

# Latino/Hispanic Perspectives on Disabilities

By

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## *Proyecto Prevención*

- ***Proyecto Prevención*** is funded by the National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities at the Center for Disease Control.
- 20 Focus groups are the primary data collection method as the first step in building and developing a state wide plan that targets the Latino/Hispanic population with disabilities in Utah.

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## Demographics

- The Latino/Hispanic population has recently become the largest ethnic group in the United States.
- As of 2003, the Latino/Hispanic population made up 13% of the nation population
- In Utah the Latino Hispanic population is approximately of 12.5%

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## Latino Hispanic Culture and Disability: a Different Approach

- The perception and the approach to disabilities by Latino/Hispanic individuals or families varies depending on factors such as the socio-economic status, country of origin and also living in a city vs. living in a rural area.
- Strong family bonds: a two sided coin.  
Being “taken care of” vs. becoming independent. Culturally it is the family’s duty to do so and, more often than not, the family can become overprotective.

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## Los Curanderos (Healers): The Alternative Health Care in Mexico

- There is a widespread belief in Mexico that when a rich person is ill, it is time to go to a doctor. When the rich person is desperately ill, it is the time to seek the help of a curandero (or healer). When the “regular person” is ill, the first alternative is to find a curandero. It is only when the “regular person” is desperately sick that it is time to go to a doctor.

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## Preliminary Findings

- From August to October 2005 we have conducted six focus groups.
- Five of those have been attended by adults that have a family member with a disability and one has been specifically for adults with a disability.
- Our average attendance by focus group has been of 9 families per meeting.
- All of the focus groups have been conducted in Spanish.
- A Spanish native speaker assistant has been collaborating in each meeting as a note-taker.
- A meal has been provided in each meeting as well as a \$25.00 gift certificate.
- Among the findings there have been issues that, not only affect the Latino/Hispanic population, but also the people with disabilities as a whole. However, the most significant issues affecting the Latino/Hispanic population are the following:
  1. Language Barrier
  2. Cultural Understanding
  3. Eager to Talk/Support Groups
  4. Legal Documentation Doesn't Equate More/Better Services
  5. Not aggressively claiming their rights

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## Family Quotes

- "I brought my family from California to Utah to live in a safer place, but I left behind many services that were offered to my child in Spanish that are non-existent here"
- "Some times is not about English, but it is about understanding how we feel as parents coming from another culture"
- "There is no better doctor than Mom"
- "We have learned, through experience, to become the experts on our Childs' disabilities"
- "We need more information available in Spanish. It is difficult enough to understand medical terminology in our own language, imagine to understand it in English"
- "If I go back to Peru, I'd died"
- "Could you tell people (service providers) the importance of having someone, not only bilingual, but bicultural"
- "To me, my son is normal, I don't care what others think"
- "I am so fortunate to have my two sons at home. It is so dangerous nowadays to have them exposed to drugs and other things. At least I know they are safe at home"
- "If I would have the ability to take the disability away from my child and pass it to me, I would do it without a doubt"

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## Partnerships Established

- Utah Disability Law Center
- Utah Governor's Council for People with Disabilities
- Division of Services for People with Disabilities
- Americorps and Independent Living Centers in Utah
- Bear River Health Department
- Central Utah Center for Independent Living

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## Partnerships Established (Continued)

- Mexican Consulate in Salt Lake City
- Department of Community and Culture, Office of Ethnic Affairs
- South Main Clinic. A Clinic that provides medical services to a large population of Hispanics in the Salt Lake City area
- Sorensen Multicultural Center
- Centro de la Familia de Utah
- Comunidades Unidas (Communities United)
- Utah Department of Health, Ethnic Health Advisory Committee
- Hispanic Chapter of the Utah Family to Family Network
- Utah Hispanic Network

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## Strategies for Reaching Out to the Latino/Hispanic Population

### **Main Barrier:**

- The absence of networking, collaboration, and communication has further hindered the attempt to provide service to improve the implementation of programs for the Latino/Hispanic population.

### **Proposed Strategies:**

- It is imperative to build a network system with an aggressive outreach program to provide information to families in reference to programs and opportunities available to them in the community.
- Agencies must make a concerted effort to integrate bilingual/bicultural professionals into their staff.
- It is important to be in touch with the norms and cultural values of the population being served.

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## Strategies for Reaching Out to the Latino/Hispanic Population (Continued)

- Latino/Hispanic organized groups working together
- Exploring and establishing a working relationship with organizations already in existence outside the Latino/Hispanic community
- Communication. Open and clear communication is essential when dealing with sensitive and diverse issues
- Role Models. Collaborating with Hispanic individuals that are/or have been recipients of services and have achieved their goals successfully, can serve as a source of inspiration to others

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## Contact Information

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