

Cambridge Health Alliance
Center for Multicultural Mental Health Research
NIMH Advanced Center for Latino and Mental Health Systems Research

Center Description

The Center for Multicultural Mental Health Research (the Center), established in 2002, is located in the Department of Psychiatry at Cambridge Health Alliance, a Harvard Medical School Teaching Affiliate. The mission of the Center is to generate innovative mental health and substance abuse services research that helps shape policy, practice, and service delivery to reduce disparities and improve the well-being of multicultural populations. Utilizing collaborative approaches with researchers, clinicians and community groups, the Center supports an array of research activities as well as nurtures a core of junior researchers. Our dynamic team of multidisciplinary mental health and substance abuse researchers includes psychologists, psychiatrists, policy analysts, health economists and statisticians. The Center also houses an administrative infrastructure that supports and helps manage the research projects.

Research at the Center addresses questions regarding mental health and substance abuse service delivery for multicultural populations using psychiatric epidemiology, systems and organizational theory, economics and financing, and qualitative and quantitative methods. In addition, the Center has a strong focus on community-based and applied interventions to improve service delivery for multicultural populations. An important objective of the work is to provide information to inform and ameliorate policy barriers to effective service delivery. Our collaborative work with service providers, administrators, and consumers deeply informs the development, implementation, and dissemination of our research into the broader academic, community, and policy arenas.

There are currently three large projects operating at the Center: the Advanced Center for Latino and Mental Health Systems Research, the National Latino and Asian American Study (NLAAS), and Excellence in Partnerships for Community Outreach, Research on Health Disparities and Training (EXPORT). Funded by the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), the Advanced Center seeks to conduct research that will contribute to designing interventions aimed at reducing disparities in mental health services among Latino and African-American populations. Also funded by NIMH, the NLAAS is a large, national epidemiologic study that collected data on the lifetime and last-year prevalence of psychiatric disorder and rates of service use for a nationally representative sample of Latinos and Asians. The EXPORT Center is funded through the National Center for Minority Health and Health Disparities, and aims to generate and explore interventions that can ameliorate service disparities in asthma and mental health for disadvantaged Latino and African Caribbean populations.

The Center facilitates information exchange, bringing together people interested in multicultural mental health issues, both through hosting conferences to share research findings and providing multiple training opportunities for junior investigators interested in disparities research. The

Center supports postdocs through the FRC-IV Training Consortium as well as through NIMH minority supplements, and provides a research community to critique and review research proposals, analysis plans, results and papers for scholarly journals. Many individuals from within the Cambridge Health Alliance, from the greater Boston area, and from around the country regularly consult with Center staff regarding their work.