of Bilingual/ Bicultural staff. Retention of staff is high. The Clinic encourages employees to further their education and provides an environment that facilitates going back to school.
- Staff receives ongoing training in cultural competency. All employees must go through a Human Resources Cultural Competency orientation. Mental Health workers in the state of Washington are also required to complete 100 hours of cultural competency training. If new staff have not completed this training, they can go to the local college to attend specified courses or they may attend state-sponsored cultural competency training.
- While the majority of staff is bilingual, YVFWC also employs interpreters. Interpreters are tested by the State to assess their level of fluency and appropriateness as interpreters. Interpreters are paid a fixed amount; a bonus is provided to bilingual staff and others that have received extra training to be "specialists".
SUMMARY FEATURES AND CHARACTERISTICS OF PROGRAMS REFLECTING CULTURAL COMPETENCY

The programs identified share a set of characteristics that uniformly account for their success in reaching and serving Latino families, youth and children. These characteristics are defined using the 7A's from the Integrating Cultural Competency in Human Services Model developed by Romero (2002).

- **Assessment:** Programs/staff share a solid understanding of Latino population characteristics in their particular region. They understand their needs through direct involvement of the Latino community and develop programs and services that respond to those needs. They do this through direct involvement of the Latino community and stakeholders.

- **Administration:** These programs/agencies governing boards and administration have an infrastructure with vision, mission, policies and procedures that reflect the values of the community and clients they serve. Additionally, the administration and governing boards reflect the demographics of their Latino communities, with shared values, commitment and passion for serving Latino families.

- **Availability:** The programs and services available are reflective of the needs of their community and congruent with their social and cultural needs using a current assessment of needs. Hours of operation of programs and services do not follow the traditional 8 to 5, Monday through Friday hours of operation. Services are extended to include weekends and late evenings and are based on employment industries in the area and addressing the youth's recreational after school needs.

- **Accessibility:** Programs/services are located in familiar, easily accessible community sites. Some programs set up satellite clinics in key locations for broader provision of services or have staff stationed in key agencies in order to provide seamless outreach, education, information and continuance of services. Programs also defined accessibility in terms of partnerships formed with key community service organizations that complement the comprehensive service needs of their clients and families. With this flexible set up, programs are able to perform seamless outreach, education, information dissemination, and continuance of services. Collaboration with primary care services is critical since studies have shown that Latinos are twice as likely to seek treatment for mental disorders in general health care settings as opposed to mental health specialty settings. Many referrals to the mental health system come from primary health care providers.

- **Appropriateness:** Programs and services are flexible and innovative, linguistically and culturally competent and professional; services and interventions are culture and age appropriate, and when necessary, alternate approaches to treatment and service delivery are explored for individual clients. Staff skills and knowledge reflect core competencies and an ability to service Latinos from their respective countries of origin. The language skills of staff are key to communicating with families enabling them to conduct interventions in Spanish or English depending on the need of the cli-
Staff do not subscribe to the 60 minute hour but allow the time the client needs at that particular interaction. Staff understand that Latinos will not conduct personal business in a linear way. One of the striking characteristics, which in our opinion accounts for the great success of these programs in reaching, engaging, and intervening with Latino families, is staff and management attitude towards, and passion for, their work. A few of the characteristics observed were flexibility, competency, respect, humility, sincerity, and the ability to work with integrity, knowledge and resourcefulness. Staff expressed enjoyment and love of their work and this positive attitude is transferred to the clients and community.

- **Affordability**: These programs do miracles with limited funding! They understand that they serve people with very limited resources, therefore fees for services are not common. Programs make every effort to ensure their clients have access to all the benefits they are entitled to receive and facilitate applications to Medicaid, Medicare, Social Security, Children's Health Insurance for low income, etc. They also provide many services for which there was no reimbursement at all.

- **Accountability**: These programs are accountable to many stakeholders, first to their clients, their communities, then to their government and other funding sources. Their biggest challenge is to balance their accountability to all funders and at the same time not compromise the quality and appropriateness of their culturally syntonic services. The biggest challenge at times if justifying culturally appropriate non-conventional services that cannot be understood and/or valued by mainstream government funders.
FACTORS THAT ACCOUNT FOR SUCCESS IN WORKING WITH LATINO FAMILIES

- Strong commitment by program/agency leadership. Agencies place a high value on cultural diversity, culturally sensitive care, and needs of clients. Agencies value diversity and incorporate cultural competence in policies, procedures, assessment and services.
- Energetic and committed staff. Strong management and line staff skills, commitment, attitude, and passion for working with Latino clients.
- Staff who have a true sense of community and services, who understand the need to work with the family as a unit, and who treat clients with dignity and respect. Programs report that the makeup and background of staff is a strong factor in a program's ability to work effectively in the community.
- Special recruitment of staff. Programs hire from the community when possible; bring students from local academic institutions into program as interns and then hire them as permanent staff.
- Multiservices that address the holistic needs of families.
- Family-centered treatment planning.
  - Culturally and linguistically appropriate services e.g. convenient locations and flexible hours. When necessary, alternate approaches to treatment and service delivery are explored for individual clients.
  - Cross-system collaboration with agencies/organizations is viewed as key to addressing challenges in meeting individual program goals.
- Integration of mental health services with primary healthcare services or partnering with primary healthcare providers to facilitate referrals for mental health services.
- Strong consumer and family involvement in decision making and treatment planning. Advisory Councils/Boards. One Advisory Board has 50% consumer participation.
- Bilingual and bicultural staff; Qualified Interpreters when needed.
- Bilingual materials; culturally inviting and supportive environment.
- Administrators that encourage and facilitate staff to continue their education.
- Leadership commitment to staff development. All programs include some form of required staff training in cultural competence; some programs provide ongoing cultural competence training; some developed their own courses and curriculum; others encourage staff to attend state-sponsored training courses.
- Advisory boards/administration are reflective of the community.
- Strong presence of staff in the community.
- Flexible/diversified funding. Programs are very entrepreneurial and assertive in soliciting resources for services. Cross-system collaboration sometimes results in funding of services.