

Culture Is Care: How Sensitivity Matters in Hispanic and Latinx Behavioral Health

Cultural sensitivity is the understanding and appreciation of the differences and overlaps within and between the cultures of different groups. In behavioral health care, it means customizing treatment for a patient's specific culture.¹ Studies have shown that when providers understand the cultural forces in play, patients feel the providers offer better care.²

“Hispanic” or “Latino/Latina/ Latinx/Latine”? Ask, don’t assume.

The generally accepted (but not universally agreed upon) definitions for these terms:³

- “Hispanic” means the person is from a country that primarily speaks Spanish.
- “Latino” and its variants mean the person is from Latin America.

These groups overlap but are not the same. People also self-identify with terms individually. Your clients will likely appreciate you asking which term they prefer.



Research has shown that Hispanic and Latinx people use behavioral health services two to four times less often than white people.² While many different barriers limit access to care, providers can help make a difference in several ways:¹

- Take cultural responsiveness training to strengthen your awareness of cultural influence on care.
- Build understanding and trust through direct experience by offering programs and partnerships with community organizations.
- Recognize Hispanic and Latinx cultural values as strengths in therapy.
- Provide education about behavioral health care in the community to help address stigma.
- Accommodate language preferences (e.g., by offering bilingual services).

Sources:

¹“Culturally-Sensitive Counseling in the Hispanic Community: Why It’s Important,” Hispanic Community Counseling Services, <https://hccsphil.org/learning-center/culturally-sensitive-counseling-in-the-hispanic-community-why-its-important>, accessed April 17, 2025.

² Fernando Espí Forcén et al., “Deconstructing Cultural Aspects of Mental Health Care in Hispanic/Latinx People,” *Psychiatric Annals*, March 1, 2023, <https://web.archive.org/web/20241204075218/https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC10540642>, accessed April 17, 2025.

³ William Alexander, “Ask the OED! Hispanic, Latino, Latina, Latinx — Which Is Best?,” Duke University School of Medicine, September 8, 2022, <https://medschool.duke.edu/blog/ask-oedi-hispanic-latino-latina-latinx-which-best>, accessed April 17, 2025.