

MENTAL HEALTH IN NYC PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES IN NYC PUBLIC SCHOOLS- WITHIN THE LATINO  
COMMUNITY.

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## Abstract

This research will explore the effectiveness of New York City public school's mental health services within the Latino Community. How has the school system improved the mental health care in the last three years? This research will also explore how the New York City Department of Education has performed managing the Covid-19 pandemic and its effect on kids, teens, and young adults from the Latino community. Mental illness in Latino households is considered a taboo and often disregarded, while it is a major public health concern. According to an article from New York School talk (2018), 13 percent of children ages 8 to 15 have had a diagnosable mental disorder. Thirteen percent might not seem like a high statistic, however considering that this represents the entire population of children in New York City, imagine what this number could mean for the Latino community. This research will investigate the work that the New York city local government and public service representatives have done with these communities to educate them on the importance of acknowledging mental illness symptoms and reaching out for help.

## Introduction

According to the American Community Survey (2019) Hispanics & Latinos make up 28.3% of New York City's population, there were 2.49 million Hispanic or Latino Americans residing in New York City, making it the largest racial or ethnic minority group.

An article from New York School Talk reveals that 13% of children 8 to 15 have had a diagnosable mental disorder (2018). Latino youth are far more likely than their peers to have mental health issues, which often go unaddressed and untreated. Immigration, cultural identity, language barrier, poverty, and discrimination create high levels of stress among Latino youth. In New York City children, teens, and young adults are currently battling social isolation, loneliness and mental illness in increasing numbers and the language barrier aggravates this for the Spanish-speaking youth and their families. Has the public school system improved their mental health care within the Latino/Hispanic population in the last years? In the last years there has been a significant lack of resources in the New York City Public Schools, especially in those schools located in poor neighborhoods where majority of students are from a minority's households. New York City Department of Education should increase the number of hires in bilingual professionals and place them in schools from the most needed areas to help the Latino Youth and their family. The addition of extra resources that can be available within the school system to these families might help to improve the mental health of Latino Youth.

## Summary

Even though New York City department of education has worked relentlessly during past three years to implement better mental health services for their public schools, it is still presenting its challenges. Data shows Latino Youth population mental health illness still on the rise, and access to mental health services for this community has been traditionally lower.

A report from Gotham Gazette (2020) reveals the Covid-19 pandemic has had profound effects for children across New York city as well as their families. Access to mental health care for young people, especially Hispanics youths is more important than ever. Yet, there are major issues with access and the consequences are already frightful. According to this report in 2020 the New York City Mayor announced new steps to provide more mental health support to young people, especially in areas of the city hardest hit by Covid-19. However, there is still a large disparity within the Latino youth population and the scope of the problem might not be fully realized.

Amid the effort from the local government to implement school based mental health clinics and hire more than 500 new social workers to help address the mental health problem across the NYC public schools, not much has been done within the Latino population. According to the New York City Department of Education (2020) Latinos/Hispanics are the largest demographic group. It was reported that 1,455 social workers were in the budget (Independent Budget Office-2020) 488 were Hispanics but only 122 were bilingual Spanish-speakers. Educating families on the importance to reach out for help when there is any sign of mental health illness should be the first step, help them identify signs their youngsters might be presenting (depression, anxiety, and other mental stressors) but they are being disregarded. There is an urgent need to increase the

number of bilingual Spanish speaking social workers but also understanding the diverse cultures. Social workers play a significant role in the schools. Not only they work on advocating for the children's overall needs, but they assist teachers on cultural values and support home/school collaboration among other things.

