

A collaborative official statement from:



NATIONAL  
LATINO  
ALLIANCE  
FOR THE ELIMINATION  
OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE



ALIANZA  
LATINA  
NACIONAL  
PARA ERRADICAR LA  
VIOLENCIA DOMESTICA



Alianza Latina en contra la Agresión Sexual  
(Latina alliance against sexual violence)  
National Latina victim advocate working group

## **Now more than ever, we need more outreach efforts for our diverse and growing Latin American communities not less!**

*The following statement includes concerns and recommendations from national Latin@ victim advocacy groups that have a combined experience of over a quarter century of advocacy and action on behalf of underserved and marginalized survivors of sexual and domestic violence.*

The following members of the **Hermanas WOCN 2010** online working group endorse this official statement on behalf of Latin@ outreach program retention:

Antonieta Gimeno (Massachusetts)

Graciela Laguna (Wisconsin)

Karen Arias (North Carolina)

Sarah Valdez-Tate (Texas)

## **The Current State of Latin@ Victim Advocacy - August 2010**

- The confluence of ethnicity, race, language, class, gender, and immigration status place countless Latinas among the most vulnerable targets of multiple forms of violence.
- According to the Sexual Assault Among Latinas (SALAS) Study, Latina victims of sexual assault suffer revictimization or multiple forms of abuse, yet only 3.3 percent utilize victim services.
- The economic crisis is forcing millions of Latinas to endure abusive working conditions for a paycheck. Equal Rights Advocates, the San Francisco-based national women's rights advocacy organization has seen a 100% increase in calls from complainants of sexual harassment and violence in the workplace.
- Many Latin@ victims of sexual harassment, child sexual abuse, rape, human trafficking, and intimate partner violence are not aware of existing services or cannot access them.
- Most rape crisis centers and domestic violence shelters do not have adequate numbers of Spanish-speaking staff to meet the needs.
- Most rape crisis centers and domestic violence shelters do not have Spanish-language victim services content on their websites.
- Many Latina victim advocates leave victim services because of burnout due to overload and overextension with additional uncompensated interpreter and translation duties, ongoing lack of tangible support, and/or tokenism.
- The loss of an agency's single bilingual staff oftentimes implies starting from scratch on multiple levels, and reestablishing critical links and *confianza* or trust with Latin@ communities.

### **The Importance of Continuity and *Confianza* (trust)**

Effective outreach programs that have made inroads with marginalized communities should never be abruptly halted or discontinued. The consequences of doing so may not only promote revictimization but also damage an agency's reputation within the affected population and destroy the trust that has been built. This could result in 50 steps backward or 20 years of regression.

*"Allí no quieren a las mexicanas." (They don't like Mexicans over there – actual statement by a survivor.)*

Perpetrators may interpret discontinued support and inaction as a license to terrorize certain communities without consequence. Agencies may thus inadvertently find themselves becoming colluders with the perpetrators of violence!!!

## Recommendations:

New outreach efforts and programs require ongoing support from an agency as a whole and should not become the sole responsibility of a single bilingual victim advocate. Outreach programs should never be developed or implemented in a vacuum, but rather respond to service area population needs.

Outreach programs are key to meeting Latin@ survivor needs and to engaging our growing communities as active agents of change in anti-violence work. The number of people of Latin American origin is projected to grow to one quarter of the total U.S. population by 2050 (U.S. Census Bureau and the Pew Hispanic Research Center). Programs and services should be planned for accordingly.

The ideas and opinions of those who develop programs and audience members should be considered when alterations are being considered.

Efforts should be made to gather information about how similar issues and concerns were addressed with mainstream populations before suspending services to Latino communities.

If the community feels unprepared to deal with the threats and actions of batterers or rapists, then that's when we come together on behalf of the women and families living with the violence and our community. Now more than ever the survivors must know *que no están solas!!!* Backing off leads to further revictimization and poly-victimization of those who now suffer in silence.

Threats to those providing victim advocacy services merit an urgent and swift community wide response that includes its **Community Stakeholders**:

- Department of Public Safety
- Federal Bureau of Investigations
- Municipal Leadership-Mayor, Manager's Office & Council
- District Attorney's Office
- District and County Court Judges
- County Probation
- Police and County Sheriffs
- State Parole
- Federal Probation
- Juvenile Probation
- Family Violence Services
- Sexual Assault Response Teams (SART)
- Survivor's Representatives
- Batterer's Intervention
- Child Protective Services
- Teen & Adolescent Services
- Social Services Representatives
- *Promotoras* or Community Health Workers
- Reproductive Rights Groups
- University or College Representatives
- Legal Aid
- Mental Health Care Services
- Substance Abuse Services
- Faith Community
- Public Housing
- Immigrant Rights Groups
- Civil Rights Groups
- Corporate Community

## Community organizing is critical!

Throughout history, victim advocacy has been linked to community organizing. Actions based on discussions that took place within Consciousness Raising groups created by feminist activists in the late 60's and 70's led to the creation of the first shelters and rape crisis centers. The victim advocates of that era did not back down but instead stood together when they were threatened for creating shelters in private homes or for defending the rights of survivors of rape.

Many victim advocates have invested so much time in creating the “buffer zone” for the survivors with the stakeholders in a united front informing the collective of abusers and sexual assault offenders that their behavior will not be tolerated and that it will have consequences. However, many Latin@ victim advocates work in isolation without the support of other Latin@ mentors and/or culturally sensitive supervision. Their achievements and inroads are due to the effective community relationships and collaborations that they are able to cultivate.

Rather than discontinue much-needed programs and services, victim advocates and the survivors they serve need to be able to rely on both agency and community support.

*“I was threatened with harm for the nine years I worked with Latina SA survivors in Oregon, as were other Latinas in other community programs working with nuestras familias... When we banded together and accompanied each other we found it beneficial for both our programs and our outreach advocacy which provided a wrap-around service (addressing more than one issue) for the Latina survivor.”*

--Clara Galvan-Lindstrom, veteran Latina victim advocate and ALAS founding member

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### **ALAS Website Review Shows Grave Lack of Services**

Partial results of an ALAS review of web content in the 15 states with half a million or more Hispanics, indicate a grave lack of victim services information in Spanish. In California, Texas, and Florida, the three states with a combined total of over 26 million Hispanics according to 2008 U.S. Census Bureau projections, only 12 of the 178 active rape crisis centers and dual services program websites include 900 words or more in Spanish. The majority (65%) of ALAS members polled voted on 1000 as the minimum number of words that an agency website should include in Spanish. ALAS members are victim advocates, Latina direct service staff, trainers, prevention specialist, and coalition staff across the nation. This official statement includes 1,123 words.

### **Diverse References and the Symbol**

The term “Hispanic” is used in many official government publications and by some agencies and individuals while “Latino” is generally used by grassroots organizations and community-based initiatives that embrace a shared Latin American or *Latino Americano* heritage. Many Latin American university students and feminist groups have adopted the use of the @ or “at” sign (that includes both an “a” and “o”) as a gender-neutral substitute for masculine and feminine gender nouns in Spanish, i.e., a *Latina* is a female and a *Latino* is a male.

“Latin@” refers to both. Some victim rights groups in the U.S. like Arte Sana, have incorporated this symbol when possible appropriate since 2001.

## About the Authors

**Arte Sana** (art heals) is a national Latina-led nonprofit committed to ending sexual violence and other forms of gender-based aggressions and engage marginalized communities as agents of change. Founded in 2001 and based in the border state of Texas, Arte Sana promotes awareness, healing, and empowerment through bilingual professional training, community education, and the arts. Of the 8,975 persons who participated in Arte Sana's training and community education up until the first half of August 2010, over 2,897 or 32% received the information in Spanish.

To learn more about Arte Sana visit [www.arte-sana.com](http://www.arte-sana.com)

ALIANZA, National Latino Alliance for the Elimination of Domestic Violence, is part of a national effort to address the domestic violence needs and concerns of under-served populations. Alianza specifically addresses the needs of Latino/a families and communities, although its work helps to inform the domestic violence field in general. Alianza's mission is: *to promote understanding, initiate and sustain dialogue, and generate solutions that move toward the elimination of domestic violence affecting Latino communities, with an understanding of the sacredness of all relations and communities.*

To learn more about ALIANZA visit [www.dvalianza.org](http://www.dvalianza.org)

Founded in 2004 by Arte Sana, the **Alianza Latina en contra la Agresión Sexual (ALAS)** is a national Latina-led membership network of victim advocates working to address and prevent sexual violence. Through collaborative efforts and cyber activism, ALAS promotes the leadership of Latina victim advocates and develops models, resources and policies to empower communities and eliminate access barriers for survivors. ALAS honors the diversity of the Latin@ culture by respecting the similarities and differences of our languages and histories. Currently, ALAS has 38 members in 17 states.

To learn more about ALAS visit [www.arte-sana.com/alas.htm](http://www.arte-sana.com/alas.htm)