

Psychologist Discusses Mental Health Stigma Among Latinos

Only about 10% of Latinos with diagnosable mental health conditions seek treatment.

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Stigma is a primary reason that Latino families choose not to discuss [mental health](#) concerns with their primary care doctors, according to psychologist Sheryl Ziegler, PsyD.

Many Latinos believe that they will be seen as weak or unfit if they discuss their mental health , Ziegler [told 9News](#) in an interview. Latino patients may wind up with prescription medications or blood tests for physical ailments because, Ziegler said, “it’s a really common Hispanic manifestation to take your mental illness and turn it into physical illness.”

Ziegler noted that only about 10% of Latinos who would be considered to have a diagnosable mental health condition seek treatment. What’s more, the suicide rate among Latinos [increased](#) by nearly 7% from 2018 to 2021.

“Puerto Ricans, which I’m half of, are almost the highest, at like around 28% [that] would be considered to have a diagnosable mental health condition,” she said. “So we have higher percentages in some Hispanic subcultures that have mental health issues that are not getting treated. I mean, 10% is so, so low.”

In addition, Ziegler emphasizes the need for primary care providers to prioritize culturally competent care and address mental health stigma.

“If you have someone who speaks Spanish and you don’t speak Spanish, get an interpreter in your office,” she said. “Maybe you have one day of the week where that interpreter is there, and that’s where you see your Spanish-speaking patients.”

She noted that focus has shifted recently to general practitioners because patients generally trust them more than psychologists when it comes to discussing their mental health. Additionally, because including family members in doctor visits is also important in Latino cultures, Ziegler advised providers to “invite them in.”

In recognition of National Hispanic Heritage Month, observed annually from September 15 to November 15, the [American Foundation for Suicide Prevention](#) is expanding access

to [suicide](#) prevention resources in Latino communities and encouraging Latinos to have open conversations about mental health in order to destigmatize mental illness and help prevent suicide.

To read more, click #Mental Health. There, you'll find headlines such as "[Five Tips for Talking With a Health Care Provider About Your Mental Health](#)," "[Reducing Mental Health, Suicide Stigma in Latino Communities](#)" and "[Suicide Rates Spike Among Latinos](#)."

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