

# Engaging Mexican Indigenous Families, Children, and Youths in Mental Health Treatment

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## Facts of the Mexican Indigenous Populations Living in the United States

- Mexicans represent 62% of all immigrants with Latin American origins living in the United States.[1]
- Indigenous people from Southeastern Mexico live in California. In this state, there are 23 different Indigenous Languages spoken, which represent 13 different Mexican states. Other states with significant Mexican descents include Arizona, Colorado, Georgia, North Carolina, and Texas.[2]
- Most adults are fluent in their Native Language and speak basic Spanish.
- Caregivers will speak with their children in their Native Language and Spanish.[1]
- Most Mexican Indigenous population are seasonal agricultural workers, live in crowded places with people who speak their languages, and come from the same region.[3]

## What you Need to Know When Treating Mexican Indigenous Populations Living in the United States

- Language barriers, poverty, and lack of employment and health insurance increases mental health disparities.[4]
- Lack of Spanish-speaking and culturally responsive counselors or therapies and structural barriers hinder the use of mental health services among this population.[5]
- Serial migration leads to family separation, a traumatic event for all family members who may experience isolation and betrayal.[6]



## What you Need to Know When Treating Mexican Indigenous Populations Living in the United States

- Mexican Indigenous mothers take full responsibility for raising the children after their spouse or partner migrates to the United States, making reunification both joyful and stressful.[6,7]
- Mexican Indigenous children born in the United States often faced deportation of their caregivers due to their legal status.[8]
- Mexican Indigenous youths can experience racism and discrimination, leading to cultural assimilation, familial isolation, and violence.[9]
- The acculturation gaps can lead to intergenerational tensions among caregivers and their children. Mexican Indigenous youths are challenged to adhere to the cultural norms of their Mexican heritage and the United States culture.[10]

## As a counselor or therapist: What you can do to engage Mexican Indigenous Populations into mental health treatment:[11]

- Distinguish Indigenous patients from other Mexican and Mexican American descendants' patients.
- Provide culturally-appropriate care by considering values and worldviews.
- Train and hire interpreters from their own communities.
- Train staff on cultural sensitivity and understanding of Mexican diversity.
- Create culturally-appropriate office spaces.
- Collaborate with local community organizations, churches, and schools to develop trust.
- Incorporate family and spirituality as a source of support or as part of therapy.
- Use of *dichos* or proverbs during therapy sessions.
- Encourage clients to openly express their reactions and disagree with you if what you are proposing during therapy is not part of their cultural values.

### References

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