

*tips for working with people of*

# LATINO/HISPANIC DESCENT

*The majority of Latinos in North Carolina are from Mexico, followed by a significant number of persons of Central American descent.*

## LANGUAGE & COMMUNICATION

- Trust is an essential element of building relationships with Latinos/Hispanics. Once trust is established, Latinos/Hispanics are much more likely to reveal personal information. Latinos/Hispanics are more likely to trust and bond with a person rather than an agency or company.
- Latino/Hispanic culture is formal.
  - When addressing someone you should use “Mr.” and “Mrs.”
  - “Please” and “Thank you” are words used with everyone.
  - To ignore someone is very rude. When you first see a person during the day, you must always recognize them and say “hello.” Before leaving, you should say “good-bye” and wish them well.
  - Latinos/Hispanics prefer face-to-face human interaction.
- Respect is highly valued. To respect someone means to listen when he or she speaks and follow his or her advice. The elders have a special place in the community because of their wisdom and they are highly respected.

## RELIGION & SPIRITUALITY

- Personal devotion to the church is important for many Latinos/Hispanics. They maintain strong beliefs. Catholicism is the primary religion, but more and more Latinos/Hispanics are converting to Protestant Christianity.

## FAMILY

- Family unity is traditionally very important among the Latino/Hispanic cultures. Family consists not only of father, wife, and children, but also of brothers, sisters, grandparents, aunts, uncles, nephews, nieces, etc. Respect for the elders and parents is required and expected in Latino/Hispanic families.
- The family shares financial and emotional support with one another. Together the families provide support and protection for children and the elderly.

## EDUCATION

- To Latinos/Hispanics education includes not only what one learns in school, but also manners, behavior, and religious beliefs. Education plays a very important role, as persons with higher degrees are respected for their knowledge.

## HEALTH CARE

- Some Members of the Latino/Hispanic community still use traditional herbs or medications from their native homelands.
  - The use of home remedies is a common practice in Latin American countries.
  - Some countries use the traditional witch doctor called “curandero.”
  - Latinos/Hispanics are not used to preventative medicine. They only go to the doctor when they are really sick.
- Mental Illness is viewed as “craziness,” and some people are reluctant to seek help because of fear of how their neighbors or families will react.
- Diabetes is a very common illness among the Latino/Hispanic population, and given the nutritional habits of the Latino/Hispanic culture, it is hard to control without very close supervision by professionals.
- Weight management and lack of physical activity are also problems for Latino/Hispanics. Poor nutrition and few opportunities or interest in physical exercise contribute to this problem. Physical activities for women, particularly, are not encouraged and are even viewed as abnormal by the rest of the community
- Because of their low income, most Latino/Hispanic families cannot afford dental care for their kids. Also, Latino/Hispanic people do not place much importance on preventive care for children’s teeth.

## OTHER PROBLEMS

- Domestic Violence is not seen as a serious issue because it is considered “okay” for a man to hit his wife if he thinks that it’s necessary.
- The use of alcohol is seen as normal in Latino/Hispanic culture; in fact, adult males are encouraged to drink to prove their social status within their families.
- Smoking is not viewed as a problem because usually men are the ones who smoke and it is considered part of their “down time.” Furthermore, in Latino/Hispanic culture one does not tell the man what to do.
- Sexually transmitted diseases are not often discussed since sex is not a topic that Latino/Hispanic families tend to share, especially with their children.