



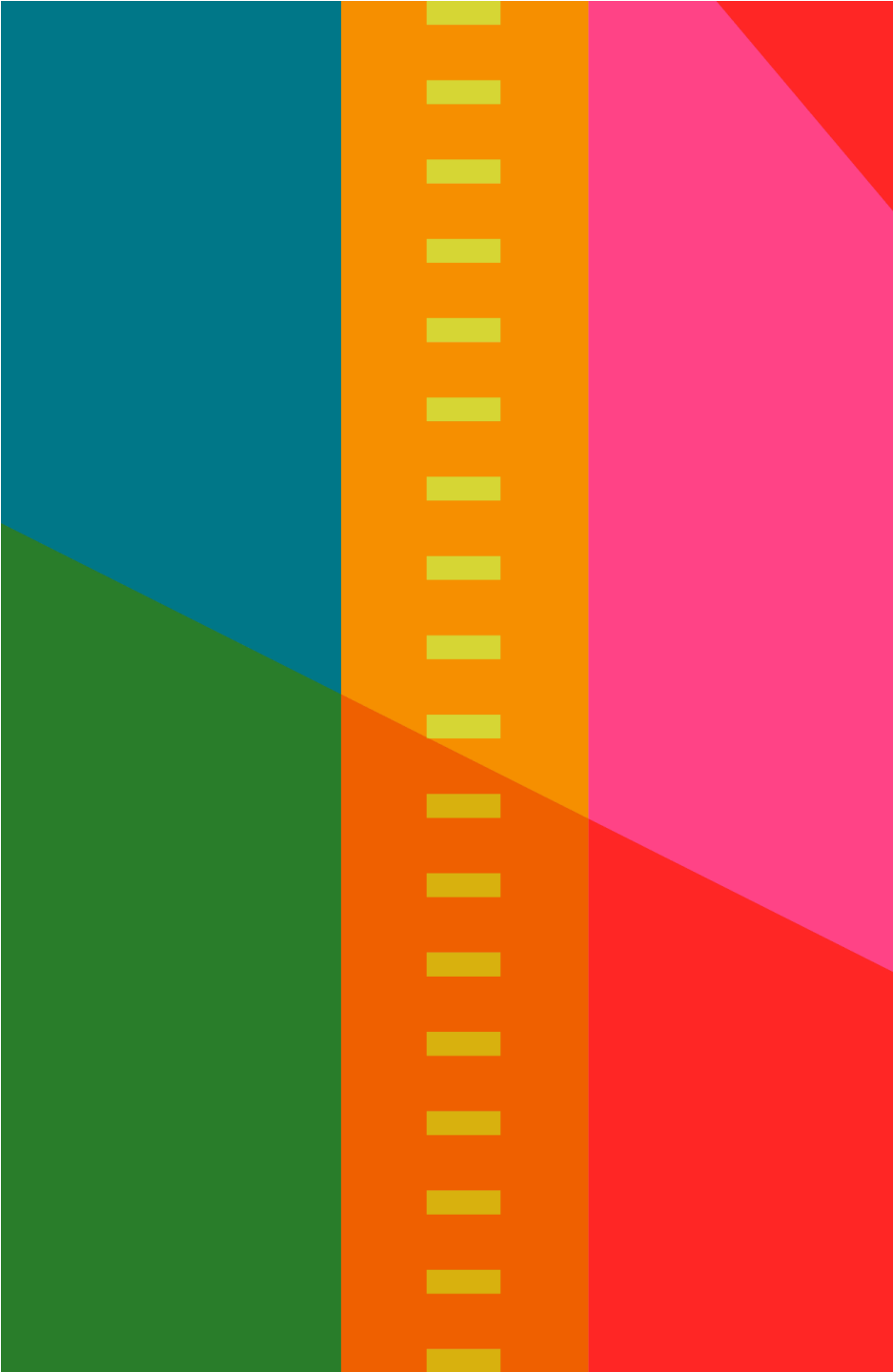
Bridging Cultures:

Adolescents and the Path to Acculturation

Raquel Gutierrez, LCSW
Mariana Cazares Rodriguez, LMHC



La Clinica de Familia
Your Provider of Choice



Who Are We?

Mariana Cazares Rodriguez, LMHC

Raquel Gutierrez, LCSW

La Clinica de Familia

Our Mission

LCDF empowers and enriches families, individuals and communities by providing quality medical, dental, behavioral health and educational services for people of all cultures.



La Clinica de Familia History



The history of La Clinica started in Las Cruces, NM as a Migrant Health initiative. What was 5 employees and 800 sq/ft office space, has expanded significantly since 1976. Our services today include:

- Medical
- Dental
- Women's Health
- Pediatrics
- Behavioral Health
- Early Head Start
- Chronic Care Management
- School-Based Clinics

Our School-Based Clinics: Direct Support in the Educational Setting

LCDF School Health Centers

At our School-Based clinics, students receive medical care, mental health support, and psychoeducational groups without leaving school. Clinic's model include a Customer Service Representative, Medical Provider, Medical Assistant, and Integrated Behavioral Health Provider.

This reduces barriers such as transportation, language, and time, promoting their holistic well-being.

LCDF has locations at :

- 10 High Schools
- 2 Middle Schools
- 9 Spoke-Sites at Elementaries



Our Community

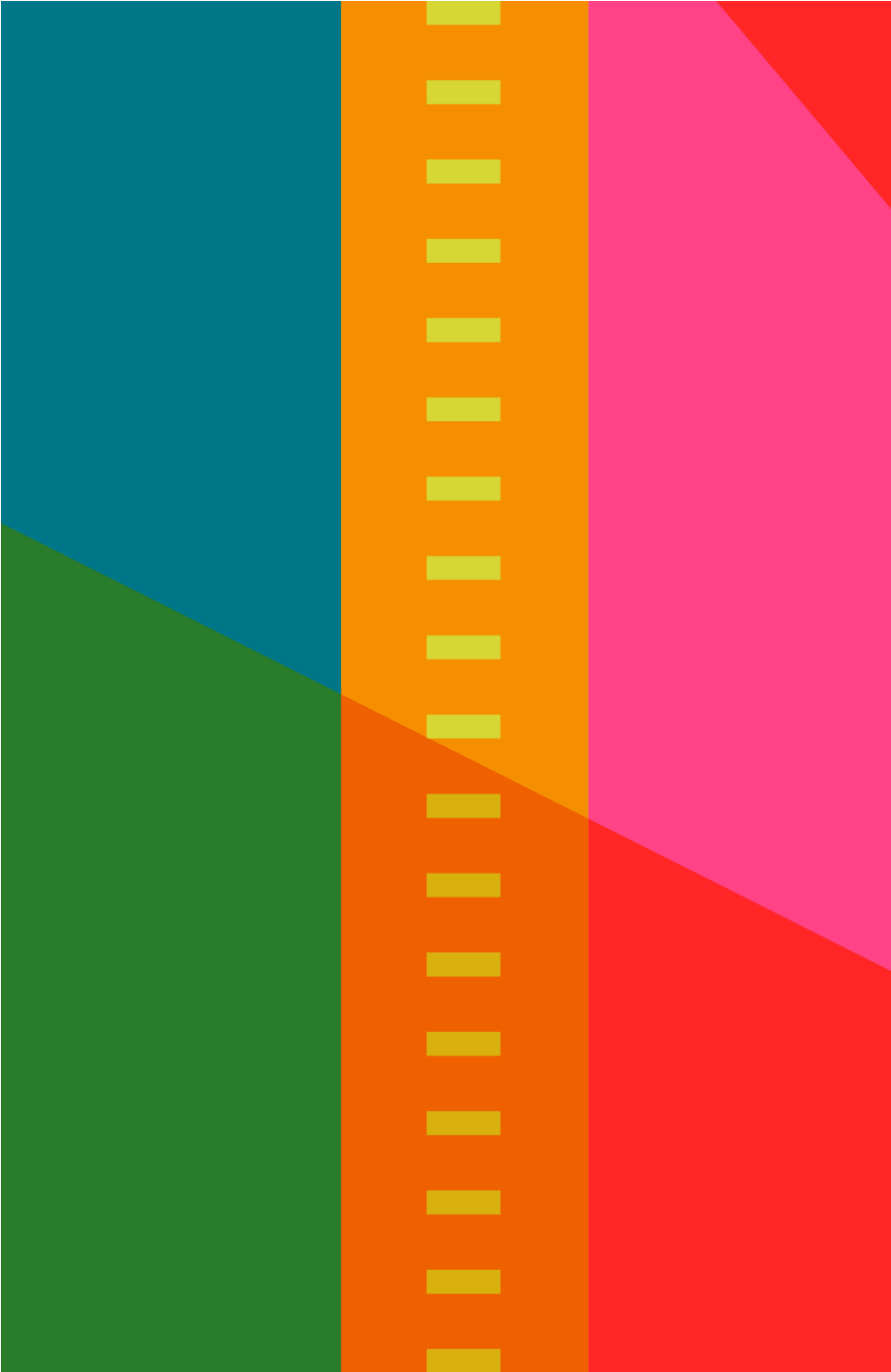
- ❖ County's population: ~**229,000**
- ❖ **68 %** of the population identify as Hispanic or Latinx
- ❖ Many families live in **rural areas**, where there are limited or a lack of medical services and transportation issues.
- ❖ High rates of first-generation students or those living between two cultures.
- ❖ Many families speak Spanish as their primary language at home.

(U.S. Census Bureau, 2025)



**Let's get to
know each
other!**



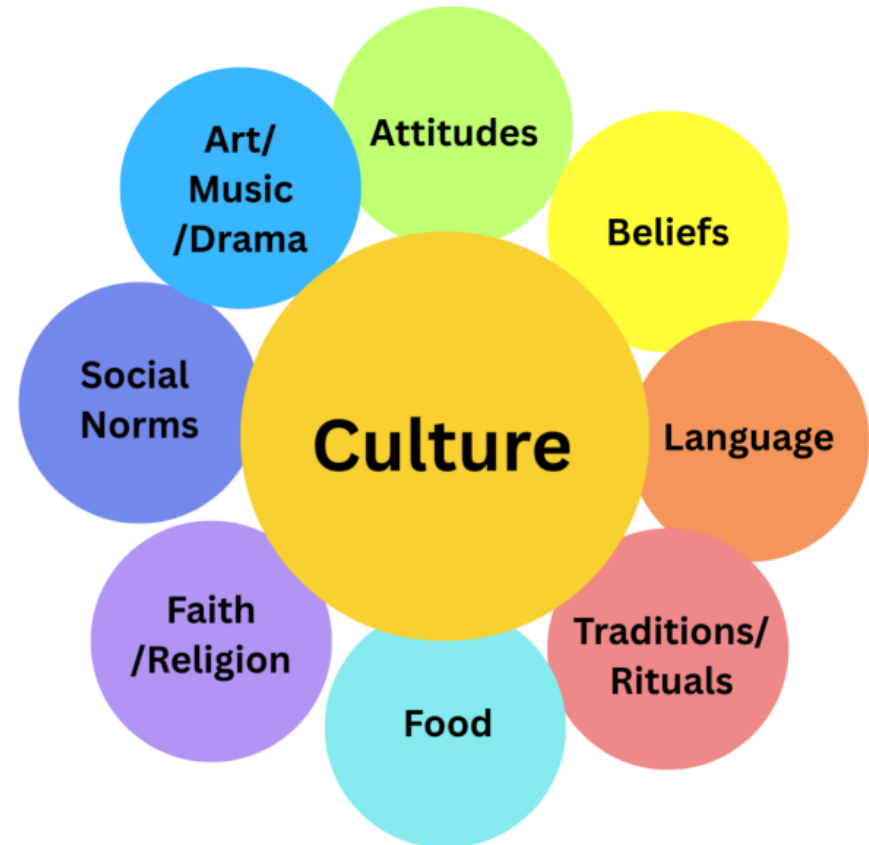


Objectives

1. Identify key 3 emotional, social, and academic impacts of acculturation on adolescents, including the role of current immigration-related stressors
2. Apply culturally responsive, School-Based strategies to address behavioral health needs during the acculturation process
3. Adapt engagement and intervention strategies demonstrated during the workshop for use in their own SBHC or School-Based programs.

What is culture?

- ✓ What do we understand because of culture?
- ✓ Key Elements of Culture
- ✓ Cultural discontinuity and it's relevance





Acculturation: Process by which a person or group adopts elements of another culture, while still conserving their own culture.

Salad or Smoothie: What are we?



Salad
(Acculturation)

Every ingredient
maintains its form and
flavor.



Smoothie
(Assimilation)

All ingredients get
blended.

*Think of a time that
you experienced
acculturation in your
own life...*



THE PATH OF ACCULTURATION



Culture
of
Origin



First
Contact



Discontinuity



Identity
Confusion



Support/
Intervention

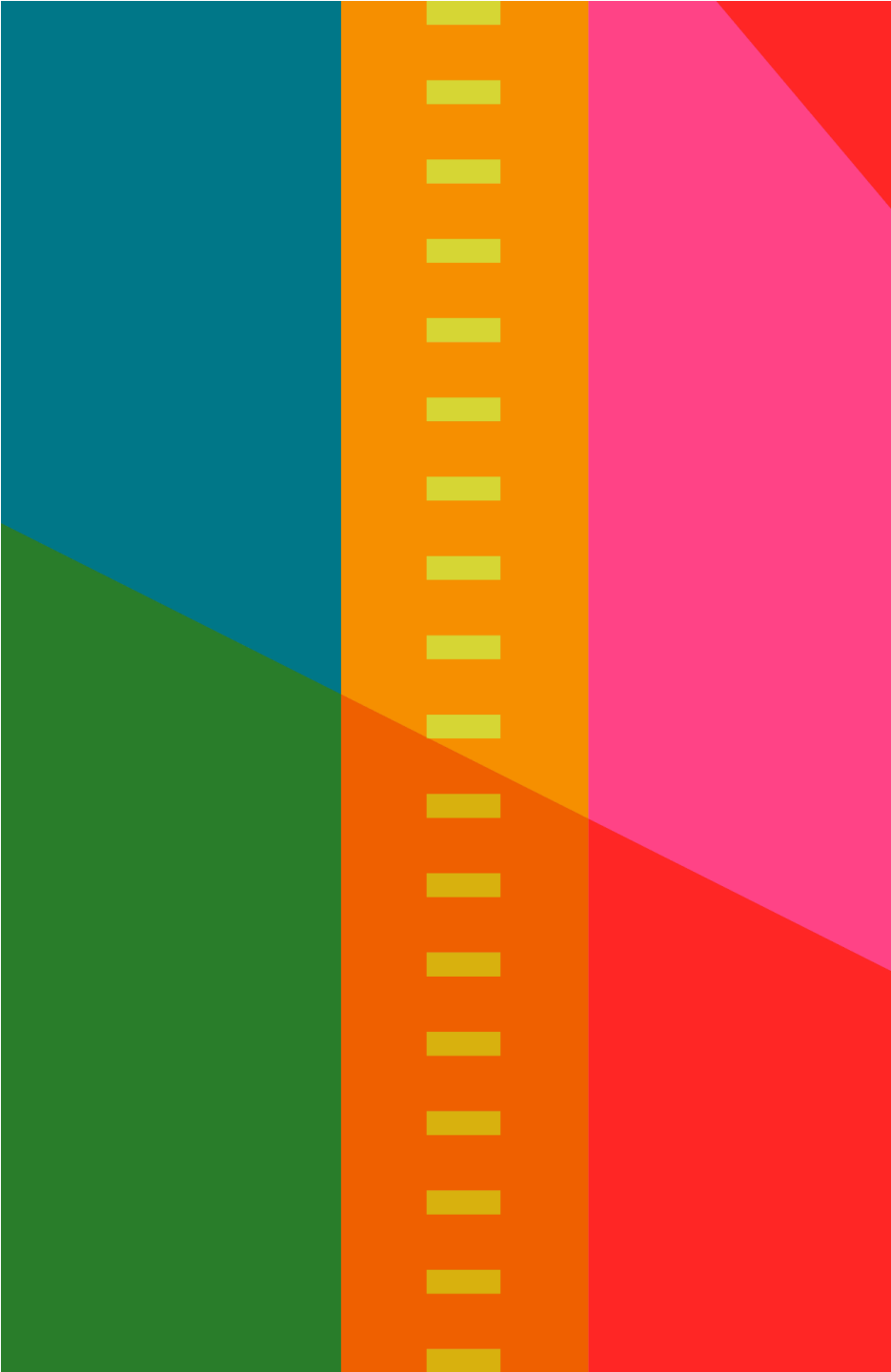


Healthy
Integration

National Overview: Mental Health and Latinx Youth

- Over 40% of Hispanic youth experienced persistent feelings of sadness and hopelessness in the last year.
- Latinx youth have less access to mental health services compared to other racial and ethnic groups.
- Over half of Latinx adolescents (65%) with mental health difficulties do not receive services.
- In 2023, high-school aged Latinx females were 17% more likely to attempt suicide in the past year than other female students in the U.S.





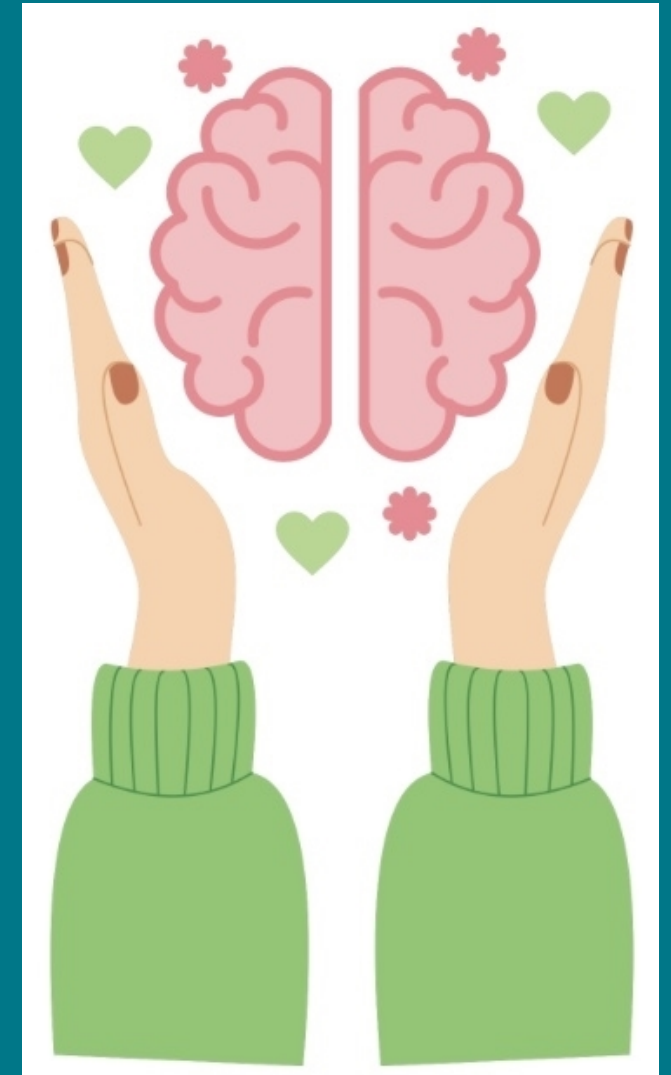
The Impact of Political Climate of Acculturating Youth

- Anti-immigrant political environments are associated with **increased mental health symptoms** in Latinx adolescents
- Family detention, deportation fears, and anti-immigrant stress contribute to increased **anxiety, depression, and behavioral concerns** among youth
- Immigration-related stressors can **negatively impact parent-child relationships** and **reduce perceived parental support**
- Latinx adolescents exposed to anti-immigrant environments show **increased risks for internalizing symptoms, externalizing behaviors, and suicidal ideation**
- Research supports the **need** for schools and healthcare systems to implement safe guards and culturally responsive mental health supports for immigrant youth

(Roche, 2024)

Implications on Mental Health

- Difficulty expressing emotions due to fear of judgement or "being a burden. "
- Cultural identity conflict: Feeling "too Mexican for Americans and too American for Mexicans."
- Family pressure and adult responsibilities: caring for siblings, translating, and working at a young age.
- Emotional isolation: withdrawal, disconnection at school, and low self-esteem.
- Adaptation to two worlds: different rules at home and in society, leading to anxiety.



Our Reality: Youth Receiving Care at LCDF, 2024-2026 Data

87 students participated in our acculturation groups

47 % were born outside of the U.S, and 89% were born in Mexico.

36 % have been in the US for less than one year, and 67% reported being separated from one or both parents

About 70% reported failing at least one class.

More than half experienced symptoms of anxiety or depression. 26% had untreated suicidal ideation, and about 30% experienced traumatic events



Common Barriers Faced by Students in the Acculturation Process

- ❖ Separation from caregivers
- ❖ Language Barriers
- ❖ Family responsibilities
- ❖ Lack of access to mental health services
- ❖ Cultural stigma against mental health
- ❖ Pressure to "fit in"
- ❖ Academic impact
- ❖ Social isolation



Breaking the Stigma

- Cultural Barriers
- Generational Silence
- Shame and fear of rejection
- Impact on the search for support



Integrated Behavioral Health Model

What is an integrated model?

Why is it important for our community?

How does it work at LCDF?



Acculturation Groups



Creating Community and Support



Integrated and Collaborative Process



Process of Implementing Groups



**Collaboration
with the School**



**Class
Presentations**



**Medical
Appointment**



**Behavioral Health
Assessment**



**Initiate
Groups**

Care plan: Evaluation and Objectives

- Identify stressors
- Identify resources and supports
- Talk about cultural identity and its influences



Applied Clinical Theories in Group Work

- Cognitive-Behavioral
- Narrative Therapy
- Erikson's Psychosocial Theory
- Person-Centered Approach
- Psychoeducation



Person-Centered Approach

Objective: Validate the emotions of young people and create a space where they can express themselves without fear of being judged.

Activities:

- Safe Space
- Reflective Listening
- Group Contract



Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy

Objective: Help the youth identify and challenge negative thoughts related to their self-image, their identity, and acculturation process.

Activities:

- Thoughts Jenga
- Thought Diary
- Cognitive Restructuring
- Role playing



Narrative Therapy

Objective : Allow teens reconstruct their history and give new meaning to their identity through personal expression.

Activities:

- Letter to Your Past Self
- Migratory Stories
- Tree of Life



Erikson's Psychosocial Theory

Objective : Support healthy identity development during the "Identity vs Role Confusion" stage.

Activities:

- Cultural Identity Mask
- Identity Collage
- Internal Dialogue



Psychoeducation

Objective: Provide information about mental health in an accessible and cultural-relevant way.

Activities:

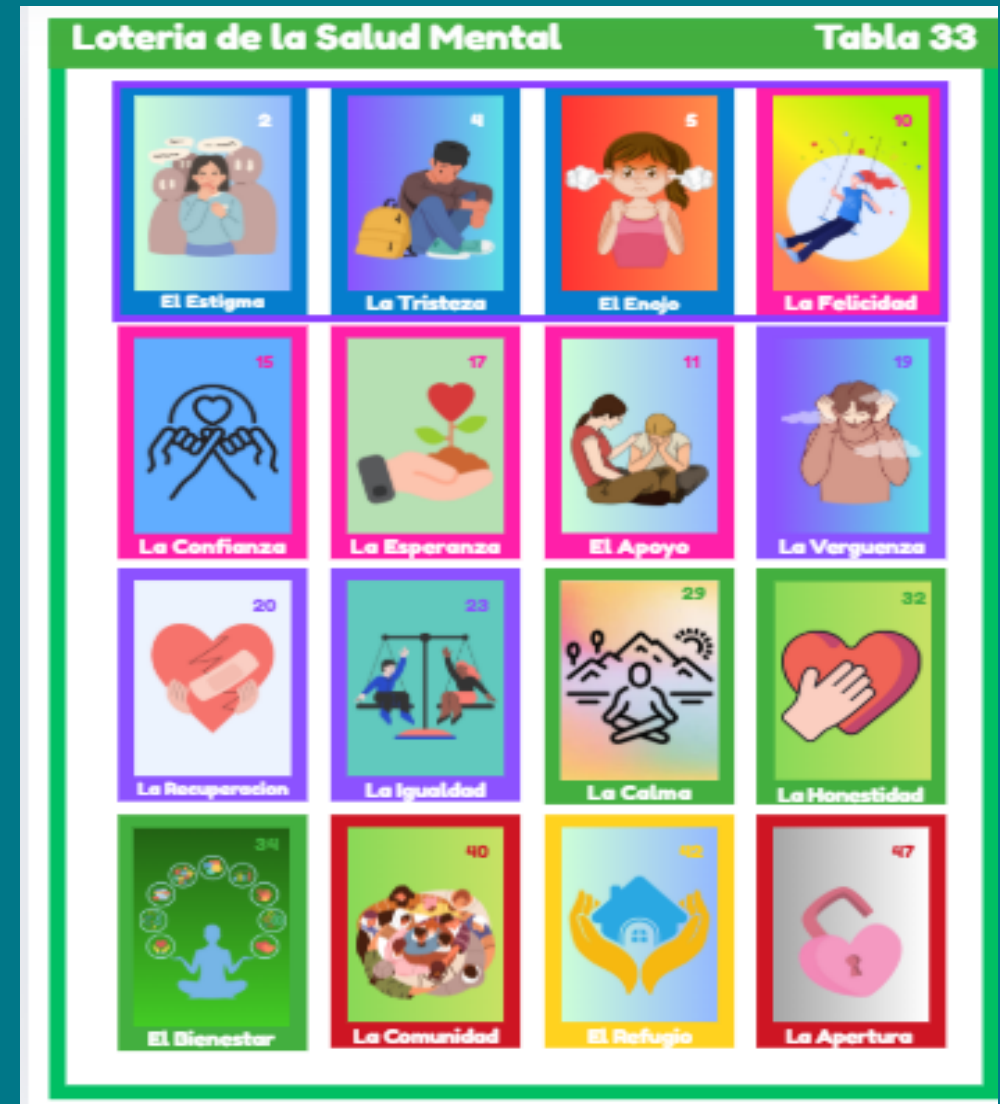
- Mental Health Loteria
- Myths and Truths
- Self-Care Map



Mental Health Loteria

What is it?

An adapted version of the traditional Mexican game of Lotería that we use to teach mental health concepts, validate emotions, and break the stigma in an accessible and culturally- relevant way.



Cultural Confidence



that we
interacted
like family

I liked...

to learn
about
others and
mental
health

Thank you for
being there
for us, even
thought
sometimes we
are rowdy

that
everybody's
ideas are
respected

having the
opportunity
to have fun
in group

I could
express
who I am

that they
listen

sharing
about other
experiences
in the US

to learn
about
culture

We could share
our thoughts
and doubts on
any topic

Questions?



La Clinica de Familia

<https://laclinicadefamilia.org>

Mariana Cazares Rodriguez, LMHC
Integrated Behavioral Health Provider
Mariana.cazaresrodriguez@lcdfnm.org

Raquel Gutierrez, LCSW
School-Base Integrated Behavioral Health Clinical Supervisor
rmgutierrez@lcdfnm.org

References

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). (2021). *Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) Data Summary & Trends Report: 2011–2021*. https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/data/yrbs/pdf/YRBS_Data-Summary-Trends_Report2023_508.pdf
- Peña, J. B., Wyman, P. A., Brown, C. H., Matthieu, M. M., Olivares, T. E., Hartel, D., & Zayas, L. H. (2011). Immigration Generation Status and Its Association with Suicide Attempts, Substance Use, and Depressive Symptoms Among Latino Adolescents in the USA. *Prevention Science*, 12(1), 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11121-010-0177-0>
- Zong, J., & Batalova, J. (2019). *The Limited English Proficient Population in the United States*. Migration Policy Institute. <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/limited-english-proficient-population-united-states>
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Minority Health. (2023). *Mental and Behavioral Health - Hispanic Americans*. <https://minorityhealth.hhs.gov/mental-and-behavioral-health-hispanic-americans/>
- Fortuna, L. R., Porche, M. V., & Alegría, M. (2008). Political violence, psychosocial trauma, and the context of mental health services use among immigrant Latinos in the United States. *Ethnicity & Health*, 13(5), 435–463. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13557850701837286>
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). (2023). *Key Substance Use and Mental Health Indicators in the United States: Results from the 2022 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH)*. <https://www.samhsa.gov/data/report/2022-nsduh-annual-national-report>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2023). Youth Risk Behavior Survey Data Summary & Trends Report: 2011–2021. <https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/data/yrbs/index.htm>
- Gonzalez, L. M., Stein, G. L., & Huq, N. (2015). The influence of cultural stressors on internalizing symptoms in Latino adolescents: The role of community-based youth development programs. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 44(5), 929–946.
- National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI). (2021). Mental health disparities: Hispanic/Latinx communities. <https://www.nami.org/Your-Journey/Identity-and-Cultural-Dimensions/Hispanic-Latinx>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). (2022). Youth Risk Behavior Survey: 2021 Results and Data Summary. https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/data/yrbs/pdf/YRBS_Data-Summary-Trends_Report2023_508.pdf
- American Psychological Association (APA). (2022). Ethnic and racial disparities in youth mental health: Cultural stress and access to care. <https://www.apa.org/monitor/2022/06/mental-health-disparities>
- Roche, K., White, R., Partovi, R., Vaquera, E., & Little, T. (2024). US Immigration Policy Stressors and Latinx Youth Mental Health. *JAMA Pediatrics*, 178(7), 669–677. <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC11091817/>
- U.S. Census Bureau. (2025). *QuickFacts, Dona Ana County, New Mexico*. Retrieved April 02, 2026 from <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/donaanacountynewmexico/POP060210>
- Office of Minority Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2026). Mental and behavioral health — Hispanic/Latinos. <https://minorityhealth.hhs.gov/mental-and-behavioral-health-hispaniclatinos>