



Executive Summary

Every organization working to prevent sexual violence in the U.S. is unique. However, at least one tie binds the movement together: the drive to eliminate sexual violence and support survivors. However, to end sexual violence, the movement and all of the organizations in it must reach every part of the population.

A significant proportion of people living in the United States are of Latin@ origin – about 16%, or 50.5 million, as of 2010 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). According to Census data, the Latin@ population grew in every region of the United States between 2000 and 2010. But the few existing studies on sexual violence against Latin@s have shown a lack of culturally relevant services for Latin@ survivors to be a substantial need. One in six Latina women report sexual victimization in their lifetime (Cuevas & Sabina, 2010). Latin@s encounter more barriers to seeking services than non-Latin@s, especially if they are immigrants (Ingram, 2007). Latin@s are also less likely to report rape victimization (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000).

The National Sexual Violence Resource Center (NSVRC), in partnership with the University of Puerto Rico Center for Evaluation and Sociomedical Research (CIES), conducted this needs assessment to add to the limited body of research on sexual violence in Latin@ and/or Spanish-speaking communities. More specifically, the NSVRC sought to identify existing strengths and needs surrounding the prevention of sexual violence with Latin@ communities and to better understand how the NSVRC, together with partners, could respond to those needs.

Sample of national survey responses:

57.8%

Said their in-person discussions were an effective outreach tool for Latin@ and/or Spanish-speaking communities, compared with 40.7% for brochures.

38.9%

Reported their organization never used culturally relevant resources working with Latin@ and/or Spanish-speaking communities.

76%

Said they received formal training on diversity, specifically how to work with different cultural groups.

19.3%

Thought the demographics of those served matched the demographics of the community.

45.3%

Reported their organization sometimes involved community members in program planning. About 19% said they never used community members.

To these ends, four fundamental questions were examined in this assessment:

1. Who are the key groups/organizations engaging in and/or supporting sexual violence prevention and intervention in Latin@ and/or Spanish-speaking communities?
2. What are the resource needs of advocates, counselors, and other professionals in the field engaging in sexual violence prevention and intervention in Latin@ and/or Spanish-speaking communities?
3. What is the cultural competency and Spanish-language capacity of programs and organizations to serve Latin@ and/or Spanish-speaking communities?
4. What is the most effective role of the NSVRC in supporting advocates working with Latin@ and/or Spanish-speaking communities?

Researchers employed a mixed-methods approach, using both quantitative and qualitative methods such as a Web-based national survey, phone interviews, and focus groups. They received feedback from approximately 250 participants from all 50 states and three U.S. territories (Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands, and American Samoa). Participants were from sexual assault coalitions, community-based sexual violence programs, and health departments (sometimes referred to as “mainstream” in this report to differentiate them from culturally specific organizations), and culturally specific organizations working with Latin@ and/or Spanish-speaking communities.

Input from NSVRC staff and the center’s Multilingual Access Project Advisory committee (MAPA) – a group including Latin@s with substantial anti-sexual violence experience from across the country – helped guide the development of research methodology and questions.

Results

Feedback from participants showed a wide variety of needs among local, state, and national organizations – including culturally specific organizations – related to sexual violence prevention and intervention. Those needs can be broadly grouped into three categories:

Top five areas for prevention-related resource development:

1. Addressing stigma of sexual violence within Latin@ communities
2. Best practices for sexual violence prevention in Latin@ communities
3. Engaging men & boys in sexual violence prevention
4. Adapting prevention curricula and strategies for culturally-specific populations
5. Human trafficking

1. Need for culturally informed resources for the community

There is a general lack of existing resources for Latin@ and/or Spanish speaking communities, according to participants, and the resources that do exist are often not relevant or accessible.

- Participants expressed an overwhelming need for resources for Latin@ communities that move beyond printed materials and toward in-person connections. In the assessment’s national survey, participants most often selected in-person discussions as an effective way to make prevention information accessible to Latin@

and/or Spanish-speaking communities (57.8% versus 40.7% for brochures; 45.8% said TV ads, 37.3% said radio ads, and 27.1% said posters).

- About 39% of respondents in the national survey said they “never” use culturally or linguistically relevant materials. About 26% “sometimes” used relevant resources, 13% used them “fairly often” or “very often”; about 20% either declined to answer or were unsure.
- Respondent to the national survey also identified prevention-related topics on which they would like to see resources (see box, left). The area most selected was addressing the stigma of sexual violence within Latin@ communities. The issue of stigma also came up in one-on-one interviews. As one participant said, there is a need for “materials that address the taboo of sexual assault ... and that debunk sexual assault, to address the isolation in the Latino community, as they don’t know who they can talk to, making the experience harder to share.”

2. Need to build organizational capacity for cross-cultural work

One trend that emerged in both the national survey and one-on-one interviews is the desire for organizations to build their capacity to perform work in Latin@ and/or Spanish-speaking communities. Participants said that their organizations had trouble reaching these communities, and expressed frustration at treatment of Latin@ advocates.

- In the one-on-one interviews, respondents said organizations as a whole do not offer enough commitment and support around cultural relevance. Some felt organizations took a surface-level approach – essentially, approaching cultural relevance like a list with items to be “checked off.” However, in the national survey, about nine out of 10 respondents felt their organization supported culturally relevant work; 76% said they received formal training on how to work with different cultural groups.
- Many of those in the national survey said their organizations have a difficult time reaching Latin@ communities. While 91.4% have identified demographics of their intended service population, just 19.3% thought that their clients-served matched their targeted service population.
- Participants also noted frequently that Latin@ advocates and Latin@-specific organizations are “tokenized,” or recognized only for their identity as a Latin@ and/or Spanish-speaker. Services to Latin@ communities often fall to the Latin@ and/or Spanish speaking staff members even when such responsibilities fall outside of the scope of their roles or job descriptions.

3. Need for community partnerships and collaboration

The organizations involved in the survey varied in size, in focus, and in location. However, a common theme that emerged across participants was the need for and desire to partner with other organizations working with Latin@ and/or Spanish-speaking communities and a space to connect and network with other advocates.

- In the national survey, 18.9% reported that their organization “never” involves community members in program planning, while 45.3% report “sometimes” involving community members.
- The most commonly cited way that organizations examine their culturally and linguistically relevant services is through consumer satisfaction data, followed by case reviews or audits and reviewing of grievances or complaints, according to respondents.

- About 60% of participants felt that they were supported “very often” by their organizations, but less than 30% felt “very often” supported by their state coalition. Participants suggested state coalitions could foster support in part by bringing organizations together to encourage collaboration. Other suggestions include providing funding, helping individual agencies through leadership development, and providing Spanish-language materials.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Assessment findings show a need for greater systemic and coordinated efforts to improve prevention and intervention services for Latin@ and/or Spanish-speaking communities. This report provides the results of the comprehensive national language access needs assessment as well as research-based recommendations for the NSVRC. A sample of these recommendations to NSVRC, found at the end of the report, include the following:

- Build the current NSVRC library and its online resource collection for Spanish-language and/or culturally relevant materials, including non-written materials such as videos and audio files.
- Develop culturally specific resources targeted toward Latin@ and/or Spanish-speaking audiences.
- Create a long-term plan for sustaining the Multilingual Access Project Advisory committee.
- Hire additional bilingual (Spanish-English) staff.
- Create training opportunities for organizations’ leaders on capacity building/outreach.
- Work with state coalitions to maintain Spanish-language and/or culturally relevant resources for local organizations.
- Develop a shared space for advocates working with Latin@ and/or Spanish-speaking populations to connect, such as a listserv or web forum.