



HISPANIC DIRECTORS ASSOCIATION
of NEW JERSEY

Building Bridges to a Better Life

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**Hispanic Directors Association Issues
Report on Mental Health for Latinos
Noting Few Improvements in State System**

For Immediate Release: December 18, 2006

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Mental health services in New Jersey for the Latino community are still inadequate, culturally insensitive and show little improvement from 15 months ago when a panel of experts first issued a report on the subject, according to a report released today by the Hispanic Directors Association of New Jersey (HDANJ). The New Jersey Mental Health Institute collaborated in the effort. The report is a follow-up to our previous report released in September 2005, both of which can be found on our website www.hdanj.org.

The report entitled: “Latino Mental Health – One Year Later: Creeping towards Progress” found the state addressed a few issues such as the establishment of a Council on Mental Health Stigma and appointed several Latino members to the body. Also, on the positive side the state allocated an additional \$900,000 to hire bilingual clinicians, bringing the total for this area to \$1.9 million.

“However, in many areas dealing with the Latino community there was little or no progress,” the report concluded. The report also found that there are no Latinos with any policy-making role in the Division of Mental Health Services or sitting on many of the state’s professional licensing boards.

“We promised to remain engaged in monitoring mental health programs for Latinos in New Jersey and that is why we reconvened our Mental Health Roundtable earlier this year,” said Elsa Candelario, Chairwoman of HDANJ. “We will continue to meet with state officials to push for greater reform of the state system to make sure it is responsive to the specific needs of Latinos.”

“We cannot say we are overly pleased with the progress thus far,” Candelario concluded.

“Although we appreciate the state and the Division of Mental Health Services’ efforts to date, we strongly believe that much more is needed in order to ensure a mental health service delivery system that not only promotes, but provides high-quality, culturally and linguistically appropriate mental health services for all Hispanics”, added Henry Acosta, Executive Director of

the newly formed National Resource Center for Hispanic Mental Health and Deputy Director of the New Jersey Mental Health Institute, Inc.

The panel, which consisted of experts in all aspects of the mental health system, made the following 11 recommendations:

***** The establishment of an Office of Cultural and Linguistic Competency within the Governor's Office.**

***** Funding for the development and implementation of several targeted public education and media campaigns geared to the Latino population.**

***** The hiring and appointment of Latinos to policy and regulatory positions at all levels of the mental health system.**

***** The allocation of \$1 million to expand outpatient services in Spanish.**

***** Every county mental health screening center in New Jersey should be required to have, at minimum, one bilingual, bicultural mental health screener on call, 24 hours a day.**

***** The establishment of a \$1 million scholarship program for students interested in pursuing mental health careers.**

***** A minimum of 1000 units mental health housing units be set aside for Spanish-speaking mental health consumers.**

***** Disgracefully low reimbursement rates for free standing clinics must be adjusted so that services can be provided in the community rather than a more costly hospital setting.**

***** The establishment of a one-year provisional bilingual license for social workers, psychologists and psychiatrists.**

***** A better statewide effort at data collection regarding services provided to mental health consumers.**

***** The New Jersey Department of Human Services needs to clarify the impact of the federal Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 on mental health services.**

The members of the Mental Health Roundtable were Henry Acosta, MA, MSW, LSW Executive Director of the National Resource Center for Hispanic Mental Health and Deputy Director of the New Jersey Mental Health Institute, Inc., Elsa Candelario, Executive Director of the Hispanic Family Center of Southern NJ, Beatriz Cruz, Director of the Director of Behavioral Health Inpatient Services at Jersey City Medical Center, Reverend Nidia E. Fernández, Chair of the Multicultural Services Committee at Ancora Psychiatric Hospital, Marcello Gómez, President and CEO of Best Practices for Children and Families, Miguel Koschil, Executive Director of the Sunrise Institute for Mental Health, Glicería Perez of the Puerto Rican Action Board, Daniel Santo Pietro, Executive Director of the Hispanic Directors Association, Martha Silva, Director of National Association for the Mentally Ill en Español in New Jersey, Frank R. Solano, Program Director of the Puerto Rican Family Institute – Jersey City Mental Health Clinic, William A. Vega, Director of the Behavioral Health Research and Training Institute for UBHC at UMDNJ.