

ENTRE NOSOTROS

AT HOMELESS CHILDREN'S NETWORK

Findings from July 2024 to June 2025



HOMELESS CHILDREN'S
NETWORK

This report was prepared by Indigo Cultural Center as part of an independent evaluation of the Entre Nosotros program. The perspectives and interpretations presented here are those of the evaluators and are not intended to represent the official views of Homeless Children's Network.

Detailed information about Indigo Cultural Center, Homeless Children's Network, the Entre Nosotros program, and the literature guiding this report are available at the end of this report in the section, *Background and Context*.

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Entre Nosotros youth participants.

Introduction

PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

The purpose of this report was to evaluate Entre Nosotros at Homeless Children's Network (HCN). Entre Nosotros (in English, *Within Us*) is a community mental health program that fosters culturally affirming mental health and wellness spaces for Latine-identified and Spanish-speaking communities to access and reclaim holistic healing practices which empower multicultural identities and values individual/family healing journeys. Entre Nosotros' goal is to destigmatize mental health and enhance Latine wellness through culturally-rooted, trauma-informed, and community-based group support services and holistic case management services. This program prioritizes working with Latine-identified and Spanish-speaking individuals and families; newcomers to the U.S.; those currently, formerly, or at risk of being unhoused; Indigenous groups; Afro-Latine; school-age youth; and LGBTQIA+ people. In fiscal year 2024-2025, to pilot the program, Entre Nosotros clinicians led five 10-week school-based support groups for Latine newcomer youth (42 served). In addition, Entre Nosotros clinicians offered a parenting support group to Latine families with children aged 0-18 at an emergency shelter site in San Francisco (6 served). The parenting support group targeted caregivers, specifically.

Entre Nosotros Contracted Performance Objectives for the 2024-2025 Fiscal Year

Entre Nosotros met its goals of providing support groups and case management service Latine-identified and Spanish speaking youth and families.

This year, we aimed to pilot the Entre Nosotros program with goals including:

• Serve 24 youth	Objective Exceeded
• Facilitate 2 youth groups	Objective Exceeded
• Serve parents and caregivers	Objective Met
• Provide case management services to families	Objective Met

As a result, HCN fostered culturally affirming mental health and wellness spaces for Latine and Spanish speaking communities, promoting individual and family journeys of healing.

For additional, detailed information about the program's achievement of performance metrics see the table *Entre Nosotros Performance Objectives* on page 4.

COLLABORATIVE PROCESS AND PARTICIPANTS

Together, with HCN, Indigo Cultural Center evaluated the impact of Entre Nosotros this year. In line with a Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) rooted in racial equity, HCN staff, including the HCN Entre Nosotros Leadership team, collaborated with the Indigo Cultural Center team on evaluation design, survey development, data collection, and the interpretation of quantitative and qualitative findings.

The current evaluation explored the impact of HCN's Entre Nosotros in its pilot year. **The present study sought to explore the following research questions for the 2024-2025 fiscal year:**

1. What is the reach of the Entre Nosotros program in San Francisco?
2. What capacities does Entre Nosotros foster for youth and families that support positive adjustment?
3. How does the Entre Nosotros program promote a culture of care for Latine identified and Spanish speaking youth and their families?

We collected data about both the Newcomer Support Groups for youth and the Parent Support Group for caregivers. For the Newcomer Support group, youth participants completed a survey at the beginning of the program (pre-surveys) and at the end of the program (post-surveys). Forty one (41 of 42) youth participated in the pre-test survey and 35 participated in the post-test survey across five support groups.

In addition, program support staff (e.g., teachers, school administrators, and social workers) completed surveys on their perceptions of the impact of Entre Nosotros on youth participants. Three (3) support staff completed the survey.

For the Parent Support Group, we attempted to survey caregivers. However, we were unable to gather data on their individual experiences. Thus, we held a focus group with Entre Nosotros staff (two clinicians and one case manager) to explore their perceptions of impact.



HCN's Latine Heritage Month Celebration.

Evaluation Findings



HCN'S ENTRE NOSOTROS SERVED A DIVERSE COHORT OF LATINE IDENTIFIED YOUTH AND FAMILIES

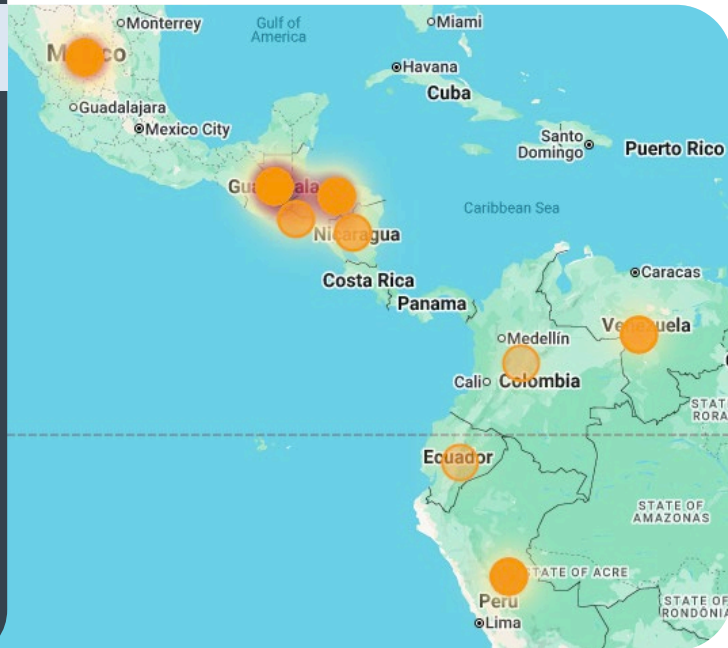
Entre Nosotros was launched in an effort to support the quickly growing population of Latine-identified and Spanish-speaking newcomer families in San Francisco. From July 2024 to June 2025, the Entre Nosotros team held five (5) Newcomer Support Groups for youth in four (4) different schools. The youth-focused Newcomer Support Groups engaged 42 youth. Youth ranged from as young as 5 years old to 14 years old. The average age of youth participants in the program was 9 years old. In addition, Entre Nosotros served all gender identities and supported youth from various countries of origin. The image below provides the countries of origin for youth.

Entre Nosotros Program Performance Objectives			
Performance Objective	Goal	Achieved	% to Goal
Implement Youth Newcomer Support Groups	2 groups	5 groups	250%
Youth supported in groups	24 youth	42 youth	175%
Implement Parent Support Groups	2 groups	1 group	50%
Parents/Caregivers supported in groups	10 caregivers/ parents	6 caregivers/ parents	60%
Provide Case Management Services	25 individuals	10 individuals	40%



Entre Nosotros Participants

Country of Origin	% of Participants
Guatemala	17.1%
Mexico	14.6%
Honduras	12.2%
Peru	9.8%
Venezuela	7.3%
El Salvador	4.9%
Nicaragua	4.9%
Colombia	2.4%
Ecuador	2.4%
Did not respond	24.4%



Entre Nosotros youth participants.

In addition to the youth focused Newcomer Support Groups, Entre Nosotros facilitated a virtual Parent Support Group where they were able to serve six (6) mothers living in a partner emergency and transitional shelter setting. Further, the Entre Nosotros team served an additional 10 clients and their families with drop-in Case Management services located at one partner school site.

HCN'S ENTRE NOSOTROS FOSTERS YOUTH'S POSITIVE ADJUSTMENT AND TRANSITION TO THE U.S.

We found that youth in the Entre Nosotros Newcomer Support Program demonstrated increases in outcomes related to their safety and connection and their coping skills. A list of specific outcomes explored can be seen in the table below. We found that youth demonstrated increases across every outcome assessed. For example, for comfort felt at school, participants' scores increased from 3.60 out of 4.00 at the start of the program to 3.90 out of 4.00 at the end of the program. This was a statistically significant increase. **Together, these findings demonstrate the profound and positive impact of the Entre Nosotros on youths' positive adjustment and transition to the U.S.**

Youth Outcomes from Participating in the Entre Nosotros Newcomer Group (1 = No, do not agree to 4 = Yes, I agree)				
Domain		Before Participating in Newcomer Support Group	After Participating in Newcomer Support Group	Newcomer Support Group Impact on Outcome
Safety and Connection				
	I feel comfortable at school.	3.60	3.90*	Increased*
	I feel connected to my cultural heritage.	3.10	3.60*	Increased*
	I have a place where I can go to feel safe.	3.40	3.70	Increased
	I have a trusted adult that I can talk to.	3.50	3.60	Increased
	I have a friend that I can talk to.	3.60	3.70	Increased
	I feel comfortable meeting new people.	3.30	3.40	Increased
Positive Coping				
	I have strengths that I am confident in.	2.90	3.50*	Increased*
	I know how my body reacts to stress.	3.00	3.10	Increased
	When I have big feelings, I have positive thoughts to help myself feel better.	3.10	3.40	Increased
	I know how to care for myself when I am feeling stressed.	2.90	3.20	Increased

Note: An * denotes a statistically significant change



contributed to positive changes in youths' behaviors related to engaging in school activities. This change in behavior and attitude towards school and program activities may be related to the Newcomer Support Group making it more comfortable and safe for youth to be in the overall school space.

"They look forward to the group and they seem to be more open to participating in class."
- Community School Coordinator

School support staff (e.g., e.g., teachers, school administrators, and social workers) shared their perspectives about the impact of the program on youth. These reflections from program support staff underscore the deep impact of Entre Nosotros in **fostering peer connection, emotional validation, and a sense of belonging among newcomer youth**. Specifically, the responses highlight that supportive spaces to process the complexities of migration and acculturation contributes to both normalizing shared experiences but also equips students with practical tools and emotional support to navigate their new environment with **greater safety, comfort, and confidence**.

For example, two of the staff described that youth's excitement and eagerness to participate in the groups

“

...at first the students were hesitant about being in the [Newcomer Support] group. Now they come down immediately when I call them, run to the cafe to get their lunch and make it to [the] group before the lunch bell rings."

- School Social Worker

”

Further, the support staff also described the impact of the Newcomer Support Groups in building connections among peers. They highlighted that the program helped students normalize feelings surrounding the acculturation process and navigating a new country.

"Our newcomer students are going through a lot of changes and this group helps normalize their feelings and helps them bond with each other. They also work on real life skills that help with the acculturation process."

- School Social Worker

"The experience of migration is intense and multifaceted. It's so important for students to have a space where they can learn to process the experience while also trying to learn at school. They are holding a lot and navigating a lot; this is just one thing we can do to ease the process."

- Community School Coordinator

"Students have [become] familiar of others' experiences that are similar to them creating an environment that cultivates a sense of belonging and acceptance" - School Social Worker

Finally, the HCN Entre Nosotros staff also reflected on the program's impact on youths' adjustment at school. Uniquely, the staff shared that they noticed the program also **built capacities** for the entire family as they supported

caregivers advocate for youth in schools, navigate systems like the education system, and gain confidence in their parenting and communication.

"We help [families] with building their capacity to reach out to their schools, or be involved in their relationship with their children, strengthening that bond as well and opening up those connections and that communication is really important." -Entre Nosotros Clinician

A CULTURALLY-ROOTED APPROACH WITH A SYSTEMS ORIENTATION PROMOTES A CULTURE OF CARE

We collaborated with the Entre Nosotros staff to explore the ways in which a culture of care was promoted by the program. The team defined a culture of care as building strong relationships with their clients that are culturally responsive, safe, trusting, reliable, and brings hope. Our focus group conversations with the Entre Nosotros staff revealed that a culture of care was promoted in two key ways: by utilizing a culturally rooted approach and maintaining a systems orientation.



A Culturally-Rooted Approach

Entre Nosotros fosters a culture of care by centering the cultural identities, values, and lived experiences of Latine newcomer youth and families. The HCN Entre Nosotros staff describe their work not as transactional service delivery, but as a deeply relational and community-rooted mission which helps them to reduce stigma, promote healing, and strengthen family and community resilience.

At the heart of this culturally rooted approach is language alignment between the clinician and family. HCN Staff repeatedly emphasized the power of offering services in families' preferred and primary language (Spanish). This alignment in language was not only a matter of comfort, but was noted to be a critical pathway to establishing trust,

emotional connection, and holistic healing. The established connection strengthens the therapeutic relationship and invites authentic engagement in the healing process. In the focus group, one clinician reflected on this from their own experience as an immigrant who had to navigate challenges related to language:

"It was really hard for me to express my thoughts, feelings and emotions in English. It's not the same, the processing, it's not the same... being able to provide Spanish-speaking services means families can express themselves fully and feel understood." - Entre Nosotros Clinician

The program's culturally rooted approach also plays a vital role in challenging stigma around mental health in Latine communities. Staff shared that building trust and normalizing emotional expression are key to helping families view mental health support as empowering rather than shameful. This trust is cultivated not only through language and cultural understanding, but by involving parents directly in the process and honoring collective cultural values. One of the most powerful examples of this is the Entre Nosotros program's intentional use of *familismo*. *Familismo* is a deeply held value that prioritizes close, interdependent family relationships. Entre Nosotros staff operationalizes this value by engaging entire families in the healing process,



Entre Nosotros youth participants with Entre Nosotros Therapists.

supporting intergenerational dialogue, and helping caregivers and youth build emotional literacy together. In doing so, the program affirms that healing is not only individual, but communal. One staff member shared what it meant to them to be able to provide culturally-rooted care:

“

*So our clients and families can receive support referrals or linkages to holistic and Indigenous services [such as having access to] provider lists of curanderos, and for me to facilitate indigenous healing practices in my work, it means to be able to provide Spanish speaking services to the families, you know, to process their thoughts, their feelings, their Emotions, in their language of origin... **These practices empower and are important to the Latine community because they promote cultural connection, resilience, holistic health, and it's important to connect mental health services with cultural values,** to understand how cultural values impact the mental health in these communities, to reduce the stigma and to empower and to respect.*

- Entre Nosotros Clinician

”

A Systems Approach

Beyond the individual impact, the Entre Nosotros staff describe the program's included focus on shifting systems of care, like schools. Particularly, Entre Nosotros staff describe how

collaboration with schools has helped educators and school staff become more aware and informed on how to support the unique needs of newcomer families. The staff note that many of these schools have little experience with newcomer families and lack the resources and expertise to adequately support them:

“We are educating people at the school level on the concept of newcomers, what is the impact, how to understand these kids and what they're going through, and how to support the families.” -Entre Nosotros clinician

“Some of these schools had no idea we could support children who just arrived. They didn't know organizations like ours existed. Just having our name out there has changed how schools think about supporting newcomers.” -Entre Nosotros clinician

These insights highlight how Entre Nosotros not only supports individual newcomer clients through culturally responsive care, but also plays a vital role in **transforming school systems to be more inclusive and responsive**. Through ongoing collaboration and education, the program is building awareness among educators and school staff—many of whom have limited experience with newcomer populations—ultimately strengthening the capacity of schools to better understand, welcome, and support newcomer youth and their families.

Implications

Entre Nosotros crucially speaks to the growing need to support Latine newcomer families in San Francisco. While the program was just launched in the past year, findings from this study highlight promising outcomes among Latine newcomer youth and families. Not only has Entre Nosotros demonstrated significant and positive impacts on youth and families, it also builds capacities for systems such as schools to support Latine-identified immigrant populations. The findings from our study have several implications for practice and policy.

First, our findings demonstrate that Entre Nosotros crucially speaks to the growing need to support Latine newcomer families in San Francisco. While these

impacts are monumental for the community, the Entre Nosotros program is not currently externally funded.

Funders should consider investment in and the sustained funding of Entre Nosotros over a multi-year period.

Funding for Entre Nosotros will allow HCN to continue serving the growing population of Latine newcomer families in this unique and important capacity. Additionally, funding for this program may be used to broaden the reach of Entre Nosotros throughout San Francisco by hiring additional Spanish-speaking clinicians and case managers. This will allow the program to support a wider range of schools and even more Latine newcomer youth and families.

In addition, with the continued support for Entre Nosotros, **other organizations seeking to support newcomer families may look to the program as a successful model and framework.** The Entre Nosotros program is an excellent example of a community centered, culturally affirming model that yields positive outcomes for youth and their families. It is critical to invest in the future of immigrant families and establish safe spaces for them to thrive. Entre Nosotros is not just a model of care—it is a catalyst for transforming systems of care supporting newcomer families into systems of hope, healing, and thriving.



Entre Nosotros youth with an HCN's Entre Nosotros Program Therapist.

Conclusion



The present study explored the Entre Nosotros program, which stands out as a beacon of culturally rooted care and resilience-building for Latine and Spanish speaking newcomer families in San Francisco. Despite this being the pilot year, findings from this study highlight promising outcomes. The present study demonstrated the program created safe, affirming spaces that support healing and thriving for Latine newcomer youth. Further, we found that these transformations were made possible through a culturally rooted approach inclusive of a focus on the systems that youth interact with, most specifically, schools. In fact, we found evidence that Entre Nosotros contributed to shifts in the school systems towards being more inclusive and trauma-informed. Taken together, our findings suggest that in a time where immigrant families face fear of deportation, lack of safety and stability, and limited avenues for resources and support, Entre Nosotros offers a powerful model of how programs can respond to community needs with love, cultural affirmation, and connection.

Background and Context Supplementary Materials

Literature Guiding this Evaluation Report

Nation-wide estimates predict that by 2040, 33% of all students will be from immigrant households (Gonzalez et al., 2014). Developmentally, childhood is an important time period for identity development which becomes even more crucial among youth navigating multiple cultural contexts (Gonzalez et al., 2014). Current research has demonstrated the deleterious effects of acculturative stress (the “culture shock” experienced when individuals emigrate to a new country and attempt to adapt to new customs, beliefs, and values), which has been proven as a highly stressful experience closely linked to poor mental health (e.g., depression, post-traumatic stress; Bekteshi & Kang, 2020). Levels of acculturative stress are influenced by external factors (e.g., fear of deportation, age, number of years in the U.S., income, etc.) and internal factors (e.g., social supports, family values, family cohesion, etc.; Bekteshi & Kang, 2020). Studies cite the importance of social support as a protective factor against acculturative stress, emphasizing its integral role, which supersedes other protective factors such as family support (Bekteshi & Kang, 2020).

The need for Spanish-speaking clinicians in the mental health field has become more apparent. Between 2014 and 2019, the U.S.’ Hispanic population grew by 4.5% (5.2 million); at the same time, the number of mental health facilities offering services for Spanish speakers has decreased by 17.8% (1,163 Spanish-speaking facilities) across 44 states (Pro et al., 2022). However, despite these gaps, mental health practitioners in nongovernmental organizations possess a unique ability to support Latine immigrants in developing protective factors given the current political and cultural climate in the U.S.; through established community rapport and trust, these organizations can facilitate community groups which uplift Latine values and beliefs while providing the appropriate mental health tools required to thrive in a new social and cultural environment (Bekteshi & Kang, 2020). Additionally, school-based programs that encourage cultural exploration and acceptance are linked to positive ethnic-racial identity development (Gonzalez et al., 2014), which can work as a buffer against discrimination, adverse life events, and boost self-esteem (Rivas-Drake et al., 2014).

Key References

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2. Gonzalez, L. M., Eades, M. P., & Supple, A. J. (2013, November 30). School community engaging with immigrant youth: Incorporating personal/social development and ethnic identity development. *School Community Journal*. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1032244>

Literature Guiding this Evaluation Report (continued)

3. Pro, G., Brown, C., Rojo, M., Patel, J., Flax, C., & Haynes, T. (2022). Downward national trends in mental health treatment offered in Spanish: State differences by proportion of Hispanic residents. *Psychiatric Services*, 73(11), 1232–1238. <https://doi.org/10.1176/appi.ps.202100614>
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Indigo Cultural Center

A Note About the Agency and People Conducting this Evaluation

Indigo Cultural Center (a predominantly BIPOC- staffed organization) is led by executive director Dr. Eva Marie Shivers, who identifies as a bi-racial African American, cisgender woman. The Institute of Child Development Research and Social Change at Indigo Cultural Center is an action-research firm that specializes in infant and early childhood research and evaluation conducted with an anti-racist lens. The Institute is led by director Dr. Jayley Janssen, who identifies as a white, cisgender woman. The evaluation of HCN's Entre Nosotros Program was led by Ronae Matriano, a Filipina woman and a small team that consisted of a Black multiracial woman, two Black bi-racial women, a Black woman, and a white woman.

Indigo Cultural Center's mission is to conduct rigorous policy-relevant research on mental health, education, and development by partnering with community agencies and public agencies that are dedicated to improving the lives of children, youth, and families in BIPOC communities. Since its inception, Indigo Cultural Center has employed the use of community-based participatory research in all our evaluations. What this means is that we use a collaborative model and working style that involves our clients – who we prefer to call 'partners' – in the planning, implementation, interpretation, and dissemination processes of evaluation. We recognize the strengths that our partners bring to each evaluation project, and we build on those assets by consulting with our partners initially and at key milestones throughout the project, integrating their input and knowledge into all aspects of the project, asking for feedback on a regular basis, and seeking consensus on key issues and outcomes.

Our Voice and Terminology used in this Report

Our evaluation team employs the use of feminist methodology and the use of first-person voice when writing reports (e.g., 'we', 'us'; Leggat-Cook, 2010; Mitchel, 2017). Throughout this report, we use the terms Black and African American interchangeably. We use LGBTQIA+ as an acronym for "lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and asexual" with a "+" sign to recognize the limitless sexual orientations and gender identities used by members of our community. We use queer to express a spectrum of identities and orientations that are counter to the mainstream. Queer is often used as a catch-all to include many people, including those who do not identify as exclusively straight and/or folks who have non-binary or gender-expansive identities. We use gender rather than sex as an inclusive term that acknowledges that gender is socially and contextually constructed and is a multidimensional facet of identity.

Homeless Children's Network

Homeless Children's Network History

HCN's trusted provider status among historically marginalized communities in San Francisco is built on 33 years of innovative, relationship-based, and culturally responsive approaches to program development, community outreach and engagement, service delivery, and evaluation. Our culturally responsive programs, citywide partnerships, and visionary leadership deliver services to 2,500+ community members annually at no cost to youth and their families. As a city leader in programming development and delivery, HCN is dedicated to advancing systemic equity and reaching the most underserved youth, families, and communities that remain overlooked and marginalized by many systems of support including mainstream philanthropic agencies. HCN offers programs and extensive services providing San Francisco's historically marginalized youth, families, adults, and communities with the tools, resources, and support needed to navigate complex systems and overcome challenges through collaborative efforts.

Three decades ago, leaders from six shelters recognized a critical gap in services for San Francisco families experiencing homelessness. These organizations provided emergency shelter, domestic violence assistance, and transitional housing, but because of their structure, they could only serve families for a short time. This limited period of care created a cycle of attachment and loss—youth and families would build relationships with staff, only to be uprooted again. This instability made it hard for families to remain open to accessing support. In 1992, the community came together to break this cycle. They founded HCN to provide SF families in crisis with a lasting source of connection and care. Over the next three decades, in close collaboration and communication with our community members, community stakeholders, and community partners, HCN has evolved into an organization that directly addresses inclusion, community empowerment, and systemic equity.

What began as a network of six shelters has now grown to a vibrant hub of an HCN Collaborative of 60+ service agencies and community-based organizations (CBOs) serving the hardest-to-reach youth and families, including those with experiences of or at risk for homelessness and violence. Our robust Collaborative network includes childcare and education centers; San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD) schools; Primary Care; LGBTQIA+ services; substance use treatment; transitional and permanent supportive housing; Family Resource Centers; domestic violence and family shelters; foster care, and others. HCN is positioned in every San Francisco neighborhood and has worked with SFUSD providing onsite and mobile case management and mental health and wellness services for students and their families since 1997. We provide Educationally Related Mental¹⁷ Health Services (ERMHS) via an MOU and currently have HCN therapists onsite in 20+ SFUSD schools.

Homeless Children's Network (continued)

Homeless Children's Network's Programming and Approaches

HCN welcomes and affirms everyone, while engaging an Afri-centric lens to address the historical legacy of intergenerational racism, inequity, and trauma. This approach embraces all historically marginalized communities based on community-defined evidence based practices, which include: affirmation of cultural inclusion, trauma- and love-informed practices, self-acceptance and resilience focuses, identification of clients' unique strengths and normalization of their experiences, reframing of mental health stigma, acknowledgement of a range of spiritual practices, family and community member integration into services, collective grief processing, fear without judgement, and addressing resource and basic-need access barriers.

The heart of our Afri-centric approach lies in holding space for cultural rhythm and nuance while creating a sense of home—a safe, culturally grounded space where people can fully express themselves and be seen without judgment. All of HCN's programs and services provide SF's most marginalized children, families, providers, and communities with the tools, resources, and support needed to navigate complex systems and overcome challenges through collaborative efforts. The seven cardinal values of HCN's Ma'at model are our core values: 1) Balance, 2) Order, 3) Righteousness, 4) Harmony, 5) Justice, 6) Truth, and 7) Reciprocity. Our approach is unapologetically culturally affirming, soul-inspiring, and grounded in a shared commitment to holistic wellness.

Over the past several years, there has been a call to decolonize the field of mental health. One important way to achieve this is by expanding the construct of wellness to include a more explicit focus on community mental health in historically marginalized and underserved communities, including in Black and Brown communities. It is increasingly important that we avoid reinforcing mainstream narratives that pathologize our communities by failing to recognize the broader systemic forces affecting the well-being of those who have experienced historical and ongoing marginalization and oppression. Community-based programs designed to promote healing, wellness, and positive mental health do not simply unfold in isolation. Homeless Children's Network's vision embodies emergent work that always reflects the time and space in which it is happening. Indeed, African and Pan-African philosophy encourages the tenets of Ubuntu - "I am what I am because of who we all are" - and teaches us that, universally, "all things have an impact on each other, and this interconnectedness and interplay is universal" (Marumo & Chakale, 2018).

HCN's Entre Nosotros Program Description

Background

The vision for HCN's Entre Nosotros program was born almost five years ago, when HCN's Ma'at program was launched. Together, HCN's Director of Behavioral Health Services and HCN's CEO imagined a program that mirrored the foundational values of the Ma'at program – solidarity and inclusivity tied into culturally congruent healing practices – with a focus on the Latine community. At the time, HCN did not have the funding to bring this program to fruition; however, this did not stop the evolution of the vision for this program. As a result of growing gaps in support for the Latine community, HCN launched Entre Nosotros in July 2024.

Local Context

Through our general, city-wide clinical therapy program, HCN sees children and their families who exhibit a range of mental health symptoms and needs, including first-generation and intergenerational trauma. However, clinical services are often individualized and limited by MediCal guidelines. HCN finds that in our General Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic, and Treatment (EPSDT) program, clinicians are often asked for more time to serve Latine clients due to complex needs. Families tend to lean on therapists for other support, seeking help for advocacy and access to additional services they are unable to navigate on their own.

Additionally, newcomer youth and families face unique social, emotional, and mental challenges. Youth that are newcomers to the U.S. often enter a period of development in which they are discovering who they are in a new and unfamiliar place while navigating the demands of school and entering adulthood. The Latine community in San Francisco—particularly those who are newly arrived—face marginalization, discrimination, and stress around immigration, acculturation, language barriers, and code switching. The need for school-based therapeutic services, which provide the platform for youth to develop the appropriate supports and skills to mitigate the stress of the acculturation process, has become increasingly important; providers in the San Francisco area have observed a significant increase in Latine newcomer students in additional SFUSD schools that traditionally had not served significant newcomer populations. Staff in these schools seek support from HCN's clinical staff in effectively meeting the complex needs of newcomer children.

As part of HCN's emergent health model, HCN chose to expand the existing community mental health model to encompass a focus on serving the needs of youth and families living through the acculturation process. Entre Nosotros presents an opportunity for culturally-responsive, trauma-informed healing to occur for youth and families across the Latine diaspora.

HCN's Entre Nosotros Program Description (continued)

Program Description

Entre Nosotros is a community mental health program that fosters culturally affirming mental health and wellness spaces for Latine-identified and Spanish-speaking communities to access and reclaim holistic healing practices which empower multicultural identities and values in individual/family healing journeys. Entre Nosotros' goal is to destigmatize mental health and enhance Latine wellness through culturally-rooted, trauma-informed, and community-based group support services and holistic case management services. This program prioritizes working with Latine-identified and Spanish-speaking individuals and families; newcomers to the U.S.; those currently, formerly, or at risk of being unhoused; Indigenous groups; Afro-Latine; school-age youth; and LGBTQIA+ people.

In fiscal year 2024-2025, to pilot the program, Entre Nosotros' clinicians led five six-week school-based support groups for Latine newcomer youth. Support groups were facilitated across three different SFUSD school sites; the program team harnessed their existing knowledge of school site needs and insight from school site staff to determine the sites that could benefit from this pilot program. The newcomer support groups utilized holistic practices that incorporate somatic and expressive interventions to promote healthy adjustment to the U.S., help youth build resilience and social support, and learn effective strategies to manage and overcome hardships – all while celebrating and honoring their respective Latine heritage. Youth built natural social connections with peers in similar situations, which normalized and affirmed their emotions and experiences.

Based on existing community knowledge of the high need for support services in shelter environments, Entre Nosotros clinicians offered two parenting support groups to newcomer Latine families with children aged 0-5 across two family shelter sites in San Francisco. Parenting support groups targeted caregivers, specifically. These groups created community amongst families that share in the acculturation process, reaffirmed natural supports amongst peers and community healers, while affirming the parenting norms and experiences they may hold as a result of their Latine heritage.



HCN's Entre Nosotros Program Description (continued)

Participants were encouraged to reflect on their identities as an individual and as a caregiver to identify any stressors and develop the tools to manage those challenges healthily to the benefit of their respective mental health and that of their children. Participants co-created and brought forward topics for discussion that felt important to them. Some of the topics explored in the support group included language and communication, acculturation, self-esteem, mindfulness, and support systems.

Entre Nosotros' Case Manager provided drop-in case management services on a weekly basis at a predominantly immigrant and Spanish speaking school site to increase access to help Latine caregivers connect with resources to meet their families' basic needs. Case managers provided referrals and linkages to services, including housing programs, food assistance programs, and more.



Gratitude

Thank you to the Entre Nosotros program participants and providers who shared their experiences and perspectives with us to use as data.

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