

Scholarship Supports Next Generation of Latino Mental Health Professionals

The Latino Mental Health Association of New Jersey aims to build a culturally competent and diverse mental health workforce.

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In 2024, the Latino Mental Health Association of New Jersey (LMHANJ) launched its first scholarship program to support the next generation of [mental health](#) professionals committed to serving the Latino community, according to a [news release](#).

Formed by LMHANJ president Angela Vargas, PhD, and president-elect and treasurer Kathy Acosta, LCSW, the Futuro Fund supports education and workforce development among [Latinos](#) in the mental health field. In its inaugural year, the fund awarded scholarships to Alanna Santos and Bryanna Araujo, both master of social work candidates.

“We know what it means to be poured into, and we understand, deeply, how life-changing that support can be,” said Vargas in the release. “This scholarship program is more than financial aid—it’s about honoring the potential within our community and helping shape a future where representation, healing and equity are the norm.”

Founded in 1999, LMHANJ is committed to addressing the mental health needs of Latinos by supporting mental health professionals through the advancement of training, research and mentorship.

In 2023, only about 48% of Latino adults who needed mental health services received treatment. Between 2010 and 2020, the suicide rate among Latino men ages 20 to 64 increased by almost 36%. For Latinas, the rate increased by 40.6%, according to a study [published in PubMed Central](#).

What’s more, existing research shows that Latinos face significant barriers to accessing culturally competent care. Language barriers can also limit Latinos’ access to care.

“The mission of the Futuro Fund aligns closely with my commitment to increasing culturally sensitive providers and greater Latino representation in these fields,” said Lori Tarke, DHSc, executive director of the Joseph A. Unanue Latino Institute. “Communities cannot be served with a ‘one size fits all’ approach. We must ensure access to culturally responsive and bilingual providers.” In the coming years, the Futuro Fund aims to expand its reach via future partnerships with philanthropists.

To read more, click [#Mental Health](#). There, you’ll see headlines such as “[Peer-Led Program Improves Mental Health in New Latina Mothers](#),” “[Trump Executive Order Targets Harm Reduction](#)” and “[National Association of Hispanic Journalists Launches Wellness Initiative](#).”

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