



**Binational Health Week:
Key Messages
October 1-16, 2011**

Binational Health Week is one of the largest mobilization efforts in the Americas to improve the health and wellbeing of the underserved Latino population. For more than a decade, federal and state government agencies, community-based organizations, and thousands of volunteers have come together annually to conduct education workshops, host health fairs and provide insurance referrals and medical screenings for this population. **This is commitment!**

The U.S. Census projects that by the year 2050 there will be over 130 million Latinos in the U.S., comprising 30% of the population. Given the current disparities faced by Latinos, this will have serious implications for the health of the nation.

BHW calls for a renewed commitment to eliminating inequalities in the social determinants of health, with a focus on access to health services, insurance coverage and the prevalence of certain chronic and infectious diseases that disproportionately affect this population.

Key Facts on the five national campaigns:

Access to Health Care Services

- Latino and immigrant families are less likely to have access to health insurance and health services than other immigrants and the native-born white population. In 2008, 31.7% of Latinos did not have health insurance compared to 10.7% among the White population.
- The main barriers to access to health care among Latinos include: immigration status, limited English language ability, financial difficulties, and the lack of knowledge on available resources such as community clinics and other public services available to low-income populations regardless of immigration status.
- The 2010 health reform to take effect in 2014 will help bring coverage to underserved Latino communities. In California alone, nearly 5.7 million Latinos will be newly eligible for participation in public health programs.¹ However, those who are undocumented are explicitly excluded from these benefits. This segment of the Latino community should be directed to low-cost services, community clinics, and services catering to everyone regardless of immigration status.
- The health of a country includes the health of its immigrants. Diseases do not recognize borders or social and legal status.

Women's Health (Cervical, Breast Cancer and Teen Pregnancy)

- Latina immigrant women are on average younger and are more likely to have children under age 18 living at home than other groups. They often have less participation in the labor force and earn lower incomes, thus affecting their access to health care.
- Breast cancer is the second highest diagnosed cancer in women living in the U.S. and the most commonly diagnosed cancer in Latina women.

- Latina women have the highest cervical cancer incidence rate than any other ethnic group; compared to White women, Latinas have a 70% higher incidence rate.
- Teen birth rates are highest among Latinas than any other race or ethnicity. Birth rates among Latina teens are more than twice that of White teen girls.

Infectious Diseases

- The border region suffers higher rates of tuberculosis, Hepatitis A and Hepatitis B than the rest of the country. This is likely related to frequent population movement, poverty and poor environmental conditions.ⁱⁱ
- There are 1.1 million people living with HIV/AIDS in the U.S. including 200,000 Latinos. Latinos account for 17% of new HIV cases and 21% of new AIDS diagnoses.
- Uninterrupted treatment is critical for the well-being of those infected with HIV. It is important to link traveling migrants living with HIV/AIDS with the resources that exist in their countries of origin.
- Tuberculosis rates are 7 times higher in Latinos compared to Whites. In 2010, there were 11,181 reported cases of TB in the United States; Latinos comprised 3,246 of those cases—more than any other ethnic or racial group.

Chronic Diseases

- The leading causes of death among Latinos in the U.S. are heart disease and cancer.
- The diabetes death rate for Latino men and women is at least 1.5 times higher than that of non-Hispanic whites.ⁱⁱⁱ
- Approximately 24% of Latino men and 22% of Latina women, ages 20 to 74, have hypertension.
- Diabetes and hypertension (high blood pressure) can damage the kidneys and lead to kidney disease. Kidney disease is a condition in which the kidneys are damaged and cannot filter blood and may lead to cardiovascular disease, anemia, and bone disease. Latinos have 2 times the rate of kidney failure compared to non-Latino Whites.
- Latinos have a 21% higher prevalence for obesity compared to Whites; over 40% of all Latino children are overweight or obese.

Mental Health

- According to the 2009 California Health Interview Survey, Latinos residing in California were more likely to suffer from psychological distress (7.4%) when compared to Whites (5.6%) and Asians (4.8%).
- This same survey found that in the last year 19% of Latinos reported having experienced moderate to severe lifetime impairment, 18% experienced social life impairment, and 15% had experienced work impairment due to an emotional/mental health problem.
- The process of migration disrupts social, familial, and romantic relationships that would have served as a protective factor—social support—against risky behavior in the past. Further, these long separations cause feelings of vulnerability, alienation, loneliness and disempowerment.
- Being undocumented in the U.S. can exacerbate the already vulnerable mental health status of Latinos. Dangerous and traumatizing border crossing experiences can have detrimental effects on one's emotional state.

BHW events will be coordinated by the consular networks of Latin American countries, including Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, Colombia, Bolivia, Ecuador and Peru. The Institute for Mexicans Abroad, the Mexican Secretariat of Health and Foreign Affairs, California's Department of Public Health, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Council of Mexican Federations in North America (COFEM), National University of Mexico (UNAM), University of Texas at San Antonio and the University of California School of Public Health's Health Initiative of the Americas (HIA) coordinate and staff multiple events to improve the health of the Latino population in the U.S.

BHW events will take place in 40 U.S. States and 3 Canadian Provinces, and nearly 4,000 health activities will reach over 600,000 people. Events include the Binational Policy Forum on Migration and Health, October 3-4th in San Antonio, Texas and many local and regional events in more than 300 cities and towns. See www.binationalhealthweek.org.

ⁱ Families USA, Understanding the New Health Reform Law, Fact Sheet, September 2010.

ⁱⁱ Office of Minority Health and Health Disparities, 2006.

<http://www.cdc.gov/omhd/Highlights/2010/HSeptOct10.html#15a>

ⁱⁱⁱ CDC, NCHS United States, 2009.