



The current COVID-19 crisis is highlighting many critical areas that are lacking in our country's socio economic structure, regarding public health and addiction recovery services. This lack is experienced more acutely by certain populations and, unfortunately, has been for quite some time.

The 1960s witnessed an influx of immigrants from the Dominican Republic to major American metropolises like New York City. My family was among them. Like thousands of immigrants before, they came here in pursuit of a better life. Unfortunately, not everyone found assimilation on American soil so easy.

Only 11 years old when he arrived in this country, my cousin, Felipe, suffered from personality issues and behavioral problems. An easy target for gangs, it wasn't long before he was indoctrinated into that world, exposing him to illegal substances. Ultimately, without resources for the Spanish speaking population to assist his mother in addressing his needs, my cousin succumbed to heroin addiction in 1991.

Stories like this are what have inspired LARA to create a support system in Spanish for the millions of people living in the United States to effectively access proper information about mental health and addiction in their native Spanish. In fact, the 2018 NSDUH reported that 92% of Hispanic/Latino youth suffering from a substance use disorder did not receive treatment in a specialty facility.

As one of the lucky few -- having recently celebrated my own 13 years in recovery -- and from my official position as the Director & Founder of LARA, I am writing to ask for your financial support to accomplish the following:

- Build a Spanish-speaking Peer Recovery Coach workforce
- Integrate bi-lingual Peer Recovery Coaches into Recovery Community Organizations in the top 10 US states with the highest Latino speaking population and Puerto Rico.
- Develop Hispanic & Latino Peer Recovery Coach trainings for virtual classrooms
- Start-up operational funding for Latino Recovery Advocacy

We already know that COVID-19 threatens an increase in substance abuse issues and the coming weeks and months are crucial to setting up necessary support. I welcome the opportunity to discuss how you can help me further this important mission and thank you for taking the time to consider my request.

Sincerely,

Angel Lagares
Director & Founder of LARA
National Certified Recovery Coach
Latino Recovery Advocacy