

**Barrett Smith; Aubrenie Jones, MPH; JW Randolph, MPH**  
Tennessee Department of Health, Office of Strategic Initiatives

## OBJECTIVE

Develop an educational and actionable toolkit to assist County Health Councils (CHCs) to engage underserved populations in their community health assessment (CHA) processes.

## BACKGROUND

- Tennessee is home to over 350,000 Hispanic or Latinx residents and over 250,000 Spanish-speakers.<sup>1</sup>
- In 2020 30.6% of Hispanic or Latinx Tennesseans were uninsured and 25.5% of the same population cited cost as the reason they had not seen a physician in the last 12 months.<sup>2</sup>
- Research has found that, nationally, only 36.2% of physicians speak Spanish.<sup>3</sup>
- Every county in Tennessee has a County Health Council (CHC) that is responsible for conducting a Community Health Assessment (CHA) to determine and develop action plans that address community public health issues.
- Many CHCs are seeking to be more equity-minded in their CHA and engage populations that are often overlooked.

### Improving Health Outcomes for Hispanic/Latinx and Spanish-Speaking Tennesseans

#### Advancing Health Equity

The social determinants of health are non-medical factors that influence health outcomes. They are the conditions in which people are born, grown, work, live, and age, and the wider set of forces and systems shaping daily life. Many of these social determinants of health lead to health inequities or disparities, which can be defined as when an individual has an unfair opportunity to achieve their full health potential. Reducing health inequities or disparities requires ensuring equity in healthcare access, treatments, and outcomes.

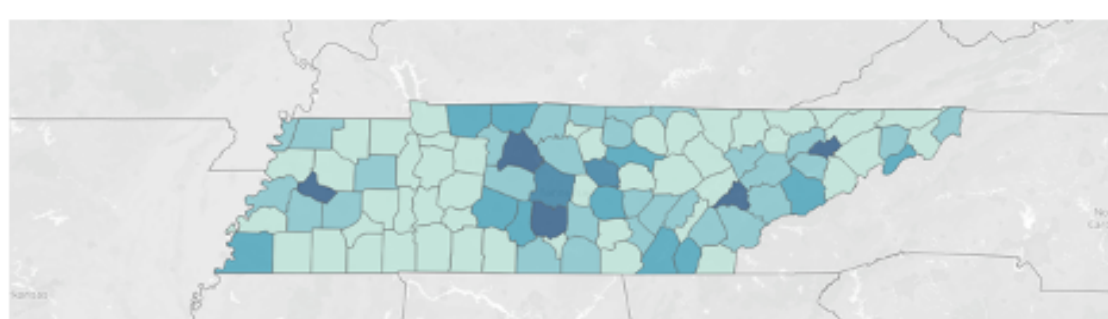
Tennessee is home to over 350,000 Hispanic or Latinx residents and over 250,000 Spanish-speakers. Access to quality and affordable healthcare has been shown to lead to improved health outcomes; however, in 2020 30.6% of Hispanic or Latinx Tennesseans were uninsured and 25.5% of the same population cited cost as the reason they had not seen a physician in the last 12 months. Additionally, research has found that only 36.2% of physicians nationally speak Spanish and in the same report Nashville was highlighted as one of the top ten metro areas with a significant language gap between patients and providers. This data highlights the stark disparities and fundamental barriers that the Hispanic/Latinx and Spanish-speaking population faces in Tennessee. Therefore, it is imperative for communities across the state to seek to address these disparities with the goal of improving health care quality and access for all Tennesseans.

#### Ways to Engage this Population in your CHA

- Translate your Community Survey into Spanish
- Invite members of the Spanish-Speaking/Hispanic/Latinx community to participate in a Listening Session
- Hold a Key Informant Interview with a member of the Spanish-Speaking/Hispanic/Latinx community in your county to gain their unique perspective on the health of your county

All the corresponding translated worksheets and resources to complete the tasks above are available to you in SharePoint. Please contact [health.councils@tn.gov](mailto:health.councils@tn.gov) with any questions or if you need further assistance.

Click [HERE](#) to visit an interactive dashboard that will tell you more about the Spanish-Speaking population in Tennessee and your community.



#### Resources and Strategies for Community Action

- Adapt Materials to be Appropriate for Your Community**
  - Translate resources into different languages and seek to ensure it is culturally compatible. Also consider putting the information into a format that is more likely to be utilized by the community you are looking to serve.
    - Example:** Campesinos Sin Fronteras, a non-profit in Arizona, found that using *fotonovelas* (a short booklet aimed at the general public that portrays a dramatic story using photo vignettes and captions) was an effective way to provide general and behavioral health information and education to their Latino population.
      - [Fotonovela developed for farmworkers and their families that focuses on skin cancer and skin cancer preventions](#)
- Provide a Personal Approach**
  - There is diversity within and across Hispanic/Latinx and Spanish-speaking communities. A one-size-fits-all approach is unlikely to work for everyone. One way to address this is to hire bilingual, diverse staff from the community to help build understanding into your outreach and engagement efforts.
- Use a Behavioral Health Peer Model**
  - This looks like involving community members and behavioral health consumers in your outreach activities. Staff should reflect the population you are serving in terms of ethnicity, language, and socioeconomic status.
  - Example:** The New Jersey Association of Mental Health and Addictions Agencies, Inc. (NJAMHAA) assigns peer specialists to places of worship in the community. Peer specialists and community support workers make resources available during Sunday church services. They are also available to answer questions from congregants.
- Use Language Familiar to Your Community**
  - Providing assistance in Spanish is important to reaching Spanish-only speakers or those with limited English skills.
  - Promotores de salud/community health workers (CHWs) are bilingual individuals from the community who understand the community served. CHWs generally share the ethnicity, language, and socioeconomic status of the community members they serve. These social attributes and trusting relationships enable CHWs to serve as a liaison or intermediary between health and social services and the community.
- Engage Community Members on Their Own Terms**
  - It is important to provide various opportunities for individuals to learn about and take part in health care programs. Find ways to become involved in existing community events.
  - Example:** The HOY Recovery Program provides culturally relevant substance abuse services in New Mexico and as a part of their work conduct pilgrimages in association with local churches to commemorate significant social and spiritual events while also helping to raise awareness about risk factors associated with health issues faced by the community.
- Partner With Community Organizations**
  - Maximize your outreach efforts through partnerships with neighborhood programs, schools, hospitals, non-profits, churches, and cultural/community centers. Many partner organizations may have bilingual capacity or cultural and community knowledge that could enhance your engagement efforts.
- Host Community Events**
  - Health Fairs (ferias de salud) are an effective and popular way to engage a broad range of Hispanic/Latinx community members. Health fairs can provide a safe and trusted venue for businesses and individuals in the

community to learn about and discuss health care options and emerging health care opportunities.

- Communicate Directly with Community Members**
  - It is important to ensure that outreach campaigns reach individuals and families in places they already go to, such as schools, doctor's offices, public libraries, Spanish grocery stores/markets, homeless shelters, public transportation and on communication channels they regularly access, such as the internet and television. Outreach campaigns using culturally appropriate and in-language messaging are more engaging and easily understood.
- Use Media as a Resource**
  - Media such as talk radio, television channels, church newsletters, ads on social media targeted for your region, newspapers, and community magazines provide opportunities to expand outreach efforts. Media outlets geared toward Latino audiences are especially effective.
  - Example:** The Colorado Department of Health Care Policy and Financing, with partners, developed and produced the video series, "Encrucijada: Sin Salud no Hay Nada." The series consisted of 12 half-hour episodes that provided information on health insurance programs and ways to access health care. The format was developed to meet the interest of the community through a Spanish-language soap opera (telenovela). The telenovela involves health issues affecting Hispanics and the services the state provides.
- Address Barriers**
  - Be aware of the challenges that keep individuals in your community from using services and understanding their health care options. Barriers can include homelessness, childcare challenges, inflexible work schedules, lack of transportation, low levels of reading comprehension, need for English translation, provider mistrust, and other psychological and cultural barriers. Again, engaging community partners and trusted community leaders can be invaluable assets when it comes to addressing and hopefully overcoming barriers to health care access.

#### Community Organizations in Tennessee that Work with the Latinx and Spanish-Speaking Population by Region

##### East

[Latinx Task Force - Knoxville](#)  
[Bridge Refugee Services - Knoxville and Chattanooga](#)  
[Catholic Charities of East Tennessee](#)  
[Centro Hispano de East Tennessee](#)  
[HoLa Hora Latina |](#)

##### Mid-Cumberland

[Nashville Area Hispanic Chamber of Commerce](#)  
[Stereonashville](#)  
[Nashville International Center for Empowerment](#)  
[Siloam Family Health Center](#)  
[Futuro](#)  
[YMCA of Middle Tennessee Latino Achievers](#)  
[Catholic Charities of Nashville at Casa Azafraán](#)  
[Nashville Latino Health Coalition](#)  
[Casa de la Cultura Latino Americana - Nashville](#)  
[Conexión Américas](#)  
[Hispanic Family Foundation](#)

##### Northeast

[Language and Culture Resource Center - ETSU](#)

##### Southeast

[Bridge Refugee Services - Knoxville and Chattanooga](#)  
[La Paz Chattanooga](#)

##### West

[Catholic Charities of West Tennessee](#)  
[Latino Memphis](#)  
[Casa Luz - Memphis](#)

##### Statewide

[Latinos for Tennessee](#)  
[Tennessee Immigrant and Refugee Rights Coalition](#)  
[Tennessee Latin American Chamber of Commerce](#)  
[Tennessee Foreign Language Institute](#)

#### Translation Resources

- [Tennessee Foreign Language Institute - Translation Services](#)
- [DeepL - Free Online Translation Service](#)

## METHODS

- Reviewed current literature and resources on engaging the Spanish-Speaking and Hispanic/Latinx communities in public health initiatives
- Solicited feedback from colleagues on the OSI team to ensure accessibility and that the toolkit was effective and comprehensive in its content

## FINDINGS/OUTCOMES

The toolkit contains:

- Latest data on health disparities faced by Spanish-Speaking and Hispanic/Latinx Tennesseans
- An interactive map highlighting where Spanish-Speakers live in TN
- CHA specific action items
- Broader community action strategies
- List of partner organizations across the state
- List of free translation resources

## CONCLUSIONS

- CHCs can increase awareness and facilitate impactful actions to address health issues that the Spanish-Speaking and Hispanic/Latinx Tennesseans face.
- This practicum allowed the opportunity to create avenues for local communities to think about incorporating health equity into their work, and take specific, actionable steps towards addressing health disparities in their communities.

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:** Special thanks to the Tennessee Department of Health, Office of Strategic Initiatives Team, specifically Aubrenie Jones and JW Randolph for their mentorship and guidance, and the Vanderbilt University, Master of Public Health Program.

#### REFERENCES:

- U.S. Census bureau, American Community Survey 2020 5-Year Estimates
- IBID; KFF analysis of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)'s 2013-2020 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS).
- <https://www.pnewswire.com/news-releases/first-ever-national-study-to-examine-different-languages-spoken-by-us-doctors-300537822.html>