

## **A Framework for Understanding the "Role of Culture" in Prevention Programs for Immigrant and Refugee Populations**

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**Discussants:** Sandra Del Sesto, M.Ed., Rosalind Kurzer, MA, Lynn McDonald, MSW, PhD., Lawrence Murray, CSW, Kim Netter, MPH

It is estimated that by 2050, racial and ethnic minorities will make up half of the total U.S. population; youth of color. There exists a paucity of research and knowledge about science-based substance abuse prevention and mental health promotion interventions for this population group. Prevention researchers and state and local prevention leaders alike can benefit from a framework for understanding the role of culture in developing an appropriate response to substance abuse and addictions among new immigrants and refugee populations.

This roundtable will discuss lessons learned from research and practice about "role of culture" in prevention and early intervention programs for immigrant and refugee populations. It will bring together researchers and practitioners who work with diverse racial/ethnic populations including immigrants. Overall, the panelist will discuss how they have addressed culture in their research and practice. The panel presentation will be followed by a larger group discussion regarding strategies and policy implications for designing culturally-based interventions for immigrants and refugees within the context of prevention and health promotion will be discussed.

Deborah McLean Leow, MSW will chair the discussion and will present key issues to be considered and unasked questions that must be answered in order to develop and deliver effective preventive interventions for immigrants and refugees. Her work in this area is funded by a grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

Rosalind Kurzer and Sandra Del Sesto will discuss the process they used to create at the grassroots level a prevention program to meet both the literacy and cultural needs of immigrant populations. They will also describe the challenges of and options for evaluating a program targeting low literacy, multicultural individuals.

Lawrence F. Murray will discuss lessons learned about the role of culture in prevention from his work with CASASTART. He will speak to the importance looking at the role of culture in prevention in a broader perspective than that of a program developer/service implementer. His presentation will focus on the question "how did we move CASASTART from being a program solely focused on high-risk kids in the "inner city" to one that is serving high-risk children in cities, suburbia and rural settings?"

Lynn McDonald will discuss the role that culture has played in various implementations of FAST - a model prevention program. In particular, she will discuss the adaptation of an evidence based prevention multi-family group (MFG) model which has been effective with immigrants and refugees (Somali, Vietnamese, Cambodian, Hmong, Slovenian, Mexican, Cuban, European, Asian, African, etc.). She will also discuss the importance of program core components in making adaptations to address cultural diversity.

Kim Netter will discuss her work on a Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Build Mentally Healthy Communities Initiative that funds programs to address the mental health issues faced by communities. The experiences surrounding the provision of programmatic technical assistance for two programs from this Initiative--the Racial and Ethnic Disparities Initiative and the Prevention/Early Intervention Initiative--will be examined from the perspective of the issues and challenges encountered in working with ethnically and culturally diverse populations. .