Salir Adelante - Promoting Good Mental Health for Every Latino in San Diego

Metropolitan Group and County of San Diego Department Health and Human Services Agency, Jan 1,2013

Summary: 2013 Silver Anvil Award of Excellence Winner — Multicultural Public Relations — Associations / Government / Nonprofit Organizations

The County of San Diego's Health and Human Services Agency engaged Metropolitan Group (MG) to develop, design, produce, and distribute a *fotonovela* designed to:

> 1) **reduce stigma associated with mental illnesses among Latinos**;
> 2) **promote good mental health**; and
> 3) **promote access to mental health services**.

By partnering with community-based organizations, public agencies, and local businesses, the fotonovela reached 42% of the Latino population of the County. Evaluation found that one in four readers took action as a result of reading the fotonovela, and readers were twice as likely to have changed their behavior toward people with mental health challenges.

Multicultural public relations includes any type of program, such as institutional, marketing and community relations, specifically targeted to a cultural group.

Full Text: ## SUMMARY

The County of San Diego's Health and Human Services Agency engaged Metropolitan Group (MG) to develop, design, produce, and distribute a fotonovela to reach the following goals:

- **G1) Reduce stigma associated with mental illnesses among Latinos;**
- **G2) Increase Latinos' awareness, understanding, and behavioral intentions in promoting good mental health; and**
- **G3) Promote access to mental health services and resources**.

RESEARCH

Background/Situation Analysis: Through a review of existing research, we learned that nearly 18 percent of Latinos will suffer from major depression in their lifetimes, but fewer than one in 11 Latinos will contact a mental health specialist, and fewer than one in five will reach out for support to a general health care provider. We also learned that Latinos tend to describe mental health challenges in terms of physical symptoms (e.g., exhaustion, aches and pains, sleeplessness, etc.). Barriers that prevent Latinos from seeking mental health services include fear of rejection, discrimination, shame, stigma, and language. *Fotonovelas* (small booklets in a comic book format) were chosen as the delivery vehicle for the health messaging based on research showing their effectiveness in reaching and motivating Latino audiences.

Audience Research: MG engaged in a literature review of existing research and conducted six focus groups with three groups representing the general Latino population, two groups with Latino mental health consumers, and one group with mental health providers. Formative groups informed strategy while a second round of groups were used to pretest the *fotonovela's* storyline and creative elements.

PLANNING

A steering committee comprised of Latino mental health consumers and service providers was created to inform the planning of the project and development of the *fotonovela*. The committee was engaged in the development and storyboarding of the fotonovela to ensure that the story was authentic and relevant to the audience. The committee also offered important insights in creating a targeted, but broad reaching, distribution strategy.

To maximize the usefulness of the *fotonovela*, the story focused on symptoms that are common across many mental health challenges rather than on any single diagnosis. The story incorporated descriptions of the physical symptoms, since research shows Latinos are more likely to describe mental health challenges in this way. To facilitate intergenerational conversations among families who are often bilingual, the *fotonovela* was produced in both Spanish and English.

Key strategies, tactics, and tools

Culturally relevant message and creative development: Key messages from our research included "You are not alone," "Treatment works," and "Help is available." All three messages were integrated into the storyline of the *fotonovela*, as were common Latino cultural archetypes (e.g., loving mother, hardworking father, concerned *abuela*, trusted best friend, parish priest, etc.). The characters in the story modeled the *fotonovela's* calls to action: reaching out to ask for help from someone you trust, offering help to someone who needs it, showing compassion, and accessing available services. The storyline and graphic design were pretested and modified based on input received during discussion groups with Latino consumers, mental health providers, and the public.

Targeted distribution: To maximize reach, we used distribution channels that are familiar in the Latino community, as well as trusted messengers, collaboration with key local organizations, and partnerships with respected local media in the Latino community. MG established partnerships with the San Diego County Library, Northgate Gonzáles Markets (six locations in San Diego County), public agencies, healthcare facilities, community based organizations, faith communities, and civic groups. In addition, we established a partnership with *promotores de salud*, local health promoters serving Latinos, who engage in direct outreach to county library branches to conduct workshops in the library on the subject of Latino mental health, during which the *fotonovelas* would be distributed.

Media Partnerships: We established partnerships with the county's leading Spanish - language newspapers, *El Latino* and *La Prensa*, which published the serialized *fotonovela* in consecutive weekly issues along with feature articles and op-eds on the subject of Latino mental health. By combining the distribution of the printed *fotonovela* with the newspaper serialization of the story, we were able to dramatically extend our reach across the county's Latino population at a minimum cost-per-exposure.

Tracking / Measurement: Measurement was conducted by the Health Services Research Center (HSRC) at the University of California, San Diego (UCSD), in the form of an online survey (see Evaluation below). MG collaborated with HSRC to develop the survey and recruit participants. Recruitment took place through advertisements in *El Latino*, *La Prensa*, *San Diego Reader*, and *Craigslist*; Facebook ads targeting adult Latinos living in San Diego; the existing database of the University of California; notice postings in county library branches and health offices, etc.; and direct requests to mental health professionals for distribution to their networks.

Timeline and Budget.
2009: Recruitment of *Fotonovela* Steering Committee members and campaign partners.
2010: Research, development, and launch of *fotonovela*.
2011-2012: Distribution and evaluation of the *fotonovela*.

Total Campaign Budget: $292,000.

EXECUTION

MG wrote, designed, published, and distributed the *fotonovelas* and coordinated all partnerships. We also trained the *promotores* to incorporate the *fotonovela* into their community outreach, providing them with copies of the *fotonovela* and promotional materials such as branded bags and pencils. The library partners and Northgate Gonzáles Markets received display racks to make the *fotonovelas* accessible to patrons and visitors. The *fotonovela* was launched during Mental Illness Awareness Week in October 2010, with the first wave of 40,000 *fotonovelas* distributed over the course of the subsequent four months. A second wave of 70,000 *fotonovelas* was published and distributed in the first six months of 2011. The serialized printing of the *fotonovela* in *El Latino* and *La Prensa* translated to 95,000 additional versions distributed, making total distribution 360,000.

EVALUATION

The Health Services Research Center (HSRC) at the University of California, San Diego (UCSD) conducted an online survey in both English and Spanish in September 2011, generating 463 responses. The February 2012 report showed the campaign achieved significant success in advancing the three goals for a modest investment over a short window of time. Measured progress toward these goals is noted by corresponding goal numbers shown below:

- The *fotonovela* reached 42% of the Latino population of the county (392,000 Latino residents). (G1)
- 19.3% of survey respondents recalled seeing the *fotonovela* at some point prior to the survey. (G1)
- Virtually all respondents who had seen the *fotonovela* accurately recalled the story and were able to describe the characters and storyline. (G1, G3)
- 26.1% reported that after reading the *fotonovela*, they talked about it with a friend or relative (one of the intended outcomes of the *fotonovela*). (G1, G2, G3)
- People who read the *fotonovela* were almost twice as likely (50% compared to 26%) to have changed their behavior in relation to people with mental health problems in the previous six months. (G1, G2, G3)
- 96.7% of survey respondents indicated that the *fotonovela* helped them understand that treatment for mental health problems is available in their community. (G2)
- 93.4% responded that the *fotonovela* helped them believe that mental health problems are nothing to be ashamed of. (G1, G2)
- More than half of all survey respondents reported they would take some sort of action as a result of reading the *fotonovela*. (G2, G3)

Product #: 6BE-1315B01