Residents Give Their Candid and Personal Insight

At CYC, we know that our residents are the experts about what their communities need and the ways we can support children and families rebound and recover from the effects of this pandemic. In Rhode Island, we’ve seen that 45% of COVID-19 cases are Latino while Latinos make up only 16% of the population. So, in early May, we convened our Resident Advisory, comprised of Latino residents living in Central Falls, Providence, and Pawtucket. Diverse in age and country of origin we asked them about how COVID-19 has affected their communities and what our next steps should be. Here’s what we learned.

“We need trusted partners and government to work together without ego to provide for the most needy in our community, particularly those with children.”

—Dario

What are the driving factors behind these disparities?

Although the members of our Resident Advisory discussed many specific situations and reasons for these numbers, two issues came up as primary factors:

**A LACK OF RESOURCES**
- Work is often nonexistent or dangerous. People feel pressure to return to work before it is safe or are taking jobs in high risk conditions, such as nursing homes.
- A lack of resources means families are struggling to provide the essentials. People find themselves having to choose between buying groceries or masks.

**POOR COMMUNICATION**
- The Latino community lacks access to basic information about how to stop the spread of COVID.
- Changing government rules and regulations are challenging to understand and not available in a wide range of formats. Simply translating the Governor’s press conference is not enough.
- When NGOs and government officials have said that resources are available for food, money, or personal protective gear, people don’t have accurate information to access them.

How has the social and emotional health of you and your neighbors been impacted?

- All of the members reported feeling various degrees of isolation, grief, and loss. For individuals without family close by, isolation is especially acute.
- Many reported severe anxiety for various reasons including: fear of getting sick or of not having enough money and uncertainty about what will happen in the next day or week.
- Many individuals and families are experiencing despair and suicidal thoughts. Members encouraged each other to ‘not give up’ and ‘not to think of dying’.
How will residents use their strengths to rebuild?

- Throughout the conversation, members emphasized the strength in their community as a critical asset to get through the pandemic and to rebuild after.
- Empathy, understanding, and solidarity all were brought up as factors in community cohesion that will mitigate the effects of the pandemic.
- Members emphasized the need for trusted partners and government to combine all their resources and work together to provide for the most needy children, youth and families in their communities.

“This crisis is not just about physical health, it is about emotional health”

—Isabel

“Friends, organizations we can trust, and our community can keep us going”

—Damari

**CYC’S RESPONSE**

**We are committed to:**

- **Listening** to residents and turning their feedback and recommendations into action and investments.
- **Doubling down** on our capacity to serve communities of color with evidence-based behavioral health supports and programs that they have selected to best fit their needs.
- **Supporting** our most vulnerable children, youth, and families with a focus on unaccompanied immigrant youth and their families.
- **Building** on the protective factors that exist among our residents. Among the many outcomes that, CYC programs have been shown to improve are:
  - Family cohesion
  - Prosocial opportunities
  - Emotional wellbeing
  - Attachment to school
  - Community cohesion