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## **Increasing the Utilization of Mental Health Services Among the Latino Community**

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Increasing the Utilization of Mental Health Services Among the Latino Community

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### **Abstract**

Mental Health affects millions of individuals every year. It can affect anyone at any age. Mariposa Wellness Center Community Connections (MWC-CC) provides services and support for those not receiving the adequate treatment. There is lack of access to health care; therefore, many individuals suffer from a mental health condition without treatment leading to major consequences such as having a dysfunctional family and homelessness. The information was delivered in a series of community outreach that were designed to provide the community with information about mental health and resources. Unfortunately, the expected results were not reached due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Mariposa Wellness Center had to close its doors to the community. Therefore, measuring the effectiveness of the outreach was impossible. As of 2020, MWC-CC serves approximately 70 participants. Only serving 4 Latinos with the expected outcome of raising the number by 10% by the end of the outreach.

*Keywords: Mental illness, barriers, stigma, community outreach*

### **Agency and Community Served**

Mariposa Wellness Center Community Connections (MWC-CC) is a non-profit organization located in downtown Watsonville, CA. As of 2019 Mariposa serves approximately 70 participants. With 29 being women and 41 being men. These numbers can change rapidly since Mariposa is a drop-in center. Participants can come in whenever they feel they need support. Mariposa is dedicated in addressing the social issue of Mental Health by serving individuals with disabilities. This population has suffered in silence throughout the years. In today's society we tend to discriminate and belittle people who suffer from a mental illness. Instead of lending a helping hand and helping them become productive members of society. Mariposa serves anyone and everyone regardless of race, gender, and ethnicity. Mariposa helps individuals who are diagnosed with a bipolar disorder, depression, schizophrenia, anxiety, a dual diagnosis among many other mental health problems.

Mariposa's mission is to assist and support adults with psychiatric disabilities and their families in achieving greater independence and improving the qualities of their lives. Some of the services and programs Mariposa provides include vocational preparation, individual and group counseling, peer support groups that provide a variety of topics related to mental health, career services, college connection helped by a Social Worker that connect individuals enroll into school and select classes that best fit their needs among many other services. Many of Mariposa's clients are individuals who have suffered from mental health problems for the majority of their lives. Many participants are people who don't have a place to live and therefore live in the streets. They have nowhere to shower and take the appropriate measures to groom. It

is extremely saddening for these individuals to deal with a mental health illness and still be homeless. Fortunately, Mariposa provides breakfast and lunch for these individuals who have no way of preparing food for themselves because they don't have anywhere to live.

### **Problem Description**

Mental Illness is defined as a condition that affects the way an individual feels, perceives or thinks. According to the National Alliance of Mental Illness (2019), 19.1% of U.S adults experienced mental illness in 2018. That is 47.6 million people, 4.6 of U.S adults experienced serious mental illness in 2018 representing 1 in 25 adults, 16.5% of U.S youth experienced a mental health disorder in 2016 and 3.7% of U.S adults experienced a co-occurring substance use disorder and mental illness in 2018 that is 9.2 million people. Approximately 32.9 % of individuals who suffer from a mental illness are Hispanic or Latino. This suggests how millions of people in the United States are affected by a mental health condition each year.

According to Susman, in the data retrieved from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health (2016). It showed that approximately 11.8 millions of adults have unmet needs regarding their mental health. In the past year including 5.5 millions of adults who did not receive mental health services. About 2.4 million adults live with a schizophrenia disorder, 6.1 million live with a bipolar disorder, 16 million with major depression and 42 million adults live with anxiety disorder.

### **Contributing Factors**

According to Corrigan and Watson (2002) many people with a mental illness are challenged by stereotypes and misconceptions of mental illness. The stigma includes having

stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination against people with mental illness that can result in negative emotions for the individual. Some of the negative emotions that can arise are fear, shame and low self-esteem which can result in a more complex health issue such as depression. As stated by Corrigan and Watson (2002) when people with mental illness experience discrimination and rejection not only by their family members but also the community they decide to go untreated due to the fear of rejection or fear of people finding out they have a mental illness. People who suffer from a mental illness carry a lot of burden on top of their illness. Specifically, the Latino community, Many Latinos do not seek services or treatment for fear of being labeled as *locos*(crazy) or as having a mental health condition because this may cause shame. Stigma and discrimination is a huge contributing factor that affects individuals who have a mental health illness. Many Latinos don't seek treatment because they don't recognize the symptoms of mental health conditions or know where to find help. The lack of information or awareness increases the stigma with mental health issues.

Culture is another indicator of a contributing factor. The Latino community has a strong belief system of *familismo* (familialism) a belief that puts priority to family. According to Valdivieso and Peet the three key components that make up familialism are familial obligations (2016). It is the obligation to provide material and emotional support to family members. They serve as role models and providers of help and support to solve problems. Latinos may choose to seek out help and support from close family members instead of mental health professionals because of the strong trust and confidence they have in their families. Latino families tend to value privacy highly. A common saying used by Latinos is "*la ropa sucia se lava en casa*" (don't

air your dirty laundry in public). The Latino community are very private and often do not want to talk in public about challenges at home. In the Latino community having a mental illness is a sign of weakness this is why they rather let a family member know before seeking professional help.

Another contributing factor is the lack of access to health care. According to Hispanics and the future of America (2006). Access to health care refers to the degree to which people are able to obtain appropriate care from the health care system in a timely manner. Without health insurance coverage, many people find health care unaffordable. The lack of health insurance coverage has been a major problem for Latinos. According to Kaiser Family Foundation (2017). Latinos make up 17.6 percent of the U.S population. The majority of uninsured Latinos come from working families that have agricultural labor jobs. In many instances these types of jobs don't offer health benefits.

In 2010 the Affordable Care Act was passed its goal was to extend Medicaid coverage to many low-income individuals but even with the Affordable Care Act many individuals find the cost to be too high therefore, remain uninsured. Latinos in the United States is a growing population faced with many health conditions and uneven access to services. Access to health services is crucial to health development across the lifespan to the prenatal stage to adulthood. The lack of health insurance is a major determinant of health outcomes affecting millions of Latinos. According to Statista (2019). 20 percent of the Hispanic population in the United States didn't have health insurance. Without access to health insurance the Latino population is at a greater risk for more severe and persistent forms of mental health conditions.

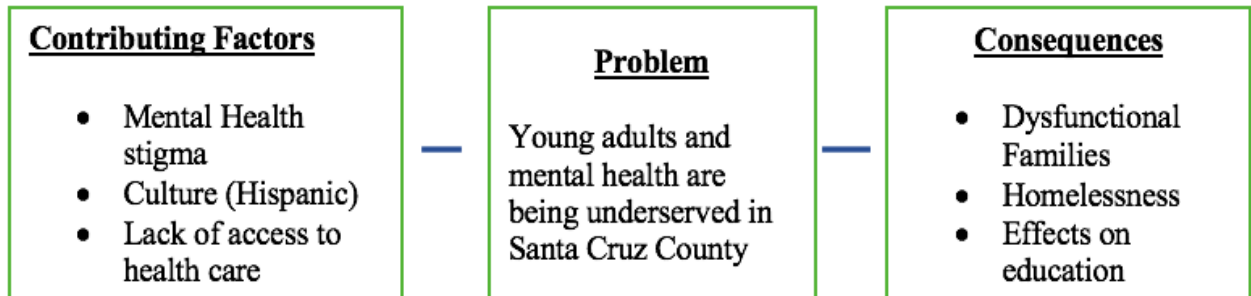
## **Consequences**

There are many different consequences as a result of the lack of awareness and understanding of mental health. Not seeking mental health services can cause a family to become dysfunctional. The family will obtain poor communication skills. Therefore, a dysfunctional family is unable to listen to one another leaving family members to feel misunderstood. People with untreated mental illness can cause conflict in a family that would be functional. Having one parent or both who suffer mental illness can bring a huge burden on the entire family.

According to Mental Illness Policy Organization (MIPO) one of the effects of having a mental health illness can lead to homelessness. The majority of homeless have untreated severe mental illness. If an individual is left untreated they become less productive and they are no longer able to work. Therefore, they are no longer able to pay rent resulting in homelessness. A recent study shows that 28 percent of the homeless who were hospitalized in psychiatric hospitals showed that the homeless were not getting the proper nutrients. Not receiving the proper care can not only affect the individual who suffers from mental health but the entire family who depends on the person who brings food and money to the table. When the individual can no longer function and bring money to pay bills the entire family is left out on the streets. Mental Health has a great impact on the individual and the family.



### **Problem Model**



### **Project Implementation**

The goal of the Capstone project is to raise awareness of the mental health services in the Latino population in the community of Watsonville, CA. The reason Mariposa would like to focus on this specific population is because the majority of the population in Watsonville are Latinos but only few are seeking mental health services when there's a mental health center right in their community. A way to deliver this project effectively is to create surveys and do community outreach at Cabrillo Community College, the Farmers Market, and public clinics. According to the National Alliance of Mental Illness (NAMI), reaching out to your community can address cultural barriers (2019). Resources can help people become more aware or learn about mental health when it is a difficult topic to talk about due to cultural beliefs and practices.

A way to implement the capstone project is create surveys with approximately nine questions and distribute to the community after each outreach has been completed. Each survey will have questions such as how often is mental illness discussed in your household? When was the first time you heard of Mental Illness? Do you know of the Mental Health Services provided

in your county? The surveys will be provided both in English and Spanish. Approximately 160 copies will be printed for each outreach. During the outreach the community will be informed of what mental illness is, the different types of mental health problems such as bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, dual diagnosis, etc. How to identify if someone or yourself suffers from mental health problems. They will also be learning about the services available at Mariposa Wellness Center and where to refer someone if they need to seek services.

The community outreach was designed to last 1-2 hours. The activities required participants to be engaged and actively participating. The outreach started out by introducing ourselves and our role at Mariposa Wellness Center. The outreach was planned to inform the community about the different types of mental health diagnosis and resources available since many individuals are unaware that they might have a mental health problem because they are unable to recognize the signs. Also, the outreach was done to help and guide those who suffer and/or have a family member with a mental health diagnosis to receive services they need in order to receive support since many don't know where to go for help. After each outreach participants were asked to fill out a survey.

In response to the capstone project Mariposa hoped to receive approximately 100-150 surveys from participants. It was quite a challenge to have a response from 150 participants, due to the stigma and cultural barriers, but the surveys that were received will allow us to analyze data more effectively. Mariposa will have a better understanding of why Latinos refuse to seek mental health services.

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To begin the project, the program coordinator Jodie Wells has provided information about mental health and the services provided at the agency. As well as evidence-based surveys that have been used in the past. To be able to carry out this project, all staff at Mariposa including my mentor will be there supporting the project. All staff members have experience doing community outreach, and have recommendations, and options that can be used as a guidance for this project.

Mental Health is a worldwide issue that affects millions of individuals every year. With many not having access to health care. This stops individuals from seeking mental health treatment making the issue to become wider. Mariposa Wellness Center offers services that are free from cost. The project will help the community learn of the different services available to them at no cost. It will also offer access to a form of treatment. The expected outcomes that the capstone project aims to achieve is to have more Latinos seek mental health services within the agency. A way we will know if the expected outcome has been achieved is by looking at how many Latino are currently clients seeking services at Mariposa vs how many clients sought services or even came to our doors to ask about services after the outreach.

### Appendix A

Activities	Deliverables	Timeline/Deadline
Discuss capstone project with mentor	Final capstone idea approved	January 2020

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COMMUNITY

Create pamphlets/flyers	location of outreach and services provided	January 26, 2020
Create surveys	Five question survey	January 28, 2020
Create PowerPoint Presentation	Information on different types of mental health, symptoms and programs	February 18, 2020
Direct telephone calls	Invite previous, new and existing clients to outreach events.	February 25, 2020
Email permission to do outreach at Cabrillo College	First email	March 3, 2020
Prepare for outreach	First outreach	March 10, 2020
Second outreach at Cabrillo	Second outreach	March 18, 2020
Last outreach at Farmers market	Last outreach	April 8, 2020
Gather all surveys and analyze information	Analyze results	April 16, 2020
Put together project for future intern	Final outreach plan for future intern	May 2020
Complete reporting requirements	Final agency and capstone reports	May 2020
Prepare capstone presentation in selected format	Present for dress rehearsal for grading	May 2020

Milestone# 4

**Project Results**

As a result of the project it was concluded that the community outreach did not achieve the expected outcome. The expected outcome was to measure current clients who are currently

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receiving mental health services at Mariposa Wellness Center vs. how many sought services or even came in to our doors to ask about our services after the outreach was completed. Although the surveys did allow us to analyze information on what ethnicity and age group are at a higher risk to develop a mental health problem the expected outcome was not reached. Mariposa expected to increase its participants up to 10%.

### **Conclusion and recommendations**

Mariposa Wellness Center closed its doors on March 18, 2020 to the community due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Closing its doors was difficult and affected the outcome of this project as we were unable to measure its effectiveness. Based on the unsuccessful outcome, it is recommended that the project be continued. Some changes are recommended if the project is continued. One change would be to have more volunteers and/or mental health specialists helping during the outreach. As it can get difficult when assisting someone with questions and answers. Having enough people to cover everyone's questions and concerns is essential.

### **Personal Reflection/ final thoughts**

Throughout my time at Mariposa Wellness Center-CC and working on the project. I had the amazing opportunity to experience and be exposed to work with people who suffer from different mental health problems. Working with this population who have been stigmatized for so long made me aware of the mental health disparities in the community, and the changes needed in order to better assist this population. During the implementation of the project it stood out to me the high need of mental health services. While being an intern at MWC-CC it allowed me to better understand how important it is to have mental health services like those offered at

MWC-CC. This experience also, gave me a great insight as to how to make an impact on this population. Assisting this population in strengthening their skills and assisting them in learning can help them to become productive in society.

### **Strengths and Challenges**

One strength that allowed the project to continue was the relationship I had with my mentor and my confidence. My confidence and determination allowed me to engage the community while doing the outreach. I was able to encourage participants in asking questions and coming forward in participating in the outreach. Also, there was a lot of support from professionals at the agency. They helped me gather information on what mental health is, the common signs of having a mental health illness, and the different types of services available in the community. Unfortunately, not everything was a success.

At the beginning of the implementation of the project, there was a lack of attendees. There were only 5 attendees. It was difficult to receive feedback from them through the surveys. Some attendees did not fully respond to all the questions provided on the survey which would make it difficult to analyze later in the process. The second time, there was an increase in attendance. This time there were approximately 40 participants, but there were some challenges with the participants. Participants were fully engaged during the outreach, but some had difficulties filling out the survey due to some participants not knowing how to read. This was the biggest challenge I came across during the implementation. I actually never took into consideration that there is Latino families who didn't have the opportunity to go to school due to other familial obligations. Having to read the survey to participants did take some time off from

me reaching out to other participants who had questions. If we were better staffed during the outreach it would've allowed us to have at least one staff member assist those who have difficulties reading and the other staff members would have focused on the rest of the participants. Unfortunately, there were only two staff members during the outreach.

### **Broader Social Significance**

During this uncertain time. It has been extremely difficult to adjust to sheltering-in-place because I was so used to my daily routine of waking up, getting ready for school, coming home, making lunch, going to work, coming home etc. Now it has taken a toll on me since I am home all day and I am currently 7 months pregnant with nothing to do. Which has made it a lot more difficult since I tend to get stressed and irritated for not being able to do much. A self-care strategy that I have implemented during this time is doing a bit of exercise to relieve some stress of being home. I also tend to do crossword puzzles to keep my mind off of this COVID-19 pandemic. It can get a bit stressful to think about it especially when it's all over the news and it's the only thing everyone talks about. One way I am managing school work is by writing my assignments down on my agenda. It helps me a bit in reminding me when things are due, but it has been difficult in regard to staying motivated to actually do the work. I am a hands-on person and love to learn face-to-face and having virtually online classes is not for me. It is one of the main reasons I never do online classes because I can't concentrate. Therefore, I don't learn anything. I do understand that moving things to a virtually online class is to keep us safe and was completely out of everyone's hands.

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A recent good day was when I gathered with my mom and grandmother and we just had a good time catching up on things. We talked about my baby shower and how we can't wait for this crisis to be over, so we can continue with the preparation of the baby shower. Spending time with them helped me a lot in easing my mind and it helped me relax during this difficult time. A bad day I had was when I almost had a mental breakdown from being home all day. I wasn't able to go outside to catch some air because it was heavily raining, and I didn't want to get sick since I tend to get sick very easily. I can still recall that day and it was the worst thing ever. I have never experienced a mental breakdown and it scared me because I wanted to desperately run outside but I knew I had to calm myself down for my baby's well-being. This is why I motivate myself to go out every day for at least 15 minutes to catch some fresh air. It's not a lot but it has definitely helped me in staying calm. I definitely want to continue having more good days than bad days.



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