

# Latino Families of People with I/DD: Disparities in Family Support

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## Purpose

To examine racial/ethnic disparities in family support by understanding the experiences and outcomes of Latino family caregivers of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) by reviewing the research literature.

## Background

- ❖ Family members of people with I/DD provide important support throughout the life course.
- ❖ Latinos have become the largest racial/ethnic minority group in the US and one of the fastest growing.
- ❖ Latino adults with I/DD are more likely to live with their families.
- ❖ In their role as family caregivers of people with I/DD, families both provide support as well as need support themselves.



## Disparities for Latino Family Caregivers

### Mental Health Outcomes

Family caregiving is valued in Latino culture and there are mixed outcomes for caregivers. Latina mothers have experienced more distress, higher levels of depressive symptoms and lower morale, and greater risk of depression in midlife. Yet, families also experience positive impacts of a child with I/DD. Latino family caregivers can be more isolated if they are recent immigrants, have a language barrier, lower SES and lower access to health information.

### Service Utilization

Latino families of children with I/DD use services less. Some reasons for this include: felt poorly treated by disability service providers, felt alienated by service system and felt professionals held negative attitudes about their child with disabilities.

- Barriers to access services: language, poverty, and discrimination
- Early intervention service barriers: financial, linguistic, and cultural incongruence

### Physical Health Outcomes

Latina caregivers are at risk of having longer-term physical health problems which may negatively impact their ability to continue their caregiving role. Compared to non-caregivers, older Latina mothers that live with their adult child with DD have poorer health outcomes, smoke more, and see the doctor less. Older Latino caregivers have a greater risk of heart problems and arthritis-related impairments. The highest health risks are for Latina mothers that are both unemployed and unmarried, or less acculturated.

### Financial Outcomes

Over 28% of poor people in US are Hispanic. Over 75% of family caregivers are women. Parents of children with DD had markedly lower savings and income. Caring for a child with DD often requires greater expenses and more lost wages, especially of mothers, which decreases their savings for the future, including retirement. Living in poverty and raising a child with I/DD can be seen as a double jeopardy.

## Caregiver Interventions

Few interventions include racial/ethnic minority families. Most that do target racial/ethnic minority families do not include them in the development, evaluation, and implementation.

### Current Interventions:

- ❖ By Caring for Myself, I Can Better Care for My Family
- ❖ Parents Taking Action
- ❖ The Future is Now



## Future Research

More research is needed to better understand Latino family caregivers, such as research on culturally competent interventions. Research should include various family perspectives beyond just the mother, such as siblings, fathers, and grandparents.

## Conclusions

- ❖ Professionals and researchers need to **listen more deeply** to the experiences of Latino families of people with I/DD to ensure they are addressing disparities.
- ❖ More culturally competent interventions are needed for Latino family caregivers.