

For Immediate Publication
Casa Esperanza, Inc.
302 Eustis Street
Roxbury, MA 02119



Media Contact: Joy Mosenfelder
(339) 201-5075
jmosenfelder@casaesperanza.org

Rising Health Inequity Continues in Latinx Communities, Culturally-Focused Services Offer Hope in Action

The Covid-19 pandemic intensified disparities in opioid-related deaths in the Latinx community. To address the growing need, Casa Esperanza, a bilingual/bicultural behavioral health provider in Roxbury, MA, increases capacity and expands services.

Roxbury, MA– Earlier this month, NBC News contacted Casa Esperanza about the disproportionate rise in opioid-related deaths in the Latinx community. Morgan Radford of NBC News visited Casa's main campus in Roxbury, MA to learn about the challenges facing Latinx patients. Improving access to behavioral health services by addressing cultural and linguistic barriers for Latinx individuals and families is part of Casa's core mission. This important story connects the access barriers Spanish-speaking patients navigate every day to rising health inequity in Latinx communities across the country.

To address this urgent need, Casa pursued and secured significant state and federal funding to develop and expand services for the community. Recently, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) funded three Casa initiatives to expand culturally-focused services. This crucial funding will enable Casa to extend the availability of Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT) services, strengthen bilingual and bicultural recovery-oriented peer networks, and continue work on the agency's innovative integrated care model for bicultural behavioral health services. Casa is laying the groundwork to become the first bicultural community mental health center in Massachusetts.

Casa will receive \$525,000 per year for five years to extend MAT to Latinx patients with co-occurring disorders. This funding will enable more Latinx patients with opioid use disorders (OUD) to access MAT, a highly effective, evidence-based treatment. Patients enrolled in MAT show a significant decrease in opioid misuse at six-month follow-up. Casa integrates MAT with psychosocial services, including counseling, behavioral therapies, and recovery support services (RSS) to assist patients in achieving and maintaining long-term.

The continuation of funding for Building Communities of Recovery (BCOR) will support the expansion of a bilingual/bicultural, recovery-oriented social support network. Casa will receive \$200,000 per year for up to three years to enhance and strengthen a Latinx community of recovery in the Greater Boston area and beyond. The project will offer a wide range of

bilingual/bicultural, trauma-informed, peer support services for Latinx patients living with Substance Use Disorders (SUD) and co-occurring SUD and Mental Health Disorders (COD). The goal is to develop a Peer Leadership program. This will provide training and mentorship to strengthen the recovery and economic independence of Latinos in recovery and help expand the bilingual/bicultural peer workforce. Additionally, Casa will develop “Time to End the Stigma,” a public awareness campaign to address the stigma, discrimination, and barriers Latinx patients face accessing treatment and recovery support services.

Additionally, SAMHSA selected Casa for a \$2,000,000 Community Mental Health Centers (CMHC) grant to support and restore services disrupted by the pandemic. This project will fund a significant expansion of service and staff to address the needs of monolingual Spanish-speakers and Spanish-preferring patients with SUDs and CODs. The project will enable Casa's bilingual Behavioral Health Care program to serve as a front door for Latinx patients with CODs. Casa will provide patients with access to the right treatment in real-time for both in-person and telehealth services. Key goals are to expand clinic hours to include evening and weekend coverage. Also, improve access to and increase utilization of mental health, substance misuse treatment, and primary care for Latinos with co-occurring disorders to support clients’ full engagement in the development, implementation; completion of goals in their individualized care plans; and provide recovery support services. This will increase knowledge of community resources, the capacity for self-management, and identify and reduce risky behavior.

Casa was also selected for a \$920,000 grant from the Massachusetts Bureau of Substance Addiction Services (BSAS). To provide recovery-based re-entry services for Latinx patients in Suffolk County. Casa will build on “Transcend: Empowerment, Recovery, and Reentry,” a bilingual/bicultural program serving Latinx patients as they reenter the community from incarceration. This program will provide incarcerated individuals with education and support to develop effective community reentry plans through critical support services in mental health, trauma, and medical services. The expanded program will focus on Latinx patients in Suffolk County. Services support participants to sustain long-term recovery and participate fully in the community while reducing risks for relapse and recidivism. Casa is partnering with the Suffolk County Sheriff's Department through this initiative to support Latinx patients with their recovery and reentry needs.

Casa Esperanza is honored to have strong state and federal support and resources to continue its mission. Casa's patients, and their families, are highly vulnerable. Nearly all belong to historically oppressed communities, and many have experienced hardship due to lifelong trauma, homelessness, poverty, and systemic discrimination. Many are multiply-diagnosed, chronically ill, or medically fragile and face an increased risk of infection from diseases like COVID-19. Casa's integrated care model is highly effective for supporting Latinx patients with SUDs and CODs to attain wellness and rejoin the community. Casa plans to continue pursuing new partnerships to innovate and expand services and capacity. Linguistically and culturally accessible behavioral health services are essential for Latinx patients and their families to manage addiction and mental health so they can lead healthy, fulfilled lives.

###

Casa Esperanza, Inc. is a bilingual and bicultural behavioral health center that specializes in serving the Latino community in Massachusetts. Our mission is to empower individuals and families to recover from addiction, trauma, mental illness and other chronic medical conditions; overcome homelessness; and achieve health and wellness through comprehensive, integrated care.

Casa operates six fully bilingual and bicultural treatment and support programs. Services include:

Residential Services, providing six- to 12-month residential addiction treatment to individuals with substance use disorders.

Casa Esperanza Men's Program serves 30 adult men.

Latinas y Niños serves 20 adult women and up to 12 children ages 9 and under, enabling clients to maintain or work to regain custody of their children while in treatment.

Familias Unidas Outpatient Services, a licensed, CARF-accredited outpatient mental health clinic, offering a range of client-centered, integrated services to support the complex, long-term needs of individuals and families with co-occurring disorders, including: individual, group and family psychotherapy; psychiatric services; medication-assisted therapies; the only Spanish-language Structured Outpatient Addictions Program in Greater Boston; and co-located primary care services through a partnership with Boston Health Care for the Homeless Program.

Supportive Housing Services, which provide safe, sober living environments that promote ongoing recovery and the development of independent living skills for residents in 37 units of permanent housing. This includes Nueva Vida, 15 single-room occupancy units; Dunmore Place & 300 Eustis Street, eight units designed for families; and Nueva Esperanza, 14 studio units for individuals.

Recovery Support Services, including peer recovery coaching, intensive case management, HIV services, education and employment counseling and readiness, sober social activities and access to leadership opportunities.

Conexiones Stabilization Services, a 32-bed program that provides 24-hour inpatient clinical stabilization services for individuals who benefit from additional time to stabilize in their recovery including nursing care, individual and group therapy, psycho-educational groups, case management, health education and aftercare planning.