

Tri-County Batterer Intervention Provider Network Meeting Minutes January 8, 2019

Present: Matt Johnston (DVSD-Lutheran Community Services Northwest), Carrie Kirkpatrick (DCJ/ASD DV Unit), Guruseva Mason (Safety First), Jacquie Pancoast (Eastside Concern), Christopher Lundell (Castaneda Counseling), Linda Castaneda (Castaneda Counseling), Regina Holmes (ARMS), Jessica Harvey (Pacific University PsyD program), Chris Huffine (Allies in Change)

Minutes by Jessica Harvey, edited by Chris Huffine

Discussion Topics: Working with Latino Clients/Cultural Humility: How to Practice It

There are two separate but related topics for this meeting. The first is a discussion of particular issues in working with Latino clients. Linda Castaneda and Chris Lundell were major contributors to this discussion. Each has experience running both Spanish speaking and English speaking groups. Also while neither is Latino/Latina, each has extensive familiarity with the culture. Secondly, the group talked about ways of actively practicing cultural humility with every client.

Cultural considerations are vital to effective treatment and supervision of individuals. Specifically, with Latino clients, there are several things to be curious about when determining the best course of action. One important aspect to consider is the political and social climate in the area where the client would be receiving services. Some places have noticed a decrease in referrals lately due to the political climate in the United States. This tends to relate to how aggressively deportations are being pursued through ICE. When there has been more aggressive deportation the number of Latinos engaged in the system tends to decline related to a fear of deportation (e.g., less likely to contact law enforcement to report crimes, less likely to engage in services). When there have been less aggressive deportation practices (as occurred during Obama's presidency, particularly the latter half) the number of Latino clients has tended to be significantly higher.

There have also been issues with clients finding Spanish speaking services, as well as, services offered by Latino individuals, which might be a preference for some clients. For some clients, their first language is an indigenous language, therefore, Spanish may be their second language and English their third language. Service providers need to be aware of how their services might be affected when working with a client in a language that is not their first. For example, they may need more time to process the information that is being presented to them.

The cultural value of *machismo*, the idea that men are the protector and provider for a family (though there may be some differences in interpretation and asking about specific beliefs is important to understanding the client), can be central to Spanish and Portuguese speaking clients. There is some indication that certain definitions of domestic violence would be unfamiliar to

those who have grown up with the *machismo* culture. That is not to say they are more resistant, necessarily, to expanding their definition of domestic violence, but that they are likely to feel a greater sense of shame than clients born and raised with extensive exposure to the ideals of the United States once they learn about the full impact of domestic violence and how that can affect those around them. American born individuals can assume that *machismo* means that Latino men are more sexist than other individuals, however, research seems to indicate that this is not the case. Service providers can struggle with how to relate to the *machismo* value in clients. It may be helpful to focus on the positive aspects, such as being a “protector.” Focus can also be on religious affiliations like Catholicism and how Mary and motherhood are revered within Mexican culture.

Trauma informed care is vital to treatment due to the marginalized status of Latinos in the United States, the historical trauma of the Latino population (e.g., European colonization), the marginalization of indigenous populations both in their country of origin and in the United States, and the personal trauma some have experienced (e.g., crossing the border and encounters with drug cartels and other forms of organized crime). There is also a general lack of awareness about mental health concerns in men, including how to recognize a mental health problem and what to do about it. Drug and alcohol use seem to be a leading factor in men reoffending while in a domestic violence program. Possible reasons for drug and alcohol use include that those who are a part of a minority culture have a harder time meeting their basic needs due to various external problems like systemic oppression. The men can feel powerless when they are used to having power in the country in which they were born, therefore, they take control in some way by using substances. Latino men also have the stress of worrying about documentation issues (even Latinos who are citizens of the United States) in addition to the financial and occupational stress. However, Latino men generally have more social support than white men in the groups.

*Familismo*, strong loyalty to immediate and extended family, is another cultural value some Latino clients might have. This value can manifest in various ways. In rural parts of Mexico, some families will have strict guidelines for the roles of men and women that seem to directly conflict with the values taught in domestic violence groups, such as, a man must fight if he is insulted. Women may also comment on a man becoming more feminine when he begins implementing what he has learned in a group that appears to contradict expectations of masculinity. *Familismo* can also provide incentive for men to learn new ways to be better husbands and fathers. It could also create some separation in a group when a Latino man is working multiple jobs to support his children and men in a United States mindset are complaining about having to pay child support.

An obvious difference in culture between the group members in the group can create an environment where Latino men are more reluctant to share and open up. As mentioned above, Latino men may have multiple jobs due to a cultural “code of honor,” therefore, there is a greater

amount of fatigue and stress which can deteriorate their ability to learn in class or to implement the skills outside of class. Latino-specific groups seem to be more cohesive and have better group harmony than other groups and group harmony seems to be more important to them.

#### Suggestions for providers who are not offering culturally specific services for Latino clients

- The word “Latino” is not a word that is used by every Spanish-speaking individual to describe themselves. Other examples include Hispanic, Mexican (if from Mexico). A couple more gender neutral versions: Latinx and Latin@.
- Be curious, be careful to not make assumptions about differences or similarities.
- Ask questions to determine their level of acculturation (ability to navigate multiple cultures) or assimilation (be like us only).
- Do not assume that the only way to be non-abusive is to fully assimilate into the culture of the US. Frame domestic violence issues related to human rights instead of a cultural issue.
- Avoid arrogance about your own culture or putting down anyone’s country of origin.
- Be careful to not allow them to use their culture to justify abusive and controlling behaviors. Ongoing non coerced informed consent can be used in every culture to help sort out whether a behavior within that culture qualifies as abusive/coercive.
- Give positive alternatives to abusive and controlling behaviors and allow group members to brainstorm their own positive alternatives.
- Level of acculturation seems to be the best determinant when deciding if an individual should be placed in an English speaking or Spanish speaking group, as well as, their personal cultural identity.

#### Providers of Spanish Speaking services in the Portland Metro Area

- Bridges to Safety
- En Foque de La Familia
- Jacob Scoen is Spanish speaking PO in Multnomah County
- Puentes – Spanish division for mental health and D/A
- Catholic Charities’ El Programa Hispano Project UNICA
- LAZOS

#### Practicing Cultural Humility

Above all things, it is important for providers to have cultural humility. Cultural humility is the realization that it is impossible to “know” about every culture and that each individual may not adhere to the assumptions one makes about a culture to which an individual belongs. Lack of cultural humility can create situations where an individual is assumed to be defiant or ignorant when in reality, they are seeing things from a different perspective. Suggestions on how to practice cultural humility in groups:

- Encourage group members to talk about their culture

- Talk about the expectations put on them and how to handle them
- Explore different ways to explain concepts (verbal vs. written information)
- Have someone who was in a similar position help with navigation and concerns
- Be curious instead of presumptive
- Be aware of how often our brains automatically make assumptions without us realizing it (i.e., implicit bias)
- Educate yourself on how the brain works and how to retrain it
- Guard against assumptions based on implicit biases
- Keep intersectionality in mind and don't define someone by only one characteristic
- Allow yourself to be surprised
- "we" vs. "you" model – we are people and interacting/engaging with one another while still respecting the differences
- Attempt to understand people's experiences with oppression, historical trauma, privilege, and power

The legal system can be a large area of oppression for people, however, it is important to realize that the experiences of White, African American, and African individuals are all different. Gently encourage men in the group to also practice cultural humility.