

# PacWest ITAC Learning Modules

Cultural Crossroads in Disabilities

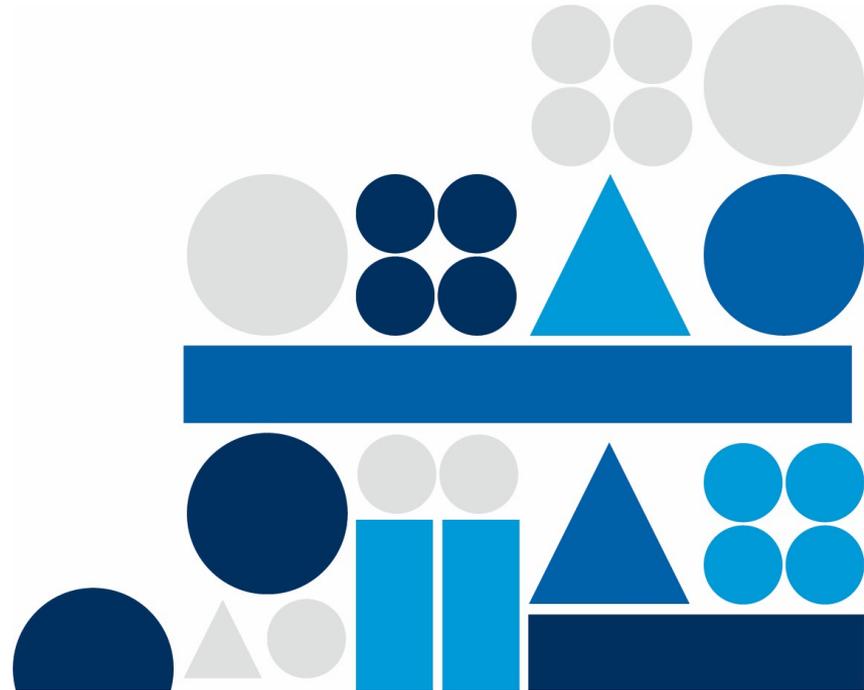


# Serving the Spanish-speaking ASD Community

Sylvia J. Acosta, PhD, Associate Professor  
University of New Mexico Center for  
Development and Disability



CENTER FOR  
DEVELOPMENT  
& DISABILITY



# Learning Objectives

1. Identify barriers to access to services for Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) among Hispanic/Latino/a or Latinx Spanish-speaking families
2. Address myths about bilingualism and ASD



Photo by [Omar Lopez](#) on [Unsplash](#)

# Learning Objectives

3. Describe models for addressing barriers and providing culturally and linguistically appropriate services for ASD for Spanish-speaking families
4. Recognize differences which occur in Spanish-speaking communities in New Mexico



Photo by [Omar Lopez](#) on [Unsplash](#)

## Disparities for Hispanic/Latinx Families

1

Racial/ethnic  
disparities in  
ASD exist

2

CDC found  
Hispanic children  
less likely to be  
diagnosed with  
ASD

3

Spanish-  
speaking  
families  
experience  
barriers to  
services

# Barriers for Access to Diagnosis

1

Parent  
knowledge  
of ASD

2

Understanding  
of the  
medical  
system

3

Knowing  
where to go  
for help

# Barriers for Access to Intervention

1

Limited  
access to  
health  
information  
about ASD

2

Unmet  
therapy  
needs

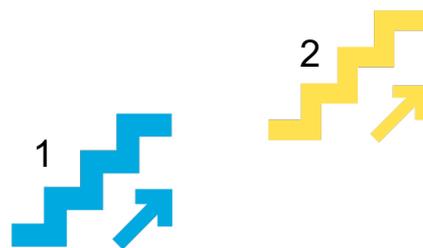
3

Stigma  
about  
mental  
health or  
disability

# What does it mean to be bilingual?



**Simultaneous learning:** when children learn two languages at the same time usually before the age of 3 years old



**Sequential learning:** a second language is introduced after learning one language (usually after the age of 3 years old)

## Bilingualism and ASD

Research has shown that bilingualism does not interfere with language learning for either language.

Literature on bilingualism in children with ASD is relatively sparse.

In general, there is no evidence that children with neurodevelopmental disabilities cannot become bilingual.

## Mythbusters

The following statements are ~~FALSE~~

Bilingual children with ASD will be confused by learning two languages

Bilingual children with ASD will continue to be delayed in learning communication skills

Bilingual children with ASD should focus on only one language (English)

## Addressing Barriers to Services for Spanish-speaking Communities

- Increase Spanish-language information about ASD
- Increase awareness about signs of ASD in the community



**Apoye su desarrollo y crecimiento**

Descargue la aplicación gratuita de los CDC  
*Sigamos el desarrollo*

Encuentre más información en [www.cdc.gov/Sigamos](http://www.cdc.gov/Sigamos)

The advertisement features a photograph of a man with glasses kissing a young child on the cheek. The child is wearing a yellow and white patterned shirt. The background is a light purple and white gradient. The text is in Spanish, promoting a free CDC app for monitoring development. The app icon is shown as a colorful rainbow with a blue circle containing a white 'i'.

# Addressing Barriers to Services for Spanish-speaking Communities

- Service delivery is culturally and linguistically appropriate
- Increase bilingual/bicultural providers
- Use of family navigators or cultural brokers



Photo by [Dollar Gill](#) on [Unsplash](#)

## Diagnostic Clinic Model for Spanish-speaking Families

1

Bilingual  
Providers

2

Culturally  
Linguistic  
Competent  
practices

3

Non-  
verbal  
cognitive  
testing

4

Language  
proficiency  
testing

5

Feedback  
and  
follow-up  
services

## Parent Training Models for Intervention

1

Evidence-based practices

2

Culturally responsive

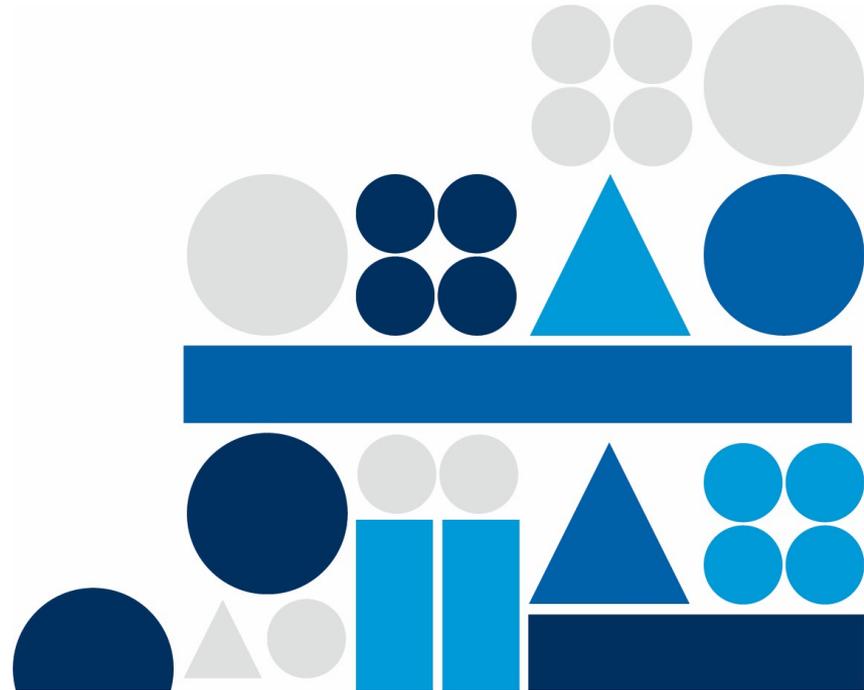
3

Use of peer models/  
bilingual providers

4

Addressing needs of rural areas via telehealth

**Thank you!**



# References

Beauchamp, M., Rezzonici, S. & MacLeod, A. (2020). Bilingualism in school-aged children with ASD: A pilot study. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, (50), 4433-4448. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/32306218/>

Drysdale, H., van der Meer, L., & Kagohara, D. (2015). Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder from Bilingual Families: A systematic review. *Review Journal of Autism And Developmental Disorders*, 2(1), 26-38. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40489-014-0032-7>

Lopes, K., Magaña, S., Morales, M. & Iland, E. (2019). Parents Taking Action: Reducing disparities through a culturally informed intervention for Latinx parents of children with autism. *Journal of Ethnic & Cultural Diversity in Social Work*, 28:1, 31-49. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/15313204.2019.1570890>

# References

Maenner M.J., Shaw K.A., Baio J., et al. (2020). Prevalence of Autism Spectrum Disorder Among Children Aged 8 Years – Autism and Developmental Disabilities Monitoring Network, 11 Sites, United States, 2016. *MMWR Surveillance Summary*; 69(No. SS-4):1-12.  
[http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.ss6904a1external icon.](http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.ss6904a1external%20icon)

Paradis, J., Genesee, F. & Crago, M.B. (2011). Dual language development and disorders: A handbook on bilingualism and second language learning, 2nd edition. Paul H. Brooks: Baltimore.

Zuckerman, K.E., Sinche, B. Mejia, A., Cobian, M., Becker, T. & Nicolaidis, C. (2014). Latino Parents' Perspectives on Barriers to Autism Diagnosis, *Academic Pediatrics*, 14, 301-308.  
<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/24767783/>

# Interview

# Thank you for joining us!



Developed with support from AUCD and the Interdisciplinary Technical Assistance Center on Autism and Developmental Disabilities, which is funded through a Cooperative Agreement (Grant # UA5MC11068) with the Health Resources and Services Administration's Maternal and Child Health Bureau (MCHB). The contents do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of MCHB, the Health Resources Services Administration, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, or the U.S. Government.