

Latinx Experiences Accessing Health Care



Advancing Health Equity

Health equity is realized when each individual has a fair opportunity to achieve their full health potential, regardless of their social, economic, demographic or other differences (World Health Organization, 2017). Reducing health inequities or disparities requires ensuring equity in access, treatments, and outcomes. **Latinx patients who have a Latinx physician who speaks their language are more likely to use needed health services** and report better patient satisfaction, but only 5% of physicians in California are Latinx (California Health Care Foundation Health Care Almanac, 2019). In California, **Latinx were more likely to report being in fair/poor health**; one in five did not have a usual source of care, and one in six reported difficulties finding a specialist (California Health Interview Survey, 2019). Community stories highlight stark disparities and fundamental barriers in accessing care. The key findings and recommendations from community focus groups can address disparities and improve health care quality for all Californians.



Improving access to care

- Latinx patients shared how difficult it is to make appointments, particularly in their own language.
- Patients in rural communities face additional barriers to accessing care, including transportation and fears about deportation.

“The clinic where I go has transportation but you have to make an appointment on time to access it...some of the patients...ask me for a ride. They are Mixteco or the elderly. They don’t like to travel very far for fear of getting pulled over by the police.”

“I feel like I am treated differently because I don’t speak English and sometimes I have to really advocate to get appointments when I need them...it upsets me that the treatment does not seem fair.”

– Focus group participant

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Improve access to culturally responsive, Spanish-speaking providers.**
- **Increase health care access in rural areas.**



Improving experiences with providers

- Latinx participants expressed frustration about the lack of up-to-date information in health plan materials (provider directories are inaccurate) and the uneven quality of interpretation, *“where I go everyone speaks Spanish but the doctor. There are medical assistants and nurses. It’s better if we use an interpreter.”*
- None of the participants were ever informed of their rights to interpretation even though they are not fluent in English. *“My language is Spanish and I always speak Spanish, but they never offered me an interpreter.”*
- Patients also expressed frustration by the lack of cultural competency of their health care providers, *“One time I went to the clinic when I was sick and the first thing they asked me was for an ID and my social security. I was really hurt. I was really sick. They only cared about my status and how I was going to pay.”*

“Some providers are completely disconnected from their communities. Sometimes they just say, eat healthy but they don’t realize that it is expensive. The health care system in the U.S. is not accessible to poor families in the U.S.”

– Focus group participant

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Improve the accuracy of provider directories and notification of patient’s rights.**
- **Provide training to health care providers in patient- and family-centered care, cultural competency, implicit bias, and trauma-informed care.**

METHODOLOGY

CPEHN and the Latino Coalition for a Healthy California (LCHC) partnered in 2019 to learn more about the experiences of Latinx individuals and caregivers in accessing quality, culturally and linguistically appropriate care. LCHC recruited Latinx community members living in the Central California and San Diego regions. Participants had health coverage, used or had a family member who had used health care in the past year, were over 18 years old, self-identified as Latinx, and were available to participate at the designated time and place of the focus groups.

California Pan-Ethnic Health Network - www.cpehn.org

Latino Coalition for a Healthy California - www.lchc.org

Supported by the California Health Care Foundation (CHCF), which works to ensure that people have access to the care they need, when they need it, at a price they can afford - www.chcf.org

Designed by Research Action Design - www.rad.cat