

Considerations for Responding to Latinx or Hispanic Survivors

Adapted from the Georgia SART Guide by Delia Lopez and Mariana Rodriguez, UMOs

The victim specific or cultural consideration section is designed to help SART members understand victims from diverse cultures to ensure all victims are served with respect regardless of their background. This section is intended to be a tool to help professionals; however, it is the responsibility of each SART member to integrate culturally relevant and responsive care into their services for victims. It is hoped that SARTs will utilize these considerations to increase their understanding of diversity and learn ways to serve victims with respect to their cultural background and identities. ¹

Latinos/Hispanics are from different countries with different cultural traditions. Although immigration status may vary (documented/undocumented), many belong to families that have lived in the United States for many generations.

Even if a victim appears to speak English, ask if they would prefer to have an interpreter. Only hire trained or qualified interpreters, do not use family members or children to interpret. For more information, please refer to *Considerations for Working with an Interpreter*.

Be informed about the special challenges faced by immigrants (racism, language barriers, sexism, cultural differences, immigration status, etc.) Understand the Latino/Hispanic community often fears reporting crimes to the police as victims do not want their family to be separated, or fear family members could be deported.

In many families, children are documented, and it may be that parents or elders in the family are undocumented. It is best to ask about citizenship only if necessary, as this can build trust with families and reduce fear.

In some Latin American countries, sexual assault and/or domestic violence are not viewed as a crime. Victim of sexual assault may often believe the assault is their fault. Victims may choose not to discuss the assault with their family because they do not want to scare, dishonor, or worry their family, or because of religious beliefs. Express your concerns with the victim about the seriousness of the abuse/assault and reassure them that it was not their fault.

Criminal Justice System Considerations

Individuals who are immigrants may not report a sexual assault due to fear of immigration problems or deportation. They often distrust the legal system or may have had or heard of previous negative experiences. Be aware of how these fears and how they may impact a victim's ability to disclose or report an assault. Provide reassurance of confidentiality and the safety of the interaction.

¹ *Georgia Sexual Assault Response Team Guide*. 2021. [2021sartguidev2-final.pdf \(svrga.org\)](#)

Barriers to reporting include deportation of family members, family separation, financial disparities, immigration status, not being believed by extended family members both inside and outside of the United States, and retaliation after reporting.

In many Latin American countries, photos of the suspected/convicted perpetrators appear in the news and, in some cases, the victim's picture may appear alongside of it. This may interfere with the victim's willingness to report, because they do not wish to be identified publicly.

There are several ways professionals can attempt to overcome these barriers by providing education and information on their rights as a crime victim, regardless of their legal status in the United States, building trust and rapport, and only asking about immigration status if necessary.

It's very important to connect victims with culturally specific advocacy organizations who can offer language appropriate materials that provide awareness and education for victims and their families on how sexual assault and domestic violence are addressed in the United States criminal justice system.

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