TuSalud

Latino Children Are More Depressed Than Their Peers

Despite this, Latino children with depression are less likely to receive mental health care.

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Latino children are more likely to experience depression and other mental health issues than their peers. What's more, their mental illnesses often go untreated. A new research review from Salud America! suggests that culturally sensitive solutions can help these children feel more supported.

Titled Salud America! Mental Health & Latino Kids, the review found that 22% of Latino youth have depression and endure stress, discrimination, and bullying—that's more than any other group besides Native American children—and fewer Latino children (8%) than white children (14%) have ever had mental health care.

"Despite the high rate of mental health issues faced by Latino children, disparities persist in how they use and receive mental health services," said Amelie G. Ramirez, DrPH, lead author of the research review, in a UT Health San Antonio article.

Researchers found that one in three Latino students say they feel hopeless and sad. More Latina high schoolers attempted suicide (15.1%) than white students (9.8%), and suicidal thoughts were up to eight times higher for Latino students who felt a lack of connection and communication with their families.

Researchers suggested that immigration, poverty and language barrier and bullying could all factor into these disparities. Fortunately, they also identified potential solutions to this mental health crisis.

They found that in-school intervention programs focused on bullying could decrease bullying by up to 25%. Community-based cultural interventions also showed promise in improving access to mental health care for Latino children. Last, researchers found that Latino children enrolled in programs that blend physical activity with mental health education had lower stress levels and greater classroom success.

The research review also suggests that program leaders, school leaders and health care providers should take into account the specific mental health needs of Latino kids and help them culturally relevant mental health programs.

“Latino and all children deserve communities and schools that equitably support healthy minds,” Ramirez said.

To learn more, read "Can Lack of Sleep Increase the Risk of Mental Health Problems in Kids?"

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