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Research: 4 in 5 Latino Kids Suffer Childhood Trauma

These children fall behind their peers in academic, physical, and emotional development; but culturally sensitive programs and policies can reduce trauma and improve early childhood development, school readiness, emotional wellbeing, and health in Latino kids

(Nov. 14, 2017)—Nearly 4 in 5 Latino youth suffer at least one traumatic childhood experience, like poverty or abuse, and lack the proper care, support, and environment they need for healthy development in formative years, according to a [new research review](#) from *Salud America!*, a national network for healthy change at UT Health San Antonio.

Salud America!'s [The State of Latino Early Childhood Development](#) examines the latest science on childhood trauma and its effect on Latino kids, and policy recommendations to improve reduce trauma, boost social and emotional health, and build school readiness.

An [animated video](#) summarizes the research.

The research shows Latino youth (77.8%) are more likely than all youth (70%) to have “adverse childhood experiences”—poverty, neglect, abuse, or household dysfunction (i.e., parental divorce, violence, substance abuse, mental health issues).

About 28% of Latino youth suffer four or more of these traumas.

Latino kids exposed to many traumas tend to have higher obesity rates, future health issues, anxiety, aggression, and substance use; and lower language, literacy, and math skills.

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

- **Kids who get stimulating early care** from birth to age 5 had far less risk of heart and metabolic diseases in their mid-30s.
- **Home visits** address and prevent adverse childhood experiences by providing Latino parents with culturally relevant support to promote a healthy, nurturing home for kids.
- **Latino preschoolers who get culturally tailored independent learning** have test scores above the national average.
- **Teaching social and emotional skills** to inner-city students improves academic achievement.

“There is a great need for culturally-sensitive programs and policies to prevent trauma and improve education, health, and social and emotional development for Latinos in early childhood,” said Dr. Amelie G. Ramirez, lead author of the research review, and director of *Salud America!* and the Institute for Health Promotion Research at UT Health San Antonio.

More than 38% of Latino children ages 2-19 have an unhealthy weight, compared to 28.5% of

White youth and 35.2% of Black youth.

This situation is compounded by issues that hinder proper early childhood development.

Salud America!'s [The State of Latino Early Childhood Development](#) research review suggests policy and practice changes:

- **Increase spending on early childhood education.** For every \$1 invested, the return is \$7 due to increased school success and career achievement, and decreased costs of health, welfare, and justice, studies show.
- **Promote access to and availability of early childhood education programs** for Latino kids.
- **Train the childcare workforce to provide trauma-informed care for kids.**
- **Create “medical homes”**—comprehensive, continuous, preventive healthcare from infancy through adulthood—to boost wellbeing in Latino and all kids.
- **Assess childhood history** and include developmental/behavioral screening in routine primary care or home visits to identify and address adverse experiences and other health issues early.
- **Support initiatives** that boost access to grocery stores and farmers markets in Latino communities.
- **Improve access** to parks, trails, safe routes, and other active spaces in Latino communities. Green schoolyards and outdoor learning environments can boost students' academic performance, mental health, and social and emotional learning.

In addition to the new research, *Salud America!* has [Latino Early Childhood Development stories, tools, and actions](#) to inspire people to drive healthy changes for Latino children.

For example:

- Read how a [San Antonio group provides free training for early childcare providers](#).
- Read how [San Antonio health workers started mega baby showers for moms in need](#).
- Read how a [Florida preschool program helps Latino kids outperform their peers in class](#).
- Read how an [Arizona Mom gives swag bags to help nursing mothers](#).
- Read how [Washington groups started free bilingual parenting classes to promote school readiness among Latino children](#).
- Read how a group [started a newborn screening test in English and Spanish](#).
- 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.

“Early childhood development and education programs, breastfeeding, and Latino family values support all have been shown to promote healthy early development,” Ramirez said.

This research review is the third in a series of new *Salud America!* research reviews. [Mental Health & Latino Kids](#) research review was released on Sept. 12, 2017. [Building Support for Latino Families](#) research review was released Oct. 17, 2017.

Access the full *Salud America!* The State of Latino Early Childhood Development research review at <https://salud-america.org/state-latino-early-childhood-development-research-review/>.

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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.