



INFORMATION

...foundation for good policy

September 21, 2001

The Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services A Healthcare Service Agency

John G. Rowland
Governor

Overcoming Barriers to Treatment for Hispanics

Thomas A. Kirk Jr., Ph.D.
Commissioner

One of DMHAS' four major strategic goals is to **"provide culturally competent and integrated mental health and substance abuse services** to persons whose needs are...not being well met..." The Connecticut Mental Health Center (CMHC), a joint endeavor of DMHAS and the Yale University School of Medicine, has recently initiated two projects to address some of the problems which undermine behavioral health treatment for Hispanic clients.

A **research project** at CMHC, led by Esperanza Diaz, M.D., is looking at the many facets of Hispanic attitudes and help-seeking behavior that can impede treatment.

Early findings compared Hispanics treated at a "culturally sensitive" Hispanic Clinic vs. those treated in a mainstream facility. Those at the Hispanic Clinic were more likely to be female, married, less educated, and more in need of help to obtain health and community services. They also had much more difficulty managing their medications.

A hurdle in the project has been to develop culturally appropriate and statistically reliable research questionnaires in Spanish. This accomplished, the project is now collecting data to reveal the subtle issues that affect mental health treatment for Hispanics.

A constellation of barriers deters minorities from reaching treatment. Many of these barriers operate for all Americans: cost, fragmentation of services, lack of availability of services, and societal stigma toward mental illness. But additional barriers deter racial and ethnic minorities: mistrust and fear of treatment, racism and discrimination, and differences in language and communication.

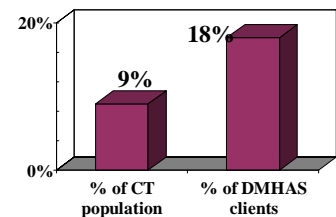
*U.S. Surgeon General's Report – August 2001
Mental Health: Culture, Race & Ethnicity*

CMHC is hosting a statewide, **free-of-charge conference** *Aprendamos de Problemas Emocionales y Adicciones* on October 6th. The conference will be **conducted in Spanish** and is jointly sponsored by CMHC, DMHAS, Yale's Department of Psychiatry, the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill - Connecticut, Yale Mental Health Education Program, and the Albert E. Kent Fund.

The purpose of the conference is to educate Spanish speaking consumers and providers about behavioral health disorders as diseases of the brain, and to present current treatments and research.

Spanish speaking research psychiatrists/scientists will present advances in neurobiology; and panels of clinicians will discuss how to recognize mental illness and seek appropriate treatment. A report based on the presentations will discuss gaps in services and cost considerations for Hispanics and will identify ways to improve accessibility.

Use of DMHAS Services
by Hispanic Clients
FY2001



Aprendamos de Problemas Emocionales y Adicciones

Saturday, October 6th

8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Hill Regional Career High School

140 Legion Avenue, New Haven

The Conference is Free of Charge & Open to All

For info contact **Clinica Hispana, CMHC**

203-789-7812.