



HISPANIC/LATINO
BEHAVIORAL HEALTH
CENTER OF EXCELLENCE

Understanding and Identifying Teenage Dating Violence in Hispanic and Latine Communities

Michelle Evans, DSW, LCSW

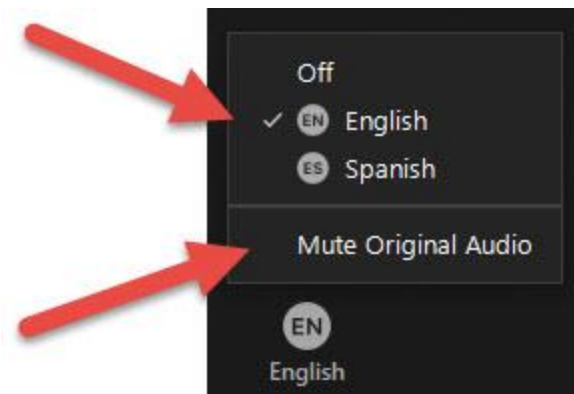
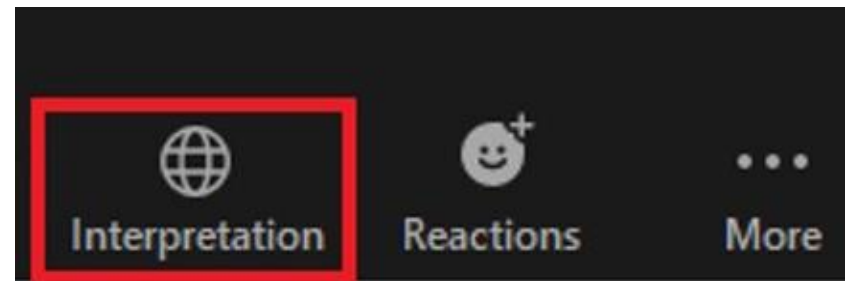


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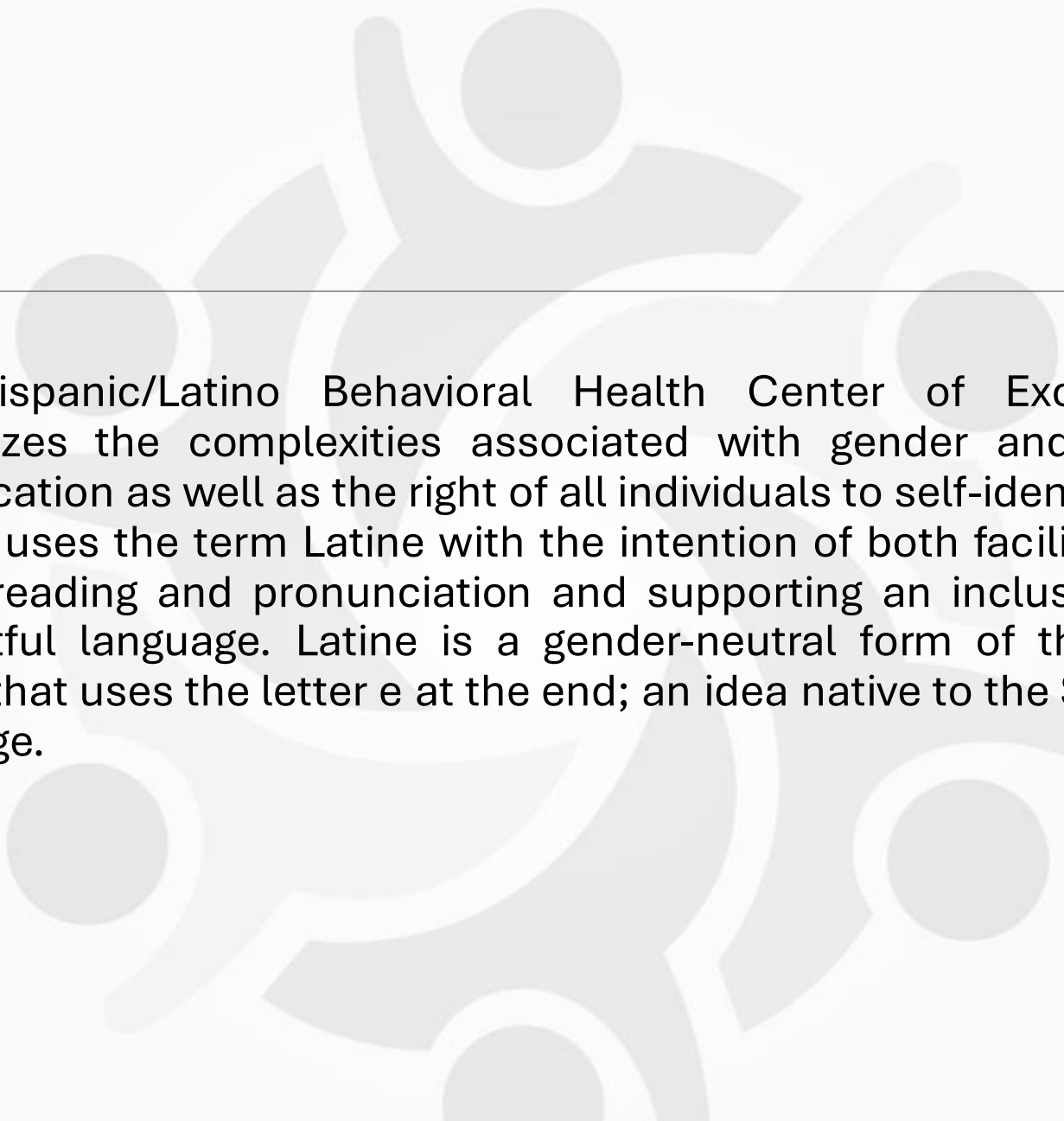
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Mission

Hispanic/Latino Behavioral Health Center of Excellence

To advance and support the sustainability of behavioral health equity by promoting community driven, culturally grounded and person-centered prevention, intervention, multiple pathways of recovery, and recovery supports for diverse Hispanic and Latine communities.



The Hispanic/Latino Behavioral Health Center of Excellence recognizes the complexities associated with gender and ethnic identification as well as the right of all individuals to self-identify. The Center uses the term Latine with the intention of both facilitating a fluent reading and pronunciation and supporting an inclusive and respectful language. Latine is a gender-neutral form of the word Latino that uses the letter e at the end; an idea native to the Spanish language.

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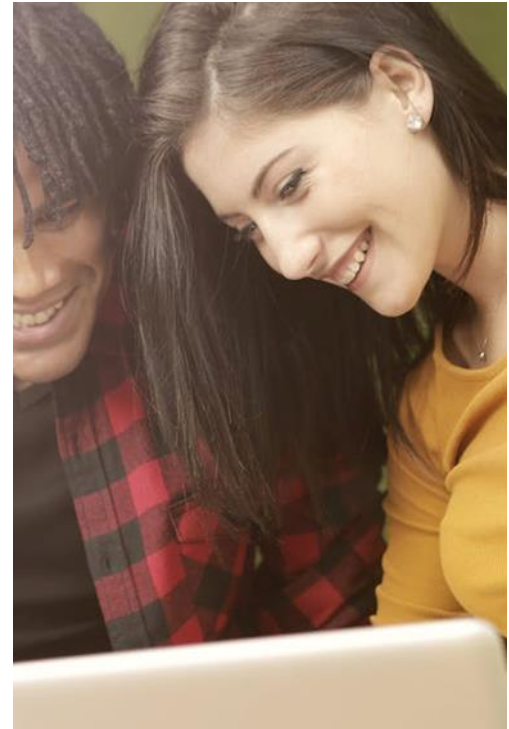
Dr. Michelle Evans is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker and Licensed Sex Offender Treatment Provider and Evaluator. She has worked in primarily with the Latine population throughout her career as a child welfare specialist and forensic evaluator and treatment provider. She is currently the Chief Executive Officer for Elgin Mental Health Center in Elgin, Illinois, a state forensic psychiatric hospital. She is in private practice at Nickerson & Associates, PC as a bilingual therapist where she treats adults and adolescents with mental health issues, substance abuse issues and sex addictions. She also teaches on these topics at Aurora University and Indiana Wesleyan University. Previously, she was the Assistant Dean for Health Professions and Public Service at Waubensee Community College, and she has held other positions within psychiatric hospitals. Throughout her career, she has worked to increase equity, justice and cultural awareness in these institutions. Michelle Evans earned a Doctor of Social Work and a Master of Social Work degree from Aurora University in Aurora, Illinois.

What is Teenage Dating Violence?

Teenage dating violence encompasses physical, emotional, verbal, and digital abuse within romantic relationships among adolescents.

Dating violence affects a significant portion of teenagers, with detrimental consequences on mental health, academic performance, and future relationship patterns.

Research indicates that dating violence is prevalent among Hispanic and Latino adolescents (Cuevas & Sabina, 2019; Vélez-Pastrana et al., 2018).



Teenage Violence Definition...

Teen dating violence (TDV), also called, “dating violence”, is an adverse childhood experience that affects millions of young people in the United States. Dating violence can take place in person, online, or through technology. It is a type of intimate partner violence that can include the following types of behavior:

- **Physical violence** is when a person hurts or tries to hurt a partner by hitting, kicking, or using another type of physical force.
- **Sexual violence** is forcing or attempting to force a partner to take part in a sex act and or sexual touching when the partner does not consent or is unable to consent or refuse. It also includes non-physical sexual behaviors like posting or sharing sexual pictures of a partner without their consent or sexting someone without their consent.
- **Psychological aggression** is the use of verbal and non-verbal communication with the intent to harm a partner mentally or emotionally and exert control over a partner.
- **Stalking** is a pattern of repeated, unwanted attention and contact by a current or former partner that causes fear or safety concern for an individual victim or someone close to the victim.

(Centers for Disease Control, 2024).

Cultural Considerations

Culturally sensitive therapy acknowledges and respects the unique values, beliefs, and experiences of individuals from the Hispanic and Latino community.

Factors such as acculturation, gender, and immigrant status influence the rates of dating violence within this demographic. Acculturation levels can impact relationship dynamics, which can influence the occurrence of dating violence. (Gonzalez-Guarda et al., 2013; Vélez-Pastrana et al., 2018).





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Cultural Context and Risk Factors

How family dynamics impact risk:

Traditional Values and Family Structures: Hispanic and Latino families often prioritize close-knit familial relationships and respect for authority figures, which can impact how dating violence is perceived and addressed.

Communication Patterns within Hispanic and Latino Families: Open communication about personal matters, especially regarding relationships, may be limited due to cultural norms and expectations.

Gender Roles and Expectations: Traditional gender roles may contribute to power imbalances within relationships, influencing the prevalence and dynamics of dating violence.

Influence of Cultural Norms on Relationship Dynamics: Cultural norms regarding respect, honor, and family unity can affect how individuals navigate and respond to dating violence.

Behavioral Warning Signs

Behavioral Indicators:

Changes in Mood and Behavior: Abrupt shifts in mood, increased irritability, or signs of depression may indicate the presence of dating violence.

Isolation from Friends and Family: Victims may withdraw from social activities and isolate themselves from loved ones as a result of controlling behavior by the abuser.

Multiple Instances of Violence or Manipulation: Dating violence can lead to long-lasting effects, potentially contributing to later intimate partner violence (Muñoz-Rivas et al., 2007).

Physical Warning Signs

Physical Signs:

Unexplained Injuries or Bruises: Visible signs of physical harm, such as bruises or injuries, without a plausible explanation, may suggest the occurrence of dating violence.

Frequent Health Complaints: Victims of dating violence may frequently report vague or unexplained physical ailments due to stress and trauma.



Academic Warning Signs

Academic and Social Impact:

Decline in Academic Performance: Victims may experience a decline in academic performance due to the emotional distress and distractions caused by dating violence.

Withdrawal from Social Activities: Teenagers involved in abusive relationships may withdraw from social interactions and extracurricular activities, fearing judgment or retaliation.

Barriers to Reporting

Fear of Stigma:

Concerns about Community Judgment: Victims may hesitate to report dating violence due to fear of societal stigma and negative judgment from peers and community members.

Fear of Bringing Shame to the Family: Cultural expectations of preserving family honor and reputation may deter individuals from disclosing their experiences of dating violence.

Reluctance to Discuss Private Matters: Cultural norms emphasizing privacy and familial unity may discourage individuals from seeking help or discussing personal issues outside the family.

Pressure to Maintain Family Harmony: Victims may feel obligated to prioritize family harmony over their own well-being, leading to a reluctance to disrupt the status quo by reporting dating violence.

Therapeutic Approaches

Establishing Trust and Rapport: Therapists should prioritize building trust and rapport with clients by demonstrating cultural understanding and respect for their experiences.

Encouraging Open Dialogue: Create a safe and non-judgmental space for clients to openly discuss their experiences of dating violence, addressing cultural barriers to communication.

Involving Family Members in the Therapeutic Process: Engage supportive family members in therapy sessions to foster understanding and support for the victim. Culturally sensitive interventions, including family involvement and addressing acculturation challenges, show promise in mitigating dating violence (Cuevas & Sabina, 2019; Vélez-Pastrana et al., 2018).

Addressing Cultural Dynamics within the Family: Explore and address cultural influences on family dynamics and relationship patterns to promote healthy communication and behavior.

Therapeutic Approaches (cont.)

Empowerment and Education:

Providing Resources and Information on Healthy Relationships: Equip clients with resources and educational materials on healthy relationships, boundaries, and assertiveness skills.

Building Self-Esteem and Resilience: Implement empowerment-focused interventions to help clients regain confidence, assertiveness, and autonomy in their relationships.

Identifying and Treating Other Risk Factors: Collaborative efforts addressing substance abuse and dating violence concurrently are crucial for prevention and intervention (Gonzalez-Guarda & Cummings, 2019).



Recommended Resources

National Domestic Violence Hotline: Provides resources, support, and information for individuals affected by domestic violence, including teenage dating violence. Website: <https://www.thehotline.org>

Loveisrespect: Offers resources, education, and support for young people to prevent and end abusive relationships. Website: www.loveisrespect.org

Break the Cycle: Provides resources and educational materials to empower youth to end dating violence. Website: www.breakthecycle.org

National Resource Center on Domestic Violence (NRC DV): Offers training, technical assistance, and resources for professionals working with survivors of domestic violence, including teenagers. Website: <https://nrcdv.org>

National Hispanic and Latino Mental Health Technology Transfer Center (MHTTC): Offers culturally tailored training, resources, and technical assistance to enhance the capacity of mental health professionals serving Hispanic and Latino communities. Website: <https://mhttcnetwork.org/centers/national-hispanic-and-latino-mhttc>

CDC - Dating Matters: Provides evidence-based strategies and resources for preventing teen dating violence, including online training modules for educators, parents, and other professionals. <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/intimatepartnerviolence/datingmatters/index.html>

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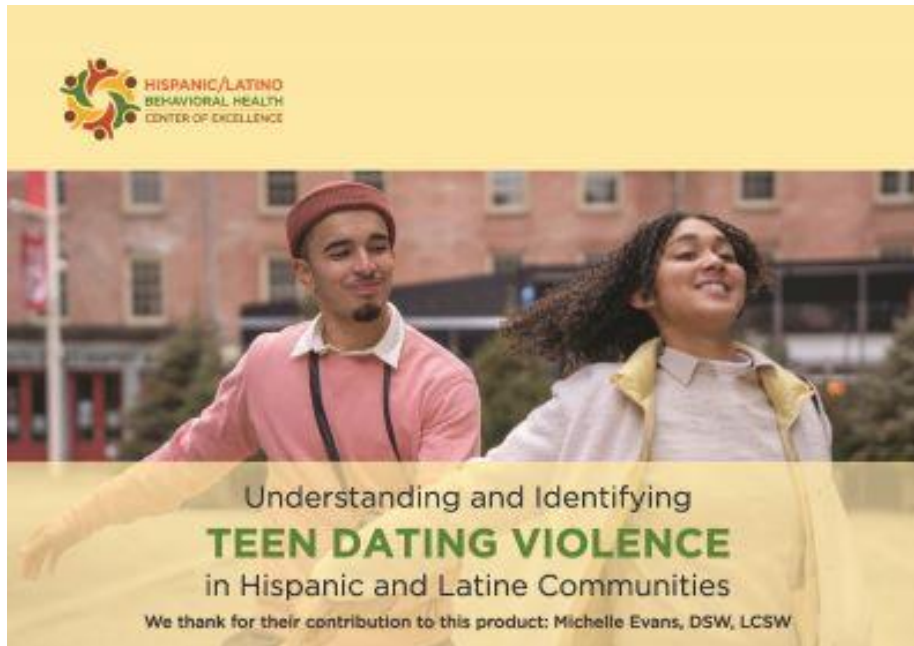
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Website: www.hispaniclatinobehavioralhealth.org

Email: info@hispaniclatinobehavioralhealth.org

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