



Contact: Cliff Despres, Communications, *Salud America!*
210-562-6517, despres@uthscsa.edu

Research: Latino Kids More Depressed, Less Likely to Get Mental Health Care than Their Peers

New research and video showcase how improving school policies, community programs, and cultural mental health services can promote healthy minds for kids

(Sept. 12, 2017)—Latino kids are far more likely than their peers to suffer depression and other mental health issues that go untreated, but innovative community and school solutions are emerging to promote healthy minds, according to a new research review from *Salud America!*, a national network for healthy change at UT Health San Antonio.

The [Salud America! Mental Health & Latino Kids](#) review examines the latest science on the state of mental health among Latino kids, and shares policy recommendations.

A [new video](#) and [issue brief](#) summarize the research.

The research shows 22% of Latino youth are depressed—a higher rate than any minority besides Native Americans—and endure much stress, discrimination, and bullying.

Fewer Latino kids (8%) than white kids (14%) have ever gotten mental health care.

Fortunately, several solutions are emerging, according to the research:

- Latino kids have less stress and more classroom success in programs that mix regular physical activity with mental health education.
- Community-based, cultural interventions have shown promise in improving Latino kids' access to mental health care.
- School-based bullying prevention programs can decrease bullying by up to 25%.

“Despite the high rate of mental health issues faced by Latino kids, disparities persist in how they use and receive mental health services,” said Dr. Amelie G. Ramirez, lead author of the research review, and director of *Salud America!* and the Institute for Health Promotion Research in the School of Medicine at UT Health San Antonio.

“Latino and all kids deserve communities and schools that equitably support healthy minds.”

More than 38 percent of Latino children ages 2-19 have an unhealthy weight, compared to 28.5 percent of White youth and 35.2 percent of Black youth.

This situation is compounded by issues of mental health.

The Mental Health & Latino Kids research review suggests policy and practice changes:

- Program leaders, school leaders, and healthcare providers should ensure that mental

health care for Latino children is sensitive to issues among this group. These issues include bullying, discrimination, and other immigration-related factors.

- Providers should diversify the mental health workforce, expand culturally oriented training, and increase access to mental health care interpreters and *promotoras*.
- Schools and nonprofits should incorporate culturally-relevant mental health programs.

In addition to the new research, *Salud America!* has [Heathy Minds stories, tools, and actions](#) to inspire people to drive healthy changes to improve mental health.

For example:

- Watch how [a Florida nonprofit gives free legal aid to reduce stress among immigrants](#).
- Read how [Arizona clinic leaders make mental health care part of primary care](#).
- Read how [Bishop Jose Torres helps his Maryland church do Latino health festivals](#).
- Use the *Salud America!* [Action Pack](#) to push for your big idea for change.
- Use the *Salud America!* [Salud Report Card](#) to learn health issues impacting your town.

“We simply must take action to create a culture of health where Latino children and families can live, learn, work, and play better,” Ramirez said.

Access the full *Salud America!* “Mental Health & Latino Kids” research review at <http://salud-america.org/healthymindsresearch>.

Stay tuned for more research, as *Salud America!* will release a new research review and video on increasing family support for Latinos on Oct. 17, 2017, and a new research review and video on enhancing early childhood development for Latino children on Nov. 14, 2017.

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About Salud America!

Salud America! is a national Latino-focused organization that creates culturally relevant and research-based stories, videos, and tools to inspire people to start and support healthy changes to policies, systems, and environments where Latino children and families can equitably live, learn, work, and play. Latinos are a rising U.S. powerhouse, but they face barriers to be their healthiest and suffer high rates of obesity and other health disparities. *Salud America!* and its award-winning multimedia communications help our social and online network—more than 125,000 moms and dads, providers, researchers, and community and school leaders—push for healthy changes in schools and communities for Latino and all kids. *Salud America!* is led by health disparities researcher Dr. Amelie G. Ramirez and supported by a passionate team of communicators at UT Health San Antonio, thanks to funding from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Visit *Salud America!* at salud-america.org or on social media @SaludAmerica.