¡EMPODÉRATE!: A Model for Addressing Social Determinants of Health Among LGBTQ Latinx Young Adults

Suyanna Linhales Barker, DrPH; Department Director
Manuel Diaz-Ramirez; ¡EMPODÉRATE! Program & Sites Manager
Alexa Rodriguez; ¡EMPODÉRATE! Transgender Program Coordinator
Community Health Action Department, La Clinica del Pueblo, INC.
Today’s Faculty

Suyanna Barker
Community Health Action Department Director

Manuel Diaz-Ramirez
¡Empodérate! Center Program & Sites Manager

Alexa Rodriguez
¡Empodérate! Center Transgender Program Coordinator

www.lgbthealtheducation.org
Call for Interventions that Focus Beyond the Individual*

- Creating safe spaces in which HIV-positive and HIV-negative Latino MSM can critically explore and discuss the impact of social discrimination on their physical and mental health;
- Enhancing feelings of belonging and social support, particularly from family, friends, caseworkers, and healthcare providers;
- Ensuring access to culturally competent and linguistically appropriate sexual health services, including HIV prevention information and education, care, and treatment; and
- Providing opportunities for social action, including volunteerism and activism.

Disparities: Challenges to Care for Latinx Immigrants

- Lack of linguistically and culturally appropriate services, including mental health services.
- Lack of family/support structures.
- Latinos are diverse: culture defined by country of origin, education, socio-economic level, immigration journey
  - Language, education and immigration status are seen as barriers for accessing support systems in the United States

Disparities: Challenges to Care for Latinx Immigrants, Cont’d

- Traditional gender stereotypes: Machismo, transphobia, homophobia
  - Transgender Immigrant Latinas face additional barriers to information and care especially if Spanish speaking only or undocumented.
- Minority status (sexual, racial, legal) leads to being shut out of jobs, education, barriers to housing, healthcare and economic security which exposes them to a higher risk of discrimination, negative health outcomes and violence.
- Conflicts between work and medical care.
- Instability/lack of availability of housing.

Social Determinants Of Health

- Illness
- Injury
- Risk taking behaviour
- Unhealthy lifestyles

Lack of Immigration Status Adjustment

- Unemployment or unhealthy work
- Stigma and discrimination
  - Lack of affordable healthy options
  - Limited opportunities for education
  - Poor access to services, transport and good housing
  - Unhealthy and unsafe physical environments
  - Poverty and deprivation

NATIONAL LGBT HEALTH EDUCATION CENTER
A PROGRAM OF THE FENWAY INSTITUTE

NATIONAL CENTER FOR INNOVATION IN HIV CARE
Immigration as a Social Determinant of Health

- What does it mean to be undocumented?
  - Progressive criminalization of administrative status
    - Relationship to police, law enforcement, state/government entities
    - Effect on physical and mental health
  - Inability to obtain basic documents—Social Security #, ID
    - Driving, banking, home renting or ownership, access to services
    - Effect on social insertion and stability
  - Inability to obtain safety net benefits
    - Effect on socioeconomic status, relationship to employer
  - Extreme vulnerability with respect to employer
¡Empodérate! Model: Definition and Key Concepts
¡Empodérate! is a safe space for Latinx LGBTQ young adult recent immigrants where they can be themselves. It offers support to access the services they might need to improve their health.
Key concept 1: Ecological Model

- Use an ecological model when developing and implementing health education and navigation activities.
- Employ multiple interventions for achieving population-level change in risk behavior and health outcomes.
- Address stigma: HIV, gender identity, sexual orientation, immigration status.
Key concept 2: Peer Education

- Understand how behavior is constructed.
- De-construct behaviors.
- Understanding behavior is influenced by: emotional strings, proximity, similarity, linkage/network.
- People tend to listen and better respond to information when it comes from a peer.
- Education between peers occurs when sharing similar age, culture, background, and social status.
- New narratives: dialogue, inclusion, motivation, share behaviors.
Our Peer-Based Model: Health Promoters

- Community-based approach to health promotion and disease prevention.
- Members of the same target population invited to use peer-education concepts to promote key messages to reduce health disparities.
- The objectives are:
  - Promote healthy life styles free of violence.
  - Advocate for a better quality of life.
  - Educate about chronic diseases and STI prevention.
  - Increase access to health care services.
System Navigation for HIV+

- La Clínica’s HIV continuum to care.
- Provides early support and full access to quality HIV services: treatment, medical case management, support services, and resources.
- HIV Care services could be in-house or other care referral services.
- Focused on newly diagnosed and re-engaged to care HIV positive Latinxs.
- It is the first step that engages clients in the care plan.
- Aimed to:
  - Improve health outcomes
  - Encourage healthy lifestyle choices
  - Prevent the transmission of HIV
Retention of HIV + Youth to Services: Steps

- Client follow-up every three months after entry into medical care, during the first year of treatment.
- Track and gather information about the process and experience within the first year of treatment, and as needed thereafter.
- Provide an additional layer of support through counseling and information about preventive practices for HIV-positive clients, including HIV-reinfection, prevention, lifestyles, and risk-reduction.
System Navigation for High Risk Negatives: Description

- La Clínica’s access and retention strategy to necessary referral support services associated with HIV prevention and health care.
- Focused on Latinx MSM and transgender women recent immigrants:
  - High-Risk HIV-Negative
  - Unknown HIV status
- Provides full access to quality referral services: medical, social support, and community resources.
- Cross-train recruitment staff as navigators.
- Trains health promoters as peer navigators.
- Steps: Recruitment, intake, initial assessment, navigation plan, needs reassessed, completion.
- Collaborates with medical care team.
- Uses HIV Navigation core elements.
## System Navigation for High Risk Negatives: Purpose

**Link and retain access to key support services:**

- Mental health
- Legal (immigration status adjustment, name change, passport)
- HIV/STD screening; PrEP, condoms
- HIV prevention interventions
- Education
- Primary medical care; Health insurance enrollment
- Hormone treatment
- Others: Employment, housing, substance use
- Leadership & community building

**Aims to improve:**

- Encourage healthy lifestyle choices, including better safe sex practices
- Increase access to care and referral support services
- Increase retention in care
- Increase self-sufficiency
- Reduce HIV incidence
- Reduce health disparities
- Reduce stigma related to sexual orientation, gender identity, HIV and immigration status
Best Practices for Working with Transgender Latinas

- Age is relative.
- Research development of interventions: There are no programs designed for transgender Latina immigrant women – only adaptations.
- Comprehensive, culturally and linguistically specific health care: Providing hormone therapy.
- Education and career advancement training.
- Mental health and substance use services.
- Legal rights and opportunities.
- Support groups and promoting transgender and Latina pride.
- Provide leadership opportunities and community involvement.
  - Advocacy and community education.
Best Practices for working with LGBTQ Latinx Young Adult Recent Immigrants

- Immigrant status is the barrier most often listed by clients as their number one impediment to seeking health services.
- Any retention strategy for HIV care has to consider navigation support for legal services to address these needs as part of the HIV retention efforts.
- Enhancing communication between support services and clinical team better serves the community.
- Recognize power imbalances between client and provider (age, sexual minority, immigration status, language).
- Identify client-centered health goals that meet the client where he/she is at: stages of change.
Best Practices for working with LGBTQ Latinx Young Adult Recent Immigrants, Cont’d

- Use preferred pronouns when talking with and referring to a client.
- Serve as a consistent support system for both high-risk HIV negative and HIV+ clients.
- Provide opportunities for community involvement.
- Be patient and unwilling to give up on your client.
- Provide and recommend opportunities for education and career advancement training and other opportunities for self-empowerment.