

Working Together to End Abuse in Later Life in Latino Communities

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Presentation Objectives

- Provide an overview of changing demographics
- Promote a human rights/social change framework for addressing domestic violence
- Address the importance of cross-cultural understanding and the utilization of community strengths
- Support the development of Culturally Proficient programs and organizations
- Encourage Community Engagement Initiatives

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Casa de Esperanza's Philosophy

- Our starting point in supporting Latinas and our communities is their **strength**; we assist them to recognize their strengths, build on them and reach their goals.
- Effective responses to domestic violence are shaped by the **lived realities of Latinas** and facilitate support systems “where they live.”
- It is the **community** that will end domestic violence, not Casa de Esperanza or any other system or organization.

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Latin@s in the United States

- Approximately 50.5 million Latin@s living in the U.S. (16.3% population) (2010 U.S. Census)
- Heterogeneous group embracing varied histories, socio-economic backgrounds, and cultural and linguistic subtleties from 22 countries of origin
- Approximately 40% of Latin@s in U.S. are foreign born; 60% were born in the U.S.
- Many families have mixed levels of acculturation and English language proficiency

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Demographic Trends for Older Adults

- Latino population aged 65 and older approx. 2.7 million people (2010 Census)
 - comprising approximately 7% of the older population
- The number of older adults in U.S. is expected to double between 2005 – 2030 (Institute of Medicine, 2008)
 - Virtually unmentioned is the shifting ethnic composition of the nation's older adults
- Between 2008-2030 the Latino population aged 65 years and older will **increase by 224%**; compared to 65% increase for non-Hispanic white population aged 65 and older (AOA 2009)
- By 2050, the percentage of the older population that is Hispanic is projected to increase to nearly 20%. (AOA)

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Creating a Comprehensive Framework

Fundamental guidelines:

- ❖ Elder abuse violates the human rights of survivors by creating unsafe & fearful environments
- ❖ Their safety must be central to any work we do
- ❖ Safety is unattainable unless we practice cultural and linguistic competency consistently at the organizational and individual level

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Barriers to Seeking Help

- Lack of knowledge and misinformation about the U.S. legal system
- Fears of the Police and Judicial System, of Deportation, of social services and child welfare or adult protective services agencies, etc..
- Linguistic and Cultural barriers
- Economic challenges
- Isolation from family and community
- Anti-immigrant sentiment/Racism
- Others...

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Heightened Risk Factors

- Increased risk for elder abuse is generally associated with higher levels of physical, economic, and emotional dependence
- Census data reveals a much higher level of dependency among Hispanic older adults
 - percentage of Hispanic older adults living with other relatives is about twice that of the total older population
 - In particular, foreign-born Latino/Latina elders can be highly dependent on relatives because of economic and cultural factors, including lack of access to social security or other pensions, as well as language barriers

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Heightened Risk Factors

- The poverty rate in 2008 for Hispanic older persons (65 and older) was 19.3%; more than twice the percent for non-Hispanic Whites (7.6%)
- Latin@ older adults have lower rates of health insurance coverage
- After years of hard labor, many do not have the stamina to work longer, but are unable to access retirement or health benefits due to immigration status
- Anti-immigrant sentiment has a negative impact since elders who experience medical needs or want to report abuse or neglect may choose to remain silent to avoid exposure to legal or immigration systems.
 - Even if they have legal status, may fear exposing family member

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Potential Forms of Immigration Relief for Victims of Violence

- VAWA Self-Petition
 - If subjected to battery or extreme cruelty
 - By a Spouse who is a U.S. Citizen or Lawful Permanent Resident to whom legally married; or
 - By adult son or daughter (over age 21) who is a U.S. Citizen
- U-Visa
 - If suffered substantial physical or mental abuse; and
 - Is willing to cooperate with a government official/law in the investigation or prosecution of the abuse
 - Does not need to be related to abuser and immigration status of abuser not relevant

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Barriers to Services

- “A significant body of research has found that Latin@ older adults are less likely to access services from mainstream service providers because many agencies are not culturally sensitive and do not have Spanish-speaking employees or materials”

(Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2007; Hispanics in Philanthropy Report, 2011)

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Limited English Proficiency

- Limited English proficiency is a significant risk factor for elder abuse:
 - leads to more social isolation and dependence
 - limits the type of social support networks these individuals are able to establish
 - significantly reduces access to services and systems intended to assist older adults

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Language Barriers to Accessing Aging Services

- Study conducted with 24 randomly selected federally-funded Area Agencies on Aging (AAA), the primary agencies intended to serve as a resource for those seeking aging services:
 - 87% were unable to serve a Spanish-speaking client upon first contact
 - Only 13% had representatives who were proficient in Spanish
 - More than half did not have Spanish hardcopies of their resources or Spanish translations on their websites

(See: “The Latino Age Wave: What Changing Ethnic Demographics Mean for the Future of Aging in the United States”, Hispanics in Philanthropy (Feb. 2011))

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“Meaningful Access”

In order for access to services to be **“meaningful access,”** it is necessary to ensure language access for individuals with Limited English Proficiency (**LEP**)

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Language Access Issues

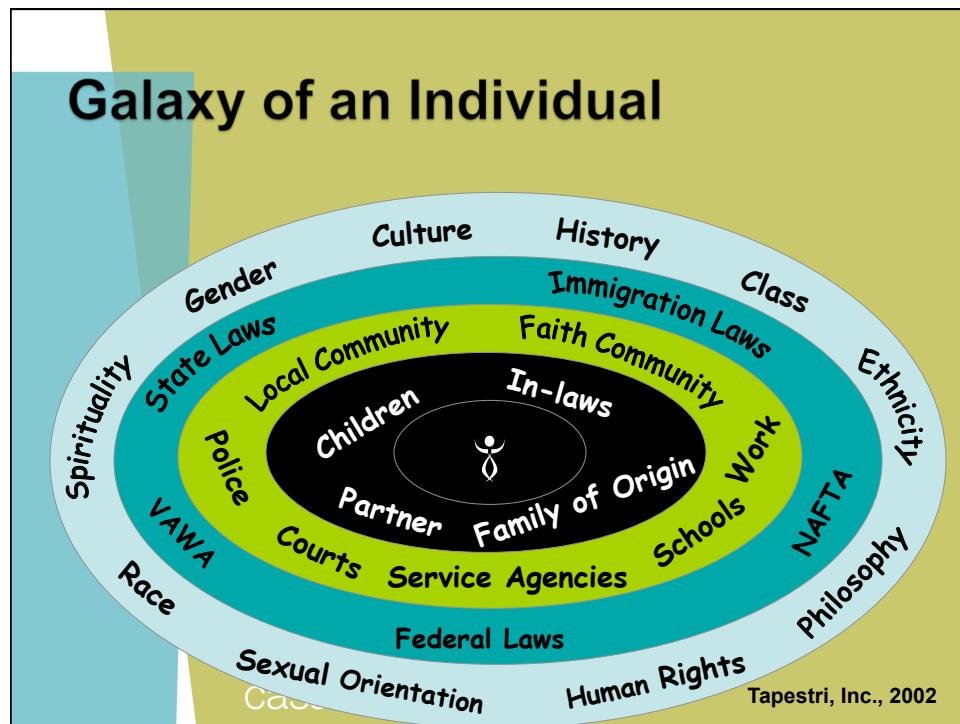
- Ensuring “Meaningful Access” to those with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) is required under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act
- Recipients of Federal funds are not allowed to discriminate based on race, color, or national origin
- Protection against national origin discrimination includes persons with limited English proficiency (Executive Order 13166, Aug. 2000)

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What about Culture?

- Multidimensional and dynamic
- Each culture, while confronting numerous challenges, also has multiple strengths
- Cultural groups often lend vital support and aid to group members, enabling individuals to experience a sense of coherence and belonging
- “One size” does not fit all in service provision

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Cultural Lens

- Cultural context gives Latinas a “cultural lens” through which they see the world.
- The lens informs their successes, challenges, goals, and needs.
- Often placing priority on **family, community, and religion**, the lens affects how Latinas understand their personal situations and make decisions.
- Cultural context and lens often shape the type of support, advocacy, and services that a Latina seeks as well as the choices that she makes.
- Cultural strengths, such as *familismo, colectivismo*, and respect for elders must be harnessed as protective factors in prevention and intervention programs aimed at eliminating elder abuse in Latino communities

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Cultural Proficiency

- A more proactive state where cultural knowledge and skills are continually sought, integrated, and utilized by individuals and institutions
- To promote cross cultural understanding, service innovation, and excellence

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Creating a Comprehensive Framework

- In creating relevant & effective programs & interventions:
 - Culture is central to effective interventions
 - Culture must never be used to condone violence
 - Survivor's experiences & voices must guide our work
 - Be open to innovation – thinking outside the box of mainstream standards

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Cultural Proficiency at the Organizational Level

- The incorporation of fundamental human rights principles such as **respect**, **dignity** and **self determination** as part of the organization's stated mission, vision and values;
- The adoption of intentional, purposeful practices to eliminate institutional racism and oppression as well as other barriers to services;
- A commitment to building egalitarian organizational practices, including input from constituents/clients.

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Community Engagement

- True Partnerships and collaborations with community-based organizations representing marginalized groups
- Making room for new models of how to do the work
- Developing leadership in the community

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Community Engagement (Cont'd)

- Community accountability for working to end domestic violence:
- Engaging men as allies to end domestic violence
- Utilizing cultural and community strengths
- Sharing resources and providing space at the table

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Recommendations

- Ensure that all organizations that receive federal funding (including federal, state, local and non-profit organizations) provide "meaningful access" to individuals with Limited English Proficiency (LEP), pursuant to Title VI of the Civil Rights Act
- Recruit and train qualified bilingual and bicultural Adult Protective System and law enforcement staff to provide needed services, as well as for Area Agencies on Aging and other service providers
- Support culturally and linguistically specific community outreach efforts to help reach those older Latinos/Latinas who face social and linguistic isolation and to raise community awareness of the problems of elder abuse as well as the services and protections available.

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- Encourage the development of coordinated community responses at the local level that include the voices and participation of ethnically diverse communities and other underserved populations.
- Engage all community stakeholders, including faith-based organizations and culturally and linguistically specific community based organizations, since Latino/Latina elder victims of abuse are more likely to trust and seek help from these institutions first and find them more accessible. Offer training and technical assistance to assist these diverse stakeholder groups.
- Ensure that federal financial resources intended to support community outreach and prevention initiatives, as well as services and training are also targeted to reach ethnically diverse communities and the community-based or culturally and linguistically specific organizations experienced in effectively working with these populations.

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- Ensure that programs such as Adult Protective Services, Meals on Wheels, domestic violence shelters and transitional housing programs, and other such federally-funded programs that have been deemed critical for life or safety, continue to be accessible to all in need of such services regardless of immigration status, and that service providers are in compliance
- Support culturally and linguistically competent research on elder abuse issues, focused on the Latin@ population and other racial and ethnically diverse communities

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The future well-being of this nation is dependent on:

- ❖ Our ability to embrace diversity,
- ❖ Enhance cross-cultural understanding,
- ❖ Help each individual to realize his/her own potential, and
- ❖ Build a more just, non-violent society that vigorously protects the human rights of all individuals

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