

Barriers to Mental Health Care In Indianapolis Latino Youth: A BACE Survey Analysis

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Purpose:

Latino adolescents in the U.S. experience high rates of depression, anxiety, and suicidal behavior, yet have the lowest treatment rates for mental health conditions like Major Depressive Disorder. Barriers such as stigma, cultural values, and structural limitations contribute to this treatment gap. Past research, particularly on Latinas, has identified self-reliance and fear of family shame as key obstacles. This study focuses on identifying and evaluating these barriers among male and female Latino youth in the Indianapolis area, where current research is minimal.

Methods:

The *Your Life Your Story Latino Youth Summit* was a two-week summer camp in Indianapolis for Latino youth ages 12–16 from immigrant backgrounds. Participants (N=8) completed a modified BACEv3 survey assessing perceived barriers to mental health care, rated on a 0–3 scale across 24 relevant items. Small sample size was attributed to unexpected political factors. Responses were averaged overall and then stratified by gender.

Results:

Top reported barriers were:

1. “Wanting to solve the problem on my own” (1.625)
2. Tie: “Concern about what my family might think, say, do or feel” and “Dislike of talking about my feelings” (1.0)
3. “Thinking the problem would get better by itself” (0.875)

When stratified, males emphasized discomfort with emotional discussions and family opinions, while females cited embarrassment and concern over peers’ opinions. Traditional structural barriers like cost and transportation were rated low.

Conclusion:

Consistent with earlier studies, self-reliance remains a key deterrent to mental health care for Latino youth. Gender differences reveal unique concerns among males and females. These insights can help providers tailor approaches to better engage Latino adolescents and reduce the persistent gap between mental health needs and service use in this population.