

LCDA CBLC June 26, 2003 Meeting Notes

The meeting began at 3:18pm.

I. Welcome

Cynthia welcomed everyone to the meeting. She introduced the *Proyecto Cambio* staff members and herself.

II. Community Based Linkage Council Members (CBLC)

Cynthia informed the audience about the CBLC, acknowledged its contribution and introduced the members of the CBLC.

III. Julia Perilla, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Department of Psychology, Georgia State University.

Cynthia introduced Dr. Julia Perilla, the key note speaker of the meeting to the audience.

Dr. Perilla's Presentation on domestic violence in Latino community.

She introduced herself and talked about her background as an immigrant Latina that came to the United States about 31 years ago as well as her life experiences. She spent the last 15 years working with the Latino community in Atlanta. She is a survivor of domestic violence herself. She discussed Latino family culture and learning about domestic violence and dealing with her own experiences as a victim by working with other victims, children, perpetrators of domestic violence, and the experience of working with Latino victims of domestic violence in Atlanta. The perception used to be that helping victims of domestic violence will break up the families. The women in the community also knew that the need to help the children traumatized by domestic violence. At the time, there wasn't a program to help the victims and children of domestic violence. This was complicated by the language barrier in the shelters. Later, while working with victims of domestic violence, she started to involve the men into the program as well since that was what the women wanted and had them both work together on the problem. The women didn't accept the idea that they had to leave their partners to receive services. They regarded it as having a part of their identity of who they are is being left behind. Dr. Perilla has also worked with women from various cultural backgrounds and learned that minority groups have certain universal problems and certain cultural needs that have to be addressed. She started working with men who were court mandated but the women attended the sessions as well as sort of a cultural mandate of working together to take care of the family. This approach had difficulty at the beginning since the white advocates said it placed women in danger. The women replied that they weren't scared of their partners and working together allowed them to keep track of the men.

Currently there is a group for women, one for children and one for men. Men attend 24 sessions are court mandated. The women are invited to attend since their partners are

attending the session. The program has a very high completion rate. Even the clergy have gotten involved and are sending those who need help to the program. The program is working closely with the clergy since they are an important part of the Latino community. The whole community has become involved in the project. At the moment, African American men have been attending the English sessions as well. The funds are limited and the program is trying to find the most effective way to achieve its goals. The program has to be very aware of not to use the culture as an excuse for domestic violence. One has to be respectful to the victims and give her time to decide what she wants to do on her own. Regarding batterers, it can be hard to hear how men talk about women but it is important to get them to talk about themselves. Harder still has been the realization that a woman is capable of battering as well and it can be seen when a woman hits her children. Domestic violence is only one element in family's environment that needs to be addressed. The problem is better addressed in group work than on one on one since it helps to empower them and realize their strengths.

Question: What is the resistance when working with male perpetrators?

Dr. Perilla: There is a lot of resistance and many men are afraid that it is going to be a tearing down of their identity. The focus is not about losing something but gaining something instead. Men need to do this work with men. A woman working with them changes the group dynamics. Once they realize that this is not a blaming process, they are more engaged. It is not about people who are angry but about making them responsible. Julia can work with men's group due to her age. Young women have more difficulty working with men.

While responding to comments on family violence, Julia stated that family violence is a complex thing. She has had to conduct a lot of training with the police, judges, etc and the program has trained people working with the men and women as well. One has to know what to do once a protective order is involved. Immigrants may not be aware of services, rights, etc. Domestic violence is a sad situation as well where some domestic violence programs tend to charge fees which can be a lot for the low income people and they have become a business by taking advantage of a bad situation.

Question: Do you find any resistance in Hispanic community within the religious community?

Dr. Perilla: It is about providing services to people. There is a great reluctance in community about it and it is like more of the basic approach. Now more and more churches are becoming part of the task force and there are faith based initiatives to domestic violence. She showed a brochure that provides information to women about domestic violence and it is important to provide information that women can hide in their shoes etc since it can be a while before they have the opportunity to obtain help. There is also a myth that it is about feminists and their desire to end marriages and all it is a myth.

Cynthia: More men don't want to lose control and they are afraid of losing control.

Dr. Perilla: Domestic violence resembles many oppressions that take place in the society. It is a reflection of what happens in the larger society. The degree and the kind of existence which is severe is where people have experienced extreme violence and misuse of power that occur in the larger society.

Comment: It also goes back to fear and how people were raised. Unless it is stopped, our children will continue that fear and keep on doing it.

Dr. Perilla: We have the potential of doing more harm than good. When asked in men's group about witnessing violence, 80% said they have witnessed it as children and most come to the program because they don't want their children to do what they are doing. It is a very strong family secret and very difficult to talk about.

Dr. Perilla: What is the most challenging issue regarding domestic violence in the city?

Response: Finding information about who can help you. Such information is needed in not only in Hispanic community but in community in general.

Comment: You can grow up with violence and think that it is a natural thing just like profanity thinking that people actually speak that way.

Dr. Perilla: A study showed that in Chile, women who saw so much violence that they thought that it was a part of the relationship. If people act that way, then they become accustomed to it.

Comment: The barriers in Oklahoma are transportation and language. It makes it difficult for people in rural areas to obtain help even if they know about it.

Comment: It is a frustrating issue as well. Sometimes just having a shelter is a big thing especially outside the OKC metro area.

Dr. Perilla asked about the role of police in Oklahoma regarding domestic violence?

Comment: It is not much unlike Georgia, some are very receptive to the training and some are not.

Dr. Perilla: I have found out in training continuous cross training about diversity and domestic violence, some police officers are very good regarding this issue and some are very reluctant about it. Another factor is to get judges to look at the things we have talked about today, but there are some that are just wonderful and who respond immediately.

Comment: It is the same over here. Most training has given to police officers. Last year they were provided with more than 100,000 hours of training. Another hurdle is with the prosecutors. The weakest link are the judges. Last year a group of judges were specifically trained on domestic violence.

Dr. Perilla: What about the medical community?

Comment: They are beginning to become aware that there is a need to identify it and report it, what to do when providing medical services. There is a lot of training on child abuse. Don't know what steps to take to provide assistance to the victim.

Dr. Perilla: We can put women more at risk by going over their head. They have to be trained as to where the resources are in the community. People don't know what is available.

Cynthia: We also have to involve the politicians in the community to dispense this information.

Dr. Perilla stated that the media is absolutely essential in informing the community about domestic violence. She concluded her presentation by thanking everyone for sharing information with her.

IV. Closing Announcements

Cynthia announced that the next meeting will take place on July 24th

The meeting adjourned at 4:51pm.