

## Substance Abuse Treatment & Prevention How can you help?

As a community, we must gain a more clear understanding of the values, attitudes and experiences of people who struggle with substance abuse. Additionally, for Latinos who face this challenge, we must recognize that culture is a factor that needs to be considered.

What can you do? The following are suggestions for ways service providers, policy makers, funders and communities can address the needs of Latinos and substance abuse.

- Support more bilingual treatment services that are culturally and linguistically appropriate for Latinos to access.
- Provide more drug-free activities such as sporting events, family activities, and create additional community volunteer opportunities for adolescents and families to participate in together.
- Provide information in Spanish about the dangers of drug abuse to families and members of our community.
- Funders and policy makers may consider supporting multicultural efforts in dealing with the challenges of substance addiction, such as Spanish-speaking outpatient treatment programs to deal with the addiction disease.

Source: Siegel et al., 2002, CSIPMH

## What works at Mattie Rhodes?

### Advocacy

Being involved in community affairs, such as state government, advisory councils and task forces.

### Cultural Competency

Being familiar with clients' cultures, traditions, values, and language. This includes providing bilingual services and a philosophy of treatment that values culture, ethnicity, and religious beliefs.

### Flexibility

Being flexible to meet clients in their own environment, such as home visits instead of office visits. Having flexible hours of operation that accommodate and work with a client's schedule.

### Holistic Perspective

Working with the entire family and treating the addiction as a family issue. Also attending to the other complex needs a family may have.



Would you like to know the estimated direct cost of absenteeism and lowered productivity due to alcohol use? Or alcohol related healthcare costs in your work place?  
[www.alcoholcostcalculator.org](http://www.alcoholcostcalculator.org)

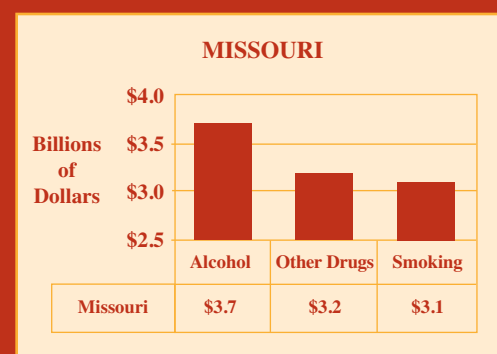
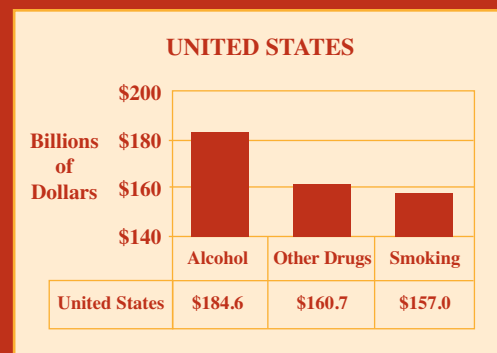
*Mattie Rhodes Center strengthens Kansas City children, families and community by providing social services, mental health counseling and art experiences in a bilingual, culturally sensitive environment.*



### COMMENTS:

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## Estimated Annual Cost to Society: Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drug Abuse



Department of Mental Health, Status Report on Missouri's Alcohol and Drug Abuse Problems, April 2004

# Insights Into La familia

A quarterly publication of the Mattie Rhodes Center

FEBRUARY 2005, VOLUME 2, ISSUE NO. 2

## Many times immigrant families struggle with acculturation and discrimination

Substance abuse can affect anyone. However, during the adolescent years, it has been shown that teenagers are at an increased risk for experimenting/abusing illicit substances. It is the experience of Mattie Rhodes Center's Substance Abuse Program, Nuevo Amanecer/A New Dawn, that adolescents' main drug of choice is marijuana, followed by alcohol and inhalant use. An alarming fact is the majority of clients served by the Program are youth, specifically from Latino immigrant families.

Many times immigrant families struggle with acculturation and discrimination while trying to adapt to their new life in the United States. As a way of coping with stress, they sometimes turn to drugs and alcohol. When these families are affected by substance abuse, their lives become more complex. Thus, providing Spanish language services and finding solutions to these challenges is important at Mattie Rhodes.

"There has always been a need for services in Spanish, but many providers have been challenged to develop linguistically and culturally specific services for the Latino community," said Luis Cordova, Substance Abuse Program Coordinator.

Families who seek substance abuse counseling are also often times faced with their children's gang involvement. "Most youth who are in gangs are using and selling drugs," said Cordova. Over his 15 years of mental health and substance abuse programming experience, Cordova has noticed an increase in illicit drug sales, gang activity, and other crimes associated with gangs in Jackson County.

In the Kansas City area, but specifically at Mattie Rhodes Center, there has been an increase of families who are seeking and requesting Spanish language services for substance abuse challenges. Additionally, parents have asked for help in getting their children out of gangs and changing the negative behavior caused by such involvement. Our clients have also expressed need for case management services, education support groups and therapy for loved ones.

One mother, Lucia\*, shares her story in hopes that other families will take advantage of the services available at Mattie Rhodes Center. Lucia wants others to know that there is a place to go for help and that there is hope to change a bad situation into a positive learning experience.

Lucia came to the U.S. from Mexico to "provide a better life for her children." Once in the "land of opportunity," the struggles of acculturation, language and the complex legal system became obstacles for her family. Her children encountered differential treatment from peers at school, which resulted in feelings of isolation and depression. Lucia felt she could not co-exist in this

*Insights Into La Familia is a quarterly publication of the Mattie Rhodes Center. Its purpose is to provide business, government, philanthropic, and community leaders with an understanding of the values, attitudes, and experiences of Hispanic families, adults, and children – and help them appreciate the severe economic, educational, cultural, and linguistic barriers confronting the Hispanic population. Each issue will profile a client of the program, offer important demographic information and data, and offer suggestions about how to better work with Hispanics in Kansas City, Missouri.*

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## Nuevo Amanecer “A New Dawn”

The Mattie Rhodes Center’s substance abuse program, Nuevo Amanecer/A New Dawn, is currently being developed to address the gaps in services for substance abuse and mental health treatment for the Spanish speaking community in Jackson County, Missouri. The program provides Individual, Family, and Group Therapy, as well as group education. Nuevo Amanecer/A New Dawn is funded by H & R Block Foundation, Community Backed Anti-Drug Tax (COMBAT), and the United Way. For more information please call Luis Cordova at 816-471-2536.

*Lucia  
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world and wanted to go back to Mexico. As her children began to experience the “American dream,” they also began to experience the problems, challenges and attitudes of “Los Americanos.”

“My daughter was beginning to misbehave, use drugs and hang out with people who were in gangs,” Lucia says. “I didn’t know how to stop her, so I locked her in a closet and did not let her leave the house.” As a result, her daughter Melinda\* was taken away by the court and placed in a foster home.

Melinda now knows her mother was desperate to keep her safe. She attributed her activity to the friends she had at the time.

“If my mother had not tried to keep me home, I may have ended up pregnant or even dead,” she said.

Melinda also ran away from home and hid from her mother, who wanted to commit her to a mental institution. Lucia thought her daughter was “insane” and as a result, she was stealing, drinking and smoking. But that was not the case.

“My boyfriend was in a gang and he did all of that stuff,” Melinda said. “I thought it was fun, but I did it for him because I cared about him.”

Lucia’s oldest son was also hanging out with known gang members. She did not know how to properly deal with the problem and as a result, it got worse. She was then referred to Mattie Rhodes, where she sought help to deal with her family’s situation. The family began to utilize individual substance abuse counseling, family therapy and case management services in Spanish. Since receiving substance abuse counseling at Mattie Rhodes and residential care, Melinda’s behavior has improved. Melinda has stopped using drugs and is allowed to go home for unsupervised weekend visits. Her relationship with her family has become more positive and healthy.

Melinda said her time with Cordova has had a major influence on how she feels now. “He has helped just by listening to me and talking to me,” she said. “It has allowed me to help myself.”

Cordova said she has made great strides in treatment. “From where Melinda was a year ago, she is a completely different person,” he said. “Her grades have improved, behavior has changed and progress has been extraordinary.”

Melinda advises others in her prior situation to think twice before turning to drugs, alcohol or gangs. “There is no benefit, and you’ll end up ruining your life,” she said. “If you want to attain something great in life, it can’t be done by stealing, drinking or killing.”

This family’s progress can be attributed to their participation in treatment and having had the opportunity to access culturally and linguistically competent services.

\* Name has been changed.

## Interview with Jessica Garcia, MSW Bilingual Substance Abuse Counselor

As children transition to young adults they go through a great deal of experimentation. This stage in their lives is highly susceptible to negative influences such as drug use. With an increased rate of drug use among Latino adolescents, it is the duty of Jessica Garcia, MSW, Substance Abuse Counselor, to assure that our youth stay on the right path.

### What are the current trends regarding substance abuse counseling with Latinos?

*From my experience with the adolescents in the Nuevo Amanecer/A New Dawn program, the three most commonly used drugs are marijuana, inhalants and alcohol. Recently I have started to notice an increase in inhalant use, such as spray paint. I have also found many of the adolescents abusing illicit drugs are also involved in gang activity.*

*Also, a big problem to be aware of is the fact that more and more adolescents are using illicit drugs as a way to self-medicate. The adolescents could be experiencing depression, conflicts in their home or past abuse issues. They will use the illicit drugs as a way to cope and not have to think about their problems.*

### How have you been able to address these issues?

*I spend a lot of time teaching them about the effects of using the drugs, including short-term and long-term negative effects. Many of the adolescents have no idea what they are really doing to their bodies. During our sessions I also try to help them explore alternatives to using illicit drugs and help them identify non-using activities. Basically, I try to help them discover their interest in other activities, such as arts or involvement in sports.*

### What are other effective ways to address these issues?

*One of the biggest needs these adolescents have is access to a safe place to participate in non-using activities. The adolescents need playgrounds and other recreational activities in their own community. Additionally, if the adolescents had more afterschool programming opportunities, mentors and positive role models, this would decrease the risk of them using illicit substances. Activities like these would allow the kids to make more positive connections with other kids.*

### Which population most often seeks substance abuse counseling?

*I often see women who are seeking help for their children. A lot of times their son/daughter is having behavioral issues, failing academically, not wanting to go to school or having other conflicts in the home.*

### What is the most rewarding part of your job?

*When I see the youth getting involved in other positive activities and they start to think about the future and not just here and now. When I see kids getting motivated and starting to think about themselves having a positive future that is when I know I am making a difference in their lives.*

## Did you know?

- Nearly 50 percent of teenagers try marijuana before they graduate from high school.<sup>1</sup>
- One in 10 Latinos ages 12 to 17 reported having used illegal drugs in the past month when surveyed.<sup>2</sup>
- Of the more than two million deaths each year in the United States, about one in four is caused by alcohol, tobacco and illicit drug use.<sup>3</sup>
- Stresses associated with constrained economic conditions, low educational attainment, and the possible impact of racism, are believed to make Latinos particularly vulnerable to alcohol and other drug use and associated problems.<sup>3</sup>
- Marijuana was the drug most commonly associated with Latinos charged with a federal drug offense in 2000.<sup>3</sup>
- Substance abuse destroys friendships, families, and careers. However, there is always a way out for the addicted if they decide to accept help.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> National Institutes on Health

<sup>2</sup> National Survey on Drug Use and Health

<sup>3</sup> California-Mexico Health Initiative

<sup>4</sup> Missouri Library World