

BARRIOS UNIDOS HEALTH SERVICES NEEDS ASSESSMENT REPORT SUMMARY

The needs assessment was designed to measure the greatest general health needs of low-income Latinos, which services are used most frequently by low-income Latinos, as well as where low-income Latinos face the biggest barriers to health care. This report provides the findings from 322 surveys collected during the months of June and July 2005.

Ceres Policy Research and Barrios Unidos developed the Barrios Unidos Health Services Needs Assessment collaboratively. Ceres Policy Research staff drafted a survey and then revised the instrument based on feedback they received from Barrios Unidos staff and Latino community members. After making final changes, the instrument was translated into Spanish so that the survey would be available in both English and Spanish. Barrios Unidos recruited community members in mid and north-Santa Cruz County and collected a total of 322 surveys. Respondents were varied by gender, language, area of residence, experience with family members in a gang, and immigration status.

Based on the data from the survey, several key factors were revealed:

- 55% surveyed were Spanish monolingual
- 51% were from Santa Cruz City (north county)
- 62% of respondents reported being born outside of the U.S.
- 35% of respondents use the emergency room
- 3% of respondents had used mental health services

Based on the responses from the participants this was a very difficult community to reach and thereby making the data that much more valuable. Access was largely based on trust and relationships staff and community volunteers have with this community. It is safe to say that this same level of trust will be necessary before community members are willing or able to come forward to access a broader range of health/mental health/substance abuse services.

The most startling factors were that a large percentage of the respondents accessed medical services through the emergency room or urgent care and a small percentage accessed mental health services. Of the youth who used mental health services many of them were referred by Juvenile Probation. This speaks to a need to conduct more outreach and education about accessibility of medical and mental health services.

Another finding that is low-income Latino patients are not usually comfortable using local health services and feel that health professionals do not usually treat them the same as other patients. This information will be critical in the planning and implementation of any new or expanded service delivery model.