



# **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](http://www.comunilife.org)**

Twitter: @comunilifeinc

Facebook: facebook.com/Comunilife