



FREEDOM FROM SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Colorado Latinx Leadership Network Project Summary and Key Lessons

The Colorado Latinx¹ Leadership Network (CLLN) was created to provide professional development opportunities and support to bilingual/bicultural Latinx advocates. Often there may only be one bilingual/bicultural Latinx staff person within mainstream sexual assault and domestic violence service organizations, which can lead to isolation and burn out. This project allowed CCASA to explore ways of creating networking, learning, and skill-building opportunities for Latinx advocates, with the intent of reducing staff turnover and, thereby, strengthening and increasing access to culturally relevant services for Latinx survivors of sexual violence in Colorado.

History of Work in Colorado and Need for the Project

In 2007, Arte Sana, a national organization that provides training and technical assistance related to sexual assault in the Latinx community, issued a position statement addressing the shortage of culturally competent Latinx victim advocates nationally due to factors such as less access to leadership roles, overextension, lack of validation, and tokenism, which have contributed to high rates of turnover. They called upon the anti-sexual violence field to develop efforts to support the retention of Latinx victim advocates and the development of culturally competent and linguistically appropriate programs and materials. Additionally, Arte Sana recognized the key role that state coalitions play in providing training and technical assistance to those who work directly with victims.²

In 2012, CCASA conducted a survey of our membership to assess needs regarding issues of diversity and inclusiveness. The most frequently identified challenge was outreach and services to Latinx survivors of sexual violence who speak Spanish and have limited English proficiency. In order to learn more, CCASA then reached out to bilingual advocates to conduct in-depth interviews. These interviews confirmed the need for CCASA to focus more attention and resources on supporting programs in their efforts to reach and effectively assist this population.

CCASA was also a project partner on a 2013-2016 Rural Grant from the U.S. Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women, which was awarded to Violence Free Colorado (VFC; formerly the Colorado Coalition Against Domestic Violence) for their Latin@ Outreach Project (LOP). This project supported a local coordinator at three rural project sites to develop and implement culturally specific outreach and services. Additionally, through the LOP, project partners were able to host the first Colorado Latin@ Leadership Summit in 2016.

¹ Latinx is a gender neutral term used to refer to individuals who are Hispanic/Latino/a.

² http://www.arte-sana.com/lva_position_statement_2007.pdf

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In considering next steps for that project, CCASA and VFC, along with the local project coordinators, conducted a critical analysis of the LOP, examining its progress, impact, viability, and overall effectiveness. The conclusion was that the project was extremely relevant and valuable but, to be fully comprehensive and effective, services for Latinx survivors must be accompanied by two additional components: one addressing the support and development of Latinx staff, and the other addressing organizational and community readiness for culturally appropriate programs and services. These two additional components are vital for ensuring that the work is effective and sustainable, and that appropriate services exist should a survivor seek support and services.

Summary of Project Activities

The CLLN was a year-long program designed to address the first identified need (support and development of Latinx staff). Through the CLLN, participants received training and support via monthly web/phone meetings, three in-person meetings, and one-on-one mentorship with CCASA staff or another Latinx advocate. Training topics included: leadership, management skills, organizational communication skills, program development and evaluation, community outreach, financial and grant management, human resources, and self-care. The program also provided the opportunity for participants to network with other Latinx advocates so they could exchange ideas, challenges, solutions, and more, in a safe and supportive space.

15 Latinx advocates were selected to participate in the CLLN through an application process that screened for appropriateness and asked several questions to explore their needs and what they hoped to gain from participating in the program. The project also supported a one-day statewide Latinx Leadership Summit in March 2018, which was attended by 34 Latinx advocates from throughout Colorado, as well as the development of an on-line training module, presented in Spanish, for sexual assault advocates that covers basic sexual assault advocacy concepts and information specific to Latinx communities.

Successes

- 14 of the 15 participants completed the year-long CLLN cohort.
- CLLN participants were able to put into practice many of the skills that they gained, such as:
 - providing testimony on policies at a local and state level,
 - providing radio interviews to talk about sexual violence in Spanish, and
 - moving to higher/better job positions.

Feedback from the CLLN participants was overwhelmingly positive. Comments on the final evaluation included:

- No tengo palabra para dar las gracias por apoyo, consejo y animo; de verdad. Gracias! (I don't have the words to thank you for the support, advice and encouragement; truly. Thank you!)

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- Thank you! This experience has been amazing and I'm very grateful for being able to be a part of it.
- Thank you so much for taking the time to teach us and empower us. This has been one of the most beautiful experiences EVER!!!
- I think sometimes it is hard to remember how great we are because of the challenges we face on a day to day basis but coming here is a destressor and beautiful time with everyone.
- I really needed to be here! Everything that we learned was really on point and I loved it! Thank you for this opportunity.

Evaluations from the Summit also demonstrate the need for and benefit of the project:

- Out of excellent, good, satisfactory, fair, or poor:
 - Participants rated the quality of information provided as 85% excellent and 5% good.
 - Participants rated the usefulness of information as 81% excellent and 9% good.
- Out of all, most, some, or none of the information being new to them, 34% of participants indicated all, 28% indicated most, and 38% indicated some.

Comments from Summit participants included:

- Awesome training
- I can only say wow! I was not expecting this. This information was wonderful!
- This training was amazing. I want to stay connected with this Latin@ leadership program.
- Good information & resources for our Latin community.
- As always the presentation & information are well prepared and a great resource.
- Thank you so much. It has been very engaging and great! Powerful!
- Thank you for bringing all these wonderful women who look like me and speak like me together. Having these spaces to network and spend time with other Latinas are life changing and give me the strength (fuel) to keep going.
- Would love more opportunities to network with other Latinx people.
- I will recommend this training to others.

Challenges

Although we hosted an initial call with participants and their manager/supervisor in order to explain the program and anticipated time commitment, one of the biggest challenges was that **participants were not allowed enough, or any, time during their regular work hours to participate in the program.** This was reflected in both participants' ability to attend regularly scheduled meetings as well as to engage in self-learning and personalized activities. We have identified two strategies that may address this challenge: 1) we will require participants' manager/supervisor to sign off on the initial application and certify that they understand and will support their staff person in committing the necessary time for project activities as part of their regular work hours, and 2) we plan to develop better strategies for communicating with,

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as well as programming to support, managers/supervisors to complement the CLLN, which we hope will help organizational leaders see the value of their staff's participation in the program for their organization as a whole.

Another challenge was related to **developing the program as it was occurring**. In order to be responsive to the needs and interests of participants, and because this was the first time CCASA had offered this program, we did not want to have all of the topics developed and scheduled in advance. However, this proved to be a challenge both in identifying resources to address identified topics and in scheduling with outside contractors/consultants to provide training, which sometime resulted in changing meeting dates. Now that we have run the program once and have some existing materials, we believe it will be easier to have some predetermined topics, while still allowing for some customization for future cohorts' needs and interests.

Key Lessons

1. As mentioned previously, a third component of this work that was identified as a need for success is to **address organizational and community readiness for culturally relevant programs and services**. Due to our own internal capacity issues, we were only able to host two calls with participants' managers/supervisors, one at the very beginning of the program to explain the program, and one midway through the program to discuss successes and challenges they were experiencing related to their services for Latinx survivors. We also provided them with several resources, including:
 - *Dismantling Racism Wheel and Perpetuating Racism Wheel* by the Virginia Sexual & Domestic Violence Action Alliance
 - *Racial Justice Assessment Tool* by Western States Center
 - *Supporting Multilingual and Bicultural Rural Advocates* by the Resource Sharing Project

However, we feel the lack of support for and engagement with managers/supervisors fed into the challenges we experienced regarding participants' time for program activities as well as participants' overall experiences of job satisfaction. Our intention is to develop programming for managers/supervisors to complement the CLLN, including at least a quarterly call as well as an individualized technical assistance plan, which we hope will help them understand the value of participation in program activities and increase their organization's understanding of and capacity for providing culturally relevant services.

2. Similar to building capacity for and sustainability of culturally relevant services within participants' organizations, we must also **build capacity and sustainability within our own organization**. Although we only had one bilingual/bicultural staff person at the time to develop and implement the program (CCASA's Director of Programs), we ensured that she had support from another staff person who provided logistical support. Additionally, most, if not all, of the CCASA staff attended the in-person meetings. However, it should be noted that CCASA staff who did not identify as Latinx stepped out of meetings when participants

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requested time for themselves to develop relationships amongst cohort members and discuss issues in a safe space.

Furthermore, anticipating the potential burden on just one CCASA staff member for developing and implementing a program like this, we identified a partner who had participated in our organization's inclusiveness/anti-oppression work for many years, who agreed to serve as a co-facilitator for the CLLN meetings. Other CCASA staff also provided training and one-on-one technical assistance to participants on topics within their area of expertise. Additionally, we worked with several experts who we contracted with to provide some of the training.

Finally, CCASA's Executive Director supported the Director of Programs in identifying needs related to organizational support for participants and strategizing solutions for addressing those needs, such as providing the call for managers/supervisors midway through the program and individual outreach to managers/supervisors to check-in and offer technical assistance. We also continued to do our own internal work to build our staff's understanding of and ability to engage in anti-oppressive and culturally responsive work.

"The training has helped me grow as an advocate and colleague for my work at [organization], as well as my personal life." – CLLN participant

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