



SUICIDE AMONG LATINA ADOLESCENTS

**Rosa M. Gil, DSW
President & CEO
Comunilife, Inc.**

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Who We are

Comunilife was founded in 1989 as a not-for-profit health and human services agency. **Our mission is to improve the quality of life and create a healthier tomorrow for New Yorkers with special needs in the Hispanic and broader communities – by providing culturally competent health and human services and a continuum of affordable and supportive housing.**

Each year, our rich continuum of housing and services meets the needs of more than 3,500 low-income and vulnerable New Yorkers.

What We Do

Comunilife offer 1,636 units of affordable and supportive housing for homeless adults living with HIV/AIDS, mental illness and also low income New Yorkers.

- Vida Guidance Center – culturally competent centered-, South Bronx-based mental health clinic – provides 21,000 outpatient visits a year.
- In 2008 we opened Life is Precious™ an innovative Suicide prevention program for Latina adolescents.

Latino Population

- 47% of the US population.
- 17% of NYS population.
- 28% of NYC population

- 37% of all Latinos in NYC are foreign born.
- 25% of Latinos speak Spanish at home. Of those, 53% speak English “very well”; 47% “less than very well” (United States Census Bureau, 2010)

- In NYC, 40 percent of all children living in poverty are Latinos.
- 92 percent of Latino children are U.S. citizens.
- 58 percent of all Latino children live in immigrant families with one or more foreign-born parents.

- Research estimates that there are about 11.2 million undocumented immigrants in the United States (Pew Research Center, 2012)
- There are approximately 500,000 undocumented immigrants living in New York State
- It is estimated that 62% of undocumented immigrants are from Mexico

Latina Adolescent Suicide: A Mental Health Inequality

Suicidal Behavior Among Latinas Adolescent

- **In New York State suicide is the second leading cause of death for Latina teens(NYSDOH, 2017)**
- Every two years the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) issues a Report on high risk behaviors among the Country's high school students.
- The Report includes the incidence of adolescents feeling sad and helpless, seriously considering and attempting suicide.
- Latina teens have higher rates of suicidal behaviors in comparison to African American, Asian and White adolescents

Suicidal Behavior Among Latinas Adolescent (Continued)

In New York City, the Boroughs with the highest percentage of Latina teens **who felt sad and helpless** in 2015 were:

- Staten Island 43.9%
- Bronx: 41.9%
- Manhattan: 41.4%

Suicidal Behavior Among Latinas Adolescent (Continued)

In New York City, the Boroughs with the highest percentage of Latina teens **seriously considering suicide** in 2015 were:

- Staten Island 20.4%
- Queens: 19.9%
- Manhattan: 19%

Suicidal Behavior Among Latinas Adolescent (Continued)

In New York City, the Boroughs with the highest percentage of Latina teens **attempting suicide** in 2015 were:

- Staten Island: 18.8%
- Bronx: 15.1%
- Queens: 13.2%

Risk Factors

There are many risk factors that contribute to Latina teens suicidal behaviors.

- New Risk Factors: The Age of Trumpism
 - Vilification of immigrants and Latinos in particular
 - Fear of deportation
- Universal Factors include poverty, disadvantaged neighborhoods, self-esteem, body image.
- Unique to Latinas:
 - Acculturation Stress
 - Conflict over gender roles
 - Conflicts within families
 - Peer/social networks – bullying
 - Isolation
 - Conflicts in school and academic failure

Life is Precious™

- Evidenced Based Best Practices to reduce suicide behaviors among Latina teens: A mental health research inequality.
- SAMHSA: Of 44 studies of suicide prevention programs serving youth (1980s to present), only 3 showed any decrease in suicidal thoughts and none tailored the interventions to Latina teens.
- Qualitative Marketing Research
- Community Defined Practices
- Life is Precious™
- Operates after-school and Saturdays
- Locations in Bronx, Brooklyn and Queens

Life Is Precious™

- **CRITERIA FOR ADMISSION:**
 - Latina teens between 11 and 18 years old
 - Psychiatric Diagnosis
 - In treatment in a mental health clinic
 - Must be in school
 - Parental Consent

Life is Precious™

PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

- Academic Support
- Creative Art Therapy
- Wellness Activities
- Family Support and Activities
- School advocacy
- Community coalition to reduce suicide among Latina adolescents

Program Evaluation

- Partnership with Columbia University, NYS Psychiatric Institute, Center of Excellence for Cultural Competence.
- Goals of the Evaluation:
 - Does the Program reduce suicidal thoughts?
 - What works in the Program?
 - Can the Program be replicated in other settings?
 - Can Life is Precious be determined to be a **community-defined evidence based best practice**?

PRELIMINARY RESEARCH FINDINGS

- Statistically significant, albeit small, changes in suicidal thoughts and depressive symptoms
 - Especially for those with history of sexual abuse, tobacco or alcohol use
 - Reduction of suicidal ideation when girls attends the program for a month.

To find out more about our programs,
please visit our website at:

www.comunilife.org

Twitter: @comunilifeinc

Facebook: facebook.com/Comunilife