Introduction

The Affordable Care Act (ACA) makes great stride in bridging the gap of accessibility for healthcare services in the United States. Since inception, 20 million uninsured have gained health coverage (Uberoi, Finegold, & Gee, 2016), Latinos living in the United States are not the exception; they are also reporting improvements in obtaining health insurance and accessibility of services. According to Uberoi et al., (2016) Latinos reduced the uninsured rate estimates from 41.8% in 2010 to 30.5% in 2016.

For 2015, Latinos comprised the largest minority group in United States with 18% and it is estimated that 29% of the population in 2060 will be from Latino descent (US Census Bureau, 2016). The expected population growth for Latinos and the increase in access for health services, demands healthcare professionals to be knowledgeable and apply skills of cultural fluency that may facilitate the provision of service in the implementation and continuation of Access to care and behavioral health. Behavioral health is a critical component to the holistic approach and integration of services. Exploring challenges and opportunities of the workforce serving Latino populations with substance use disorders in the ACA era is needed to reduce the unparallel difference between services needed and services available for Latinos in the United States. According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (2014) workforce development is one key strategic initiative that is leading the path to an effective service delivery system. The aim of the study was to explore and understand the challenges and opportunities the providers serving Latino populations in the ACA changing environment.

Methodology

Researchers for this study used a qualitative approach. Three main questions were considered (See Table 2). Five focus groups were conducted, each representing five states within the 10 Human and Health Services Regions where Treatment Episode Data Set (TEDS-A) for 2012 indicated high proportion of Latinos receiving service use disorder treatment services (see Figure 1). Using a profile form, each Regional ATTC under each HHS region invited potential attendees to each meeting. A total of 56 participants engaged in the conversation using a structured questionnaire. For each group, the same interviewer guided a presentation of national and state situation regarding Latinos in the US with specific emphasis on substance use disorders before the discussion. This technique allowed for participants to have a foundational understanding of the topic and researcher’s knowledge and biases in the area. After authorizations, conversations where recorded and noted the interviewer documented the incidences. For the purpose of this report, Rapid Assessment Process was utilized for analysis (Bebee, 2005). Additionally, two coders reviewed, noted documentation, and listened the recordings to determine themes and topics after concordance and agreement.

Results

The majority of participants were females (57.1%), Latina/o (53.6%), primary profession social work (25.0%) or addiction professionals (17.9%), and role administrative (37.5%) or clinical supervisor (14.3%). See Table 1 for details by locations. Table 2 shows salient domains and themes under NetCare.

Discussion

Results of the study indicated that providers serving Latinos face challenges at the time of service provision. Workforce needs support to keep doing the work while being compliant with the requirements under ACA. Cultural insensitive curriculum infusions are needed in college and universities capacitating new health care professionals. Specialized training centers are needed to support capacity building strategies of the workforce serving Latinos with substance use disorders. Promotion of integration, diversity, supervision, and mentorship in organizations is needed to address the gap of clients served and professionals properly trained for delivering culturally appropriate services. Identification of needs among behavioral health services especially on substance use is an ongoing process to promote for continually monitoring progress in quality service delivery. Recognition of limited cadre of trainers and limited training opportunities, focusing on the incorporation of specific-cultural themes for Latinos persists, it is imperative to develop instructors’ training and make available a comprehensive repository of resources (e.g., trainings, guides, and materials) for broadening the scope of practice. Training Centers, universities/colleges, and credentialing/licensing bodies should consider these challenges and capitalize to transform these into opportunities for developing additional competencies required for the better provision of services, especially among the workforce serving the Latino populations.

References


Acknowledgements

This project was possible thanks to the Support of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration, and the Regional ATTC’s for their support and collaboration.

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