



Summary of Focus Group Results

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Values/Family

The focus groups discussed the shift in family structure and values when they arrived in the United States. Most participants were born in Mexico. They described the transition to a more individual, isolated life, rather than being surrounded by friends and family.

Healthy Eating/Diabetes

Participants reported that they started eating poorly, particularly fast food and processed foods, when they immigrated to the United States. A few people mentioned eating much more meat once they moved. Adjusting to their new lives was very hard, and staying healthy was even harder due to long work schedules and stress. Buying food was more expedient and seemed cheaper than making it at home. While some emphasized the responsibility of the individual to make good choices, others acknowledged the financial and access barriers many in their community face. One participant stated that she developed diabetes when she was twenty-three years old. Many were aware that diabetes was a problem in their community, but did not know much about how it is treated. They were also aware of high rates in communities of color. Participants shared advice with each other on eating more balanced diets with plenty of fruits and vegetables and exercising more. They shared information on local farmers markets and food bank programs. One person stated that some places require identification to access services, which can be a barrier for undocumented community members. Multiple people stated that eating healthy seemed expensive, especially if you tried to buy organic and high-quality natural food products.

Participants suggested that community organizations should offer diabetes classes and nutrition programs and recommended exercise programs like Zumba, access to soccer fields and places to exercise, and more community events to encourage children to play and move outside. One person recommended that programs publicize services in Spanish and in spaces frequented by community members.

Acculturation/Mental Health

Multiple participants described how difficult it was to leave their families behind and to try to make new friendships in a new country. Some described having feelings of depression, insomnia, extreme stress, and even suicidal ideation. Participants expressed differing understandings of mental health and its causes. Some understood it as a result of a singular traumatic event, while others mentioned depression as an ongoing condition. One participant said it was vital to go to a therapist and another recommended



going to church groups to talk with peers in a safe space. Domestic violence was brought up multiple times as a problem in the community. Embarrassment and fear were mentioned as reasons for not seeking help. External factors affecting mental health included unemployment, poor education, demanding work schedules, immigration raids, limited resources, lack of information, and violence inside and outside of the home. One participant shared their experience with depression and its manifestations, including forgetfulness, insomnia, poor appetite, and feelings of helplessness, in addition to high blood pressure. Another had a son who was schizophrenic and was trying to seek care and support as a caregiver.