

Culturally Tailored Program Helps Latinos Cut Heavy Drinking

The program, delivered in Spanish, reduced heavy drinking among Latino adults by 22%.

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A culturally adapted behavioral intervention in Spanish helped significantly reduce unhealthy [alcohol](#) consumption among Latino adults, according to a study published in the [Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs](#).

Latinos make up nearly 20% of the United States population. Despite being the fastest-growing ethnic group in the country, Latinos face several barriers to [substance use](#) treatment, including cost, [stigma](#) and limited culturally and linguistically relevant services. What's more, Latino adults report binge drinking in the past month at higher rates (26.4%) compared with non-Latinos (23.1%).

To address this disparity, researchers at the [University of California \(UC\) San Diego School of Medicine](#) tested a culturally adapted version of motivational enhancement therapy combined with strengths-based case management (CA-MET/SBCM). The program prioritizes personal motivation, goal setting and linking participants with health and social services as needed.

"Our findings highlight the importance of meeting people where they are strengths-based case management —both linguistically and culturally," said lead author and professor of medicine at UC San Diego School of Medicine, Alison Moore, MD, MPH, in a [UC news release](#). "By working through trusted community health workers, we were able to create a bridge between evidence-based behavioral strategies and the real-world experiences of Latinx adults, who are too often underserved by traditional treatment systems."

The study enrolled 236 Latino adults who surpassed low-risk drinking limits but were not in treatment. Participants received either CA-MET/SBCM services or a publication by the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism titled Rethinking Drinking.

At 12 weeks, those who received the combined therapy with case management services showed nearly twice the reduction in heavy drinking days compared with the control group (down 18.5% vs. 10.3%). At 26 weeks, those in the intervention group reduced their heavy drinking days by 21.7% compared with 12.9% in the control group.

To address unhealthy alcohol use in the Latino community, researchers encourage community organizations and health care workers to share the Rethinking Drinking booklet and refer those who need additional support to the CA-MET/SBCM intervention.

“Reducing unhealthy drinking is not just about abstinence—it’s about helping people align their behaviors with their values and life goals,” Moore said. “When we do that in a way that honors their culture and language, we not only improve individual health but also strengthen entire communities.”

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