

Health Department Launches Poster Campaign In Schools and Clinics To Help Address High Rates Of Depression In Latinas

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The Health Department announced the launch of a new awareness campaign to help destigmatize mental health problems and promote positive coping strategies among young Latinas, who suffer from depression at higher rates than other groups. This fall the Health Department began distributing posters, palm cards and compact mirrors with the tag line, "Don't keep it in - talk to us" in both English and Spanish. In addition to public middle schools and high schools, the campaign will enlist shelters, health clinics, beauty salons, community-based organizations and the Health Department's District Public Health Offices.

Latina teens who are struggling with mental health issues are urged to call 311 and ask for LIFENET or *AYÚDESE*, a service of the Mental Health Association of New York City, for free confidential multilingual help and referrals.

"Depression is a treatable illness," said Dr. David Rosin, Executive Deputy Commissioner at the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. "Too many young Latinas have unaddressed mental health issues and are hurting themselves. We hope this campaign will reach these young women and encourage them to call for help if they are feeling sad or overwhelmed."

A 2005 survey of New York City public high school students suggests that Latina teens suffer disproportionately from depression. Some 46% (versus 31% of white and Asian girls) reported feeling sad for at least two of the past four weeks. While the number of actual suicides among teen girls are very low, 14% of Latinas had attempted suicide during the past year versus 8% of white girls.

When interviewed in small groups, many Latina teens report high levels of stress at work, home and school. Those who are recent immigrants with limited English may be overwhelmed with taking care of siblings at home or helping parents navigate life in New York City, even as they struggle to adjust and fit in themselves. Although some Latina teens report talking with friends and family about their problems, that is not always enough.

"Getting professional help, outside an immediate circle of family and friends, can help with the problems teen girls are facing," said Dr. Rosa Gil, founder of the Hispanic Mental Health Association and founder and President of Comunilife, Inc., which provides community-based mental health, rehabilitation services and housing to patients of diverse populations. "Doctors and therapists who work with young Latinas or recent immigrants in similar situations can help young women realize they are not alone and help them feel better."

Schools, clinics and community groups can order promotional materials by calling 311 and asking for the DOHMH Latina Media Campaign.

Youth Risk Behavior Survey

This information is based on results of the 2005 New York City Youth Risk Behavior Survey, a self-administered, anonymous questionnaire adapted for New York City from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Youth Risk Behavior Survey. In New York City, the survey has been conducted in public schools every two years since 1997.

<http://www.nyc.gov>