

Latino Garment District Workers Outreach Project

Project Summary Report

Prepared for:

Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health
Underserved Cultural Communities
Latino Sub-Committee

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A sincere thank you to all of our community partners and GWC member-leaders who informed this report.

Project Description

Garment Worker Center (GWC), a worker rights organization leading an anti-sweatshop movement to improve conditions for tens of thousands of Los Angeles garment workers, was hired in 2021 for the purpose of implementing and developing the “Latino Garment District Workers Outreach Project.” GWC has organized garment workers in Los Angeles since the organization’s inception in 2001. As the nation’s largest cut-and-sew apparel base, the garment manufacturing industry in LA County comprises approximately 40,000 Latino and indigenous garment workers.

Given GWC’s extensive experience working with the garment worker community, our organization was well equipped to meet the deliverables of the “Latino Garment District Workers Outreach Project,” developed by the LACDMH Underserved Cultural Communities—Latino Sub-Committee. The goal of the Latino Garment Worker Project is to outreach, educate, and increase knowledge pertaining to mental health services and resources by utilizing a non-stigmatizing and empowering approach.

Locations

This project targets Latino and indigeneous garment workers in Los Angeles County’s Service Area four (4), Service Area six (6), and Service Area seven (7).

Service Area 4 - Garment Worker Center (Downtown Los Angeles)



Garment Worker Center was the ideal venue to host the workshops in Service Area 4. This location was selected because of GWC's embedded relationship in the community, being the only labor center organizing garment workers specifically. Factors that informed this decision included its proximity to garment factories within the Fashion District, accessibility to public transit options such as DASH and Metro buses, and its centralized location in relation to where garment workers live, namely in the neighborhoods of Pico-Union, South Central Los Angeles, East Los Angeles, and Northeast Los Angeles.

Service Area 6 - A C Bilbrew Library (Compton/Athens)



A C Bilbrew Library was the ideal location to host the workshops in Service Area 6. This location was selected to collaborate with LA County Public Libraries and provide

garment workers with linkages to programs and services, specifically for families with children. Other factors that informed this decision included its proximity to registered garment factories in the surrounding area, creating a unique opportunity for GWC to expand its outreach in Athens and Compton.

Service Area 7 - Robert F. Icaza Worker Center (Huntington Park)



Ricardo F. Icaza Worker Center was selected as the ideal location to host the workshops in Service Area 7. Through GWC’s pre-existing relationship with labor organizers at Icaza, the mental health workshops provided an opportunity to invite factory workers in the meatpacking district in Huntington Park to participate in the workshops. Other factors that informed this decision included the close proximity to several garment factories, creating an opportunity for GWC organizers to conduct outreach and provide a linkage to a multitude of training and resources for workers at Icaza Worker Center.

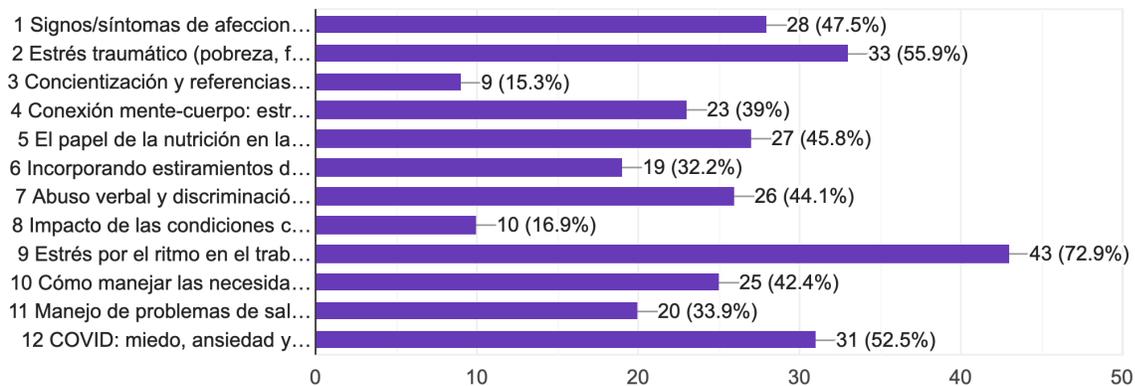
Workshop Curriculum

We approached the curriculum development process by distributing a survey to our base of garment worker members. The purpose of the survey was to directly solicit feedback on which mental health topics workers were most interested in, and to inform GWC members of upcoming mental health workshops geared toward the garment worker community. The survey instructed members to select five out of 12 mental health topics they would like to see offered. The topics listed included the modules in the “Statement of Work,” as well as specific experiences our members have brought to us anecdotally over the years. We collected a total of 59 survey responses. The workshop topics that received the most votes from workers included:

- Stress due to work pace and wage theft (72.9%)
- Traumatic stress (poverty, homelessness, discrimination, racism) (55.9%)
- COVID: fear, anxiety and grief (52.5%)
- Common mental health signs/symptoms (depression, anxiety, stress) (47.5%)
- The role of nutrition in emotional well-being (depression, anxiety and stress) (45.8%)
- Verbal abuse and age discrimination (44.1%)

Por favor seleccione 5 temas que le gustaría ver ofrecidos:

59 responses



We shared the survey results with several community partners who have experience working directly with the garment worker community in Los Angeles County. Consulting with our network about the survey provided a unique opportunity to involve therapists, social workers, labor rights educators, and community organizers in this project to develop mental health education that addresses the challenges workers face in the garment industry.

After receiving final approval from Dr. Luis Guzman, UsCC/LACDMH, who provided guidance in all aspects and implementation regarding this project, GWC coordinated curriculum development between several partners and implemented this project as a sequenced series of workshops.

Below are the workshops that were piloted as part of the “Emotional Well-being Workshops for Garment Workers” pilot program:

SOW Modules	Workshop Curriculum	Partners
	"Salud Mental y Estigma"	DMH Promoters-

		Victoria Mercel
d. Mind-Body Connection – Stress, Nutrition, and Mindfulness		
i. Nutrition’s role in Depression, Anxiety, Toxic Stress	"Psicología de la nutrición: la conexión entre su dieta y la salud mental"	Dr. Deborah Hazley (Wellnest)
a. Signs/Symptoms of common mental health conditions among the Latino garment worker community (e.g., Depression, Anxiety, PTSD)	"Síntomas de salud mental comunes entre la comunidad de trabajadores de la costura"	Cynthia de Leon, LMFT
b. Traumatic Stress (racism, discrimination, poverty, homelessness, grief)	"Factores socioeconómicos que impactan el bienestar emocional"	Luz Bertadillo, MSW
c. Domestic Violence awareness and referrals	"Prevención de Violencia Familiar"	DMH Promoters - Victoria Mercel
ii. Incorporating daily mindfulness stretching during workday		Patricia Rizzo, Veronica Ponce de Leon (UCLA LOSH), GWC
e. Sexual/Verbal harassment and Ageism	"El Impacto de la Violencia Laboral en el Bienestar Emocional"	
f. Impact of common mental health conditions on family functioning	"Impacto de las condiciones comunes de salud mental en el funcionamiento familiar"	Marisol Granillo, MSH, MPH

Workshop Summaries

(1) Mental Health & Stigma

Summary - What is mental health?

- Myths and realities about Mental Health
- Beliefs and values about mental health
- Stigma and Discrimination
- Important facts about mental health problems
- Practical advice to eliminate stigma

By partnering with LACDMH United Mental Health Promoters in Service Area 4, we introduced the workshop series with the topic “Mental Health & Stigma.” LACDMH Promotora, Victoria Mercel, connected her former experience working in the garment industry, highlighting the impacts that a sweatshop environment has on physical and mental health. We found this collaboration to be an impactful way to destigmatize

negative beliefs about mental health through the workshop being delivered by a community member and increasing awareness of LACDMH services.

(2) Nutrition Psychology: The Connection Between Diet & Emotional Health

Summary - How does the brain depend on food for its function?

- The connection between our body and our thoughts
- Identifying the impact of diet on our mood and emotional well-being
- Identifying the types of foods that help maintain physical and emotional health

We partnered with Wellnest to offer the class “Nutrition Psychology: The Connection Between Your Diet and Emotional Health,” developed and presented by Dr. Desmonette Hazly. This topic was an important follow-up to “Mental Health & Stigma,” to reinforce the mind-body connection, reduce mental health stigma, and establish the relationship between physical health and emotional well-being, highlighting nutrition's role in achieving positive mental health outcomes.

(3) Symptoms of Stress Among the Garment Worker Community

Summary - What is emotional well-being?

- Connections between emotional health and physical health
- Common problems and prejudices of emotional health e.g. depression, anxiety, and stress
- Managing your emotional health
- Tools and supports for physical and emotional well-being

In this workshop, Cynthia de Leon, LMFT, provided education that de-stigmatizes negative beliefs about mental health and introduced the symptoms and signs of stress, anxiety and depression. Utilizing a trauma-informed care approach, this curriculum reinforces the connection between emotional wellness and physical health, addressing challenges specific to the garment worker community.

(4) Socioeconomic Factors that Impact Emotional Well-being

Summary -

- The impact of low wages and limited access to resources on emotional well-being e.g. poverty, not having legal migration status
- Trauma due to migration e.g. racism, discrimination

- Referrals to services for immigrants
- Tools and supports for emotional well-being

In this workshop, Luz Bertadillo, MSW, provided education on the social determinants of health, and obstacles that the Latino and indigenous population faces (i.e. racism, discrimination, poverty, homelessness) in achieving public health equity. Because of the complexity of these subject matters, this workshop was designed as a guided talk-space where garment workers shared their lived experiences and barriers to access quality health care, good jobs with fair pay, housing, and education.

(5) Family Violence Prevention

Summary - Familial Violence

- Facts and impact of familial violence
- Cycle of domestic violence
- Helpful guide for victims of domestic violence
- The Impact of domestic violence on children and adolescents
- Practical advice

The topic of “Family Violence Prevention” raises domestic violence awareness, as well as offers practical advice on what to do and available resources for victims of domestic violence. This workshop was also presented by LACDMH Promotora, Victoria Mercel.

(6) The Impact of Workplace Violence on Emotional Well-being

Summary-

- Know and define what workplace violence is (e.g. verbal harassment and discrimination)
- Identify risk factors related to workplace violence and analyze its effects on emotional and physical well-being
- Learn how to advocate individually and collectively
- Share educational resources to support self-care and advocacy

In collaboration with Patricia Rizzo and Veronica Ponce de Leon, UCLA LOSH, this workshop defined “workplace violence” and provided education on health and safety standards that protect the emotional and physical wellbeing of workers, as well as identified risk factors in the workplace that may lead to emotional/psychological harm.

(7)The Impact of Emotional Well-being on Family Functioning

Objectives - Common physical health and mental health symptoms of garment workers

- Common reactions to stress
- Impacts on dynamics and relationships with relatives
- Tips for parents
- Self-care tips and support resources to support emotional well-being

Finalizing the workshop series, Marisol Granillo, MSH, MPH, provided education and research on physical and emotional health outcomes garment workers experience globally. This workshop addresses common reactions to stress of working parents, the importance of building communication skills, and the importance of destigmatizing mental health in Latino families.

Resource Guide

GWC collected approximately 145 requests from garment workers related to a variety of social services between July 2021 - December 2021. This coordinated intake of questions informed the content of GWC's Resource Guide. We worked with an artist to illustrate the 26-page guide, which is available in English and Spanish. GWC also developed a "Member Support Orientation" to provide information on services and resources available in Los Angeles County. The resources in the "GWC Resource Guide" include:

1. Health & Well-being
2. Food Resources
3. Tenants Rights
4. Housing Resources
5. Community Centers
6. Immigration Legal Services
7. LGBTQ Resources
8. Family Legal Services
9. Labor Rights & Resources
10. Garment Worker Center

[See Resource Guide attached]



Project Timeline

While the original timeline and deliverables aimed to complete this project in 12 months (July 2021 - July 2022), we requested an extension of an additional two months to carry out deliverables. The deciding factors in requesting an extension for our original timeline included onboarding two new staff members in July 2021, as well as the height of the SB62 campaign in August 2021. The full workshop series was piloted in SA 4 at Garment Worker Center from March 2022 - June 2022. We also requested additional time to conduct targeted outreach in Service Areas 6 and 7. We coordinated two workshops in Service Area 7 in July 2022, and two workshops in Service Area 6 in August 2022.

We worked closely with Dr. Luis Guzman to obtain feedback and approval at every stage of this project, and appreciate the support and flexibility offered to extend due dates. This served to carry out activities and outreach efforts to their full potential.

Below is the timeline, with original due dates and approved extensions:

Deliverables	Description	Due Date	Approved Extensions
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Phase 1	User-centered design and field testing of resource booklet for Latino & Indigenous community	12/31/2021	2/15/2022
	Development of pre/post questionnaires (5 questions minimum)	12/31/2021	2/15/2022
	Secure location/virtual platform for workshops	12/31/2021	2/15/2022
	Development of workshop curriculum	12/31/2021	2/15/2022
Phase 2	Development of workshop curriculum	12/31/2021	4/15/2022
	Recruitment of workshop participants (50)		
	Mental Health Education and Engagement workshops -- total of 10 across 3 SA within Los Angeles County (SA 4, SA 6, SA 7)	6/30/2022	8/15/2022
Phase 3	Project Summary Report and outcomes	7/15/2022	9/06/2022

Workshop flier, agenda, and sign-in sheets

Please see attachments for agenda, workshop flyers, and sign-in sheets.

Summary of Demographics

With the successful recruitment, enrollment, and participation of 61 Latino and indigenous adults, we engaged 57 current and former garment workers across 12 “Emotional Well-being Workshops for Garment Workers.” A majority of participants were between the ages of 46 to 60 years old, followed by the age range of 30 to 45 years old. A majority of participants are from the countries of Mexico and Guatemala, and come from linguistically diverse backgrounds. A majority of participants also live in zip codes that represent the neighborhoods of Pico/Union, Echo Park, West Lake, Koreatown, Downtown, South Central, Vermont-Slauson, and Huntington Park. Out of 57 garment workers, there was approximately a 4:1 ratio of female participants versus male participants.

A full list of participants’ names, zip codes, age, gender, linguistic capacity and ethnicity is available in the attachments.

Total Participants	57
Total Male	11
Total Female	43
Total Transgender	3
Ages 61+ (1961 and	8

below)	
Ages 46-60 (1962 - 1976)	35
Ages 30-45 (1977-1991)	12
Unknown	2

Known Languages (Linguistic Capacities)	Spanish, K'iche, Canjobal, Zapoteco, Mixteco, English
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Ethnicity (Home Country)	
Guatemala	19
Mexico	31
Honduras	1
Unknown	6

Project Outcomes

The “Emotional Well-being Workshops for Garment Workers” successfully engaged 57 current and former garment workers across 12 events. The mental health workshop series included trauma-informed mental health education, strategies to practice well-being and help-seeking behaviors, and reduced mental health stigma among Latino and indigenous adults. The outcome measures demonstrate an overall increase in knowledge and comfort with mental health education from a holistic perspective, as well as awareness of mental health resources available in the community.

Workshop Surveys

A total of **104 Pre-Surveys** and **97 Post-Surveys** were completed. Below are the 5 close-ended statements adjusted to each workshop topic, and the number of surveys collected for each pre- and post-questionnaire. We offered one-on-one reading/writing support to participants who self-identified as having limited literacy skills. We also administered the surveys as a group, reading the questions out-loud before and after the workshop.

- Mental Health & Stigma (pre 7/post 10)
 1. I understand what emotional health is

2. I know how to support someone with their emotional health
 3. There is discrimination against people who have mental health problems.
 4. I know where I can find more information or resources about mental health.
 5. I know when to seek mental health support.
- Nutrition Psychology: The Connection Between Diet & Emotional Health (pre 26/post 20)
 1. I know that nutrition can have impacts on emotional well-being
 2. I know how the immune system works.
 3. I know how to use herbs and spices to prevent and combat health conditions.
 4. I know where I can find more information or resources about healthy foods.
 5. I know how to identify the types of foods that help maintain physical and mental health.
 - Symptoms of Stress Among the Garment Worker Community (pre 20/post 23)
 1. I understand what mental health is.
 2. I know how to support someone with a mental health condition.
 3. There are negative prejudices about mental health.
 4. I know where I can find more information or resources about mental health.
 5. I know when it is necessary to seek mental health help.
 - Socioeconomic Factors that Impact Emotional Well-being (pre 11/post 14)
 1. I understand the symptoms of traumatic stress.
 2. There are socioeconomic factors that impact immigrants.
 3. Mental health problems are common in people who have immigrated to a new country.
 4. I know where I can find more information or resources about mental health.
 5. I know when it is necessary to seek mental health help.
 - Family Violence Prevention (pre 8/post 8)
 1. I know what family violence is.
 2. I know how to support someone who suffers from family violence.
 3. I know where I can find more information about resources for victims of domestic violence
 4. I know where I can find more information or mental health resources.
 5. I know when to seek help for mental health.
 - The Impact of Workplace Violence on Emotional Well-being (pre 12/post 12)
 1. I understand the impacts of workplace violence on emotional well-being.
 2. I know the risk factors related to workplace violence.

3. I know ways to advocate individually or collectively in my workplace.
 4. I know where I can find more information or resources about mental health.
 5. I know when it is necessary to seek mental health help.
- The Impact of Emotional Well-being on Family Functioning (pre 20/post 18)
 1. I know what some of the common mental health conditions are (i.e. depression, anxiety)
 2. I know what are common reactions to stress.
 3. I know the impact of stress on family dynamics and relationships.
 4. I know where I can find more information or resources for parents.
 5. I know where I can find support resources for emotional well-being.

(See Pre & Post Survey Data - [Compiled Results](#))

Comments from Workers

In addition to meeting these concrete deliverables, we collected written comments from workers as part of the post-survey. Below are some quotes workers shared about the workshop series:

- “Aprendí cómo tratar a los demás y ser mejor amiga y aprendí a tratar y compartir que tiene que apoyar a los que necesitan apoyo.” // “I learned how to treat others and be a better friend and I learned to treat and share that you have to support those who need support”
- *Participant, Mental Health & Stigma*
- Muy interesante la información sobre cómo mixtiar frutas y verduras para ayudar con tu salud.” // “Very interesting information on how to mix fruits and vegetables to help with your health.”
- *Participant, Nutrition Psychology*
- “Necesito aprender más sobre cómo mantenerse más en el futuro. Porque es siempre necesario consumir mejor. // “I need to learn more about how to support myself more in the future. Because it is always necessary to consume better.”
- *Participant, Nutrition Psychology*
- “La clase estuvo excelente, pero como necesitamos una terapia en grupo.” // “The class was excellent, but we need group therapy.”
- *Participant, Symptoms of Stress Among the Garment Worker Community*

- Es muy agradecido que hayan personas que puedan ayudar con salud mental porque afecta bastante.” // “It is very appreciated that there are people who can help with mental health because it affects a lot.”
- *Participant, Symptoms of Stress Among the Garment Worker Community*
- “La salud mental-existe por varias factores que afectan al buen funcionamiento de las personas. Y es como una enfermedad que requiere tratamiento.” // “Mental health exists due to several factors that affect the well-functioning of people. And it is like an illness that requires treatment.”
- *Participant, Socioeconomic Factors that Impact Emotional Well-being*
- “Es importante la salud mental. porque provoca problemas en los matrimonios. afectan a los niños y las personas solas. Se deprimen más fácilmente”// “Mental health is important. Because it causes problems in marriages. affect children and single people. They get depressed more easily”
– *Participant, The Impact of Workplace Violence on Emotional Well-Being*
- “Realmente agradezco por hacernos participes de este taller que nos educa bastante. Muchas gracias” // “I really thank you for making us participate in this workshop that educates us a lot. Thank you very much”
- *Participant, Impact of Emotional Well-being on Family Functioning*

Lessons Learned

Throughout the workshop series, workers often expressed navigating ever present fluctuations of life, from personal matters to unsustainable employment. Participant’s work environments might shift on a daily basis due to the volatility of the industry— constantly seeking new job opportunities, relocating to different factories, traveling to new cities— which can make it difficult to dedicate time and attention to their personal well-being. Workers often shared examples of stressful situations in their workplaces, as well as pointed out employers and co-workers often do not see well-being as a priority. With the majority of participants being between the ages of 46-60, several shared experiences of ageism and discrimination, resulting in loss of employment or severe underemployment for some. Workers recognized the untreated anxiety, depression, and trauma that exists among garment workers are high, and that mental health education and services are important and necessary to the garment worker community.

Successes

The “Emotional Well-being Workshops for Garment Workers” were a first connection to the Garment Worker Center for a total of 11 workers who are new to GWC. These workers now have the support network of our organization for future service needs, access to future mental health workshops, and support for organizing in their workplaces. The workshops also created an opportunity to reconnect with long-term GWC members who live in Service Areas 6 and 7, since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Participants were often willing to share lived experiences and respond to the workshop’s content by connecting it to their own lives, highlighting the most prevalent mental health issues experienced by Latino and indigenous workers– trauma related to work, immigration, and family. Powerful testimonies were shared, often highlighting that social justice and mental health are not independent. For some topics, the group conversations served as spaces for honest explorations of self. In some cases, we checked in with participants after the workshop who shared deep thoughts to offer support and referrals to the DMH Access Line.

In addition to the workshops providing mental health education, participants explored tensions that the body feels as a response to stress. Presenters introduced “mindfulness” (“atencion plena”), incorporated education on the mind-body connection, and combined it with activities that require movement. Such activities provided opportunities for participants to learn a practice (i.e. deep breathing, stretching, reconnecting to nature) and build skills to alleviate stress and enhance emotional well-being from a holistic perspective.

Framing Mental Health as Social Justice

Although there are several challenges garment workers face that influence health outcomes and quality of life, workers appreciated and expressed the importance of education and promoting emotional well-being for garment workers. By reducing stigma around mental health, GWC has adopted a practice of emphasizing the emotional well-being of our garment worker members. As a result, two GWC members have connected GWC to faith-based organizations to explore ways we can collaborate and support the garment worker community through mental health challenges. Over the past year, the “Emotional Well-being Workshops for Garment Workers” have become an integral part of our organizing space. Workers continue to express interest in this programming, as well as express the benefits of feeling validated and supported.

Network and Resources

Some unique resources that resulted from working with multiple community partners included:

1. Cynthia de Leon, LMFT, provided a guide on “How to Request Support” with specific scripts to communicate needs, identify emotions, and request services over the phone to the DMH Access Line.
2. Dr. Desmonette Hazly developed a nutrition guide, as well as three short articles about “The Connection Between Mind, Body, and Diet.” These materials supported the distribution of the content provided in the mental health workshop. GWC worked with artist “Miss Z” to illustrate the guide “Nutrition Psychology: The Connection Between Diet and Emotional Health.” Dr. Hazly also provided a linkage to nutrition workshops and mental health services at Wellnest LA.
3. Luz Bertadillo, MSW, provided information on free arts/recreational activities in Los Angeles, parks and green spaces in Los Angeles, as well as guided a meditation exercise with affirmations.
4. Victoria Mercel, DMH Promotoras, provided illustrated literature from “Vision y Compromiso” that summarized key information related to mental health disorders, including depression, anxiety, and stress.
5. Veronica Ponce de Leon and Patricia Rizo, UCLA LOSH, provided education on CAL OSHA health and safety standards that protect the mental health of workers, and provided linkage to other “Workplace Violence” training programs.
6. Marisol Granillo Arce, MSH, MPH, provided resources for parents and children, including a list of organizations in Los Angeles that offer mental health services, specifically therapy for children.

In addition to these resources developed by our partners, participants were also able to meet with local service providers and the DMH Spanish Support Groups offered virtually. A GWC Member Support Coordinator as well as a GWC Organizer or other staff were present at each presentation to share GWC resources, invite garment workers to organize with GWC, and respond to questions related to workplace organizing. Dr. Luis Guzman also shared information on mental health services and resources for the Latino community.



[See Nutrition Guide attached]

Challenges

Logistics

Although the Statement of Work stated workshops must be at least two hours in duration, we decided it was best to conduct shorter, 1.5-hour workshop sessions. The times selected to host workshops were primarily Wednesday evenings, from 6p to 7:30p. The factor in deciding these times was to accommodate the time at which most participants get off of work and their commute on public transportation.

Survey Administration

Some barriers we encountered with survey administration include the following:

- Delivery of the first two workshops in March 2022 via virtual platform (Zoom) due to COVID-19. To administer pre and post surveys, we offered the option to fill out the survey virtually or in-person at the office, as well as offered in-person support with reading and writing.
- Participants not completing pre and post surveys due to late arrival or needing to leave the workshop early to commute home.

- Based on participants feedback regarding their literacy levels and the terminology on the likert scale, we changed the scale by updating the language as follows:

“1 = Totally Disagree” to “1 = No” ; “5 = Totally Agree” to “5 = Yes/Always”

Survey Instructions - Original Likert Scale

Based on what you learned during today's event, please circle the number that most closely represents whether you agree or disagree with the following statements.

The scale starts with "1= Totally Disagree" through "5 = Totally Agree"

Survey Instructions - Revised Likert Scale

Based on what you learned during today's event, please circle the number that most closely represents whether you agree or disagree with the following statements.

The scale starts with "1= No" through "5 = Yes/Always"

- Low participation from male workers overall throughout the series, with approximately 4:1 ratio of female participants versus male participants. As a result of this outcome, we can intentionally target male workers in the future.

Total Participants	57
Total Male	11
Total Female	43
Total Transgender	3

Outreach to Indigenous populations

GWC surveyed participants and found the known languages included Spanish, Qui'che, Canjobal, Zapoteco, Mixteco, and English. The method of outreach to indigeneous populations included one-on-one invitations from our Quiche-speaking organizer, illustrated flyers, and voice message descriptions of the workshop fliers.

Known Languages (Linguistic Capacities)	Spanish, Qui'che, Canjobal, Zapoteco, Mixteco, English
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Although we communicated the availability of translation to indigenous languages, all participants chose “Spanish” as their language preference, regardless of whether their linguistic capacities included other languages. For our future work in this area, we are curious to learn why workers who speak both languages, and where Qui’che is their primary language, may not prefer interpretation, so we may better understand the needs. Anecdotally, workers who identify as indigenous have expressed experiencing discrimination and mistreatment, including from co-workers, which may be a reason they chose not to accept interpretation support.

Recommendations

The population that GWC serves faces several barriers to access mental health services. Below are recommendations for LACDMH on how to improve outreach and engagement to the Latino and indigenous community in order to increase accessibility, penetration and retention:

- Several workers have communicated experiences of being advised by their primary doctors diagnosing stress symptoms to improve diet/nutrition in order to reduce physical symptoms such as chronic headaches and pains. In several cases, doctors did not provide a referral to DMH mental health services or resources.

Our recommendation to DMH is to expand non-traditional mental health services that will increase awareness and knowledge related to mental health, stress management, and nutrition. DMH can work with mental health practitioners to offer culturally-relevant nutrition education programs, such as cooking and edible gardening classes, for the Latino and indigenous community. A project such as this would also connect participants with local community resources to address food insecurity.

- Other challenges that workers have expressed when attempting to access mental health services include: limited availability, no availability, or appointments scheduled months in advance for initial appointments; feeling overwhelmed by the access line system and lack of one-to-one support for connecting to services; lack of awareness by non-insured individuals; lack of family therapy; and taking time off work to commute to a therapy session.

To alleviate some of these challenges, our recommendation to DMH is to improve access to one-on-one counseling and/or therapy services by making it available outside of traditional health care clinics. Mental health care providers could engage Latino and indigenous community members by meeting them in community spaces they frequently engage with. Community members may benefit from having a counseling psychologist, for example, hold “office hours” in the community, such as worker centers, community centers, churches, and other places.

- Several garment workers expressed the interest and need for an in-person group therapy specifically for garment workers. For some this may feel more culturally appropriate than individual one-on-one therapy, and prevents isolation of workers.

Our recommendation to DMH is to increase accessibility to mental health services through in-person therapy groups. Providing this space can empower workers, strengthen resilience, and build self-confidence so that they can adopt health-promoting behaviors. In addition to group therapy, garment workers would also benefit from other kinds of therapeutic programming that focus on skills-building (i.e. self-regulation skills, creativity/arts programming) in addition to education and awareness of mental health services.

- In discussing the low participation of males in this pilot program, a specific recommendation to DMH from one of our GWC leaders and long-time member is for DMH to destigmatize mental health by developing a plan to discuss the role of “machismo” in the family unit, “machismo” as a systemic problem, and the cultural stereotypes of “machismo” in Latin America.