



Lessons in Equity: What Works in Services, Staffing & Leadership

Key Learning from a Latinx Advisory Committee Public Policy Listening Session

Hosted by Community Action of Skagit County

May 13, 2021

Misión LAC | LAC Mission:

- Creación de redes y relaciones. | Networking and relationship building.
 - **Asesoría y toma de decisiones. | Advising Decision-Makers.**
 - Fortalecer la comunidad apoyando el crecimiento del liderazgo. | Strengthen Community through Supporting Leadership Growth.
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Background:

At the Latinx Advisory Committee meeting on May 13, 2021, Community Action hosted guests from Skagit Regional Health who asked for a listening session to hear how their health system could better meet community needs. Participants, mostly direct service providers serving the Latinx, Spanish-speaking and Indigenous communities, gave such insightful feedback, that we've compiled their responses to apply to any LAC partner organization.

Request:

We ask LAC and other community partners to take this feedback and share it with their staff teams and leadership at their organizations.

For more information about the LAC, or to get involved:

- <https://www.communityactionskagit.org/latinx-advisory-committee/>
- LAC@CommunityActionSkagit.org

Key questions: Adapted from Skagit Regional Health to apply more broadly to partners in social services, education, government and other fields of work:

- What does the community want, need or prefer from a service provider?
 - What is the most important thing the service needs to have to make you comfortable with visiting them?
 - Is there anything that service providers in Skagit County can do to make the COVID vaccine more inviting for the community?
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Lessons Learned about Services & Outreach:

Hours of Operation

- **Extend hours beyond 5 p.m** so people can access routine services after they get out of work, rather than putting them off until emergent care is needed.

Language Access

- **Use Basic Language.** Don't use jargon.
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- **HUGE NEED for Spanish AND Indigenous interpretation, and translation of materials, and engage native speakers from the community as interpreters:** The following are Indigenous languages spoken in our region:
 - Mixteco Alto Sahim Sauí de la Montañas
 - Mixteco Bajo de San Juan de Huaxtepec
 - Triqui
 - Tu'un Savi
 - Zapoteco
 - Huasteco
 - Chinanteco
 - Náhuatl

Translation ≠ Interpretation:

- Interpretation includes cultural understanding. When things are being translated sometimes the meaning changes. An interpreter might have to say something 2-3 times to get the correct meaning, especially if they are translating from English to Spanish to Triqui.

Outreach/marketing/sharing information:

- **It is not about the message. It is the messenger.** Get to know your community by doing outreach. Hire people from the Latinx community that know the language, culture, and community to get the word out.
- **Provide information in different formats, such as videos with local testimony.** Promote and bust myths by sharing the stories of people who have had the service and the benefits to them.
- **Target Messaging to groups engaged with the community:** Such as the many local Spanish-language social media pages, radio stations, etc.

Longer appointments for clients who need interpretation:

- Simply providing interpretation does not equate to equitable access to services. If providers give the same amount of time to every patient they see (15-30 minutes), they are essentially giving half the time to patients needing interpretation
- Allow extra time not only for interpretation, but also for questions to allow for comprehension, and ask for demonstration of comprehension.
- Give supporting materials in simple Spanish and in images for those with low or no literacy.

Lessons Learned about Employment Pathways, Staffing and Leadership:

Changing hiring practices: The service provider is as important as the service

- **Are the educational requirements for your job positions necessary?** Education levels can be a barrier to hiring. Language help is necessary, but many hiring organizations are asking for a high school equivalent, AA, or BA. There are many young people in our community (15-17 years old) that speak 3-4 languages (Mixteco, Triqui, Spanish, & English) and have been interpreting for family members for years.
- **Hiring more bilingual staff.** Bilingual staff in social and health services are exhausted and overwhelmed. They are also being called in to help with interpretation in other departments or tasks when interpreters were not available. We can resolve this by hiring more bilingual staff, interpreters, getting more interpreter machines, or hiring more bilingual non-clinical positions that do not require credentialing or training. Positions such as Bilingual greeters, Bilingual facilitators, Bilingual receptionists, and not just Spanish, but also Indigenous Languages.
- **Treat language and community/cultural proficiency as the professional experience it is,** and give waivers for education or other experience. Or give hiring bonuses for these skills you value.

These are qualities most employers cannot train for, so pay fairly for the expertise that is only learned through lived experience in our community.

Create pathways to employment and professional development:

- Internship opportunities for highschoolers & college students
- Proposing on creating a new Translation program at Skagit Valley College
- Working with Skagit Valley College to connect bilingual graduates with medical, social service and other jobs. There are many students looking for jobs, but don't have experience.
- Replicate the Maestros para el Pueblo model (Mount Vernon School District and Skagit Valley College developing structured pathways local multilingual/multicultural students from high school through college, internship, and eventually to enter the education workforce)

You can't have equity for your client/patients if you are understaffing your services:

- Especially during COVID, direct service staff have experienced workplaces understaffing, which not only leads to overall lower quality of service and care, but also to burning out the Latinx, Spanish-speaking and Indigenous workers we hear agencies want to hire and retain.

Training for all staff (receptionists, providers, etc.)

- It is important to have welcoming, polite, and respectful staff. People are coming looking for help and don't want to feel like they are bothering staff. Many clients/patients feel they are interrupting.

Leadership Diversity:

- Is anyone on your board of directors or senior staff leadership a person of color, multilingual and/or multicultural?

With thanks to our meeting support from:

- **LAC Chair and Community Action Board Members:** Elizabeth Ibanez, Kati Ortiz
- **Facilitator:** Elizabeth Jennings, Community Engagement Manager, Community Action of Skagit County
- **Interpreter:** Erika Quintanilla, Language Exchange
- **Notes/logistics:** Isabela Ordonez, Community Action of Skagit County

With thanks to participants for sharing their wisdom at the May 13 meeting:

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