

## Lessons learned from community based participatory research (CBPR) to assess HIV/AIDS needs for and advocacy capacity on behalf of latinos learning objectives

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Latinos in US South are disproportionately impacted by HIV/AIDS. Structural barriers, service practices, and anti-immigration laws contribute to limited access to HIV services and poor health outcomes. Using CBPR approach, Latino Southern REACH project facilitated formation of a community coalition to document Latino's HIV needs and advocacy efforts in nine US Southern states. A transdisciplinary research team engaged in a partnership with 25 community members from North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Northern Florida, Mississippi, Louisiana, Alabama, Tennessee, and Arkansas. This partnership guided creation of a multi-state coalition, which through a consensus process, developed the research agenda, conducted in-depth interviews, and participated in data analyses on factors impacting HIV testing, care, and treatment. The Coalition members received training via webinars on 1) the human rights framework and 2) research design, participant recruitment and data collection and analysis. CBPR is a feasible methodology to conduct research with communities without prior exposure to research. Feasibility is associated with a clear and mutually agreed upon roles, shared decision-making, flexible research agenda, and involvement of community members in all aspects of the research process. Latino cultural constructs and language are key considerations when developing partnerships with Latino communities. Communities must play an active role throughout research process to ensure that studies are culturally sensitive and relevant. The process of forming community-research partnerships is time consuming, yet it results in greater capacity and commitment by community members to advocate for the health of target groups.

### Biography

Jesus Felizzola has more than 25 years of experience in HIV/AIDS clinical practice, cultural competency, and research and evaluation. Currently he serves as a principal investigator of a 5-year HRSA/HAB-funded special project of National Significance, Building a Medical Home for HIV homeless individuals in rural North Carolina. He has also worked as senior Director of research and evaluation and Project Director of the AIDS Education and Training Center, National Center for HIV Care in Minority Communities at health HIV in Washington, DC. During his tenure with Howard University, also served as associate director of the NIH-funded Research program in Epidemiology and Prevention of Drug Abuse and AIDS, project director of Minority Institutions Drug Abuse Research Development program, and Cultural Competency manager for Howard's National Minority AIDS Education and Training Center. Other work experience of Dr. Felizzola include serving as principal investigator of a HRSA/SPNS multi-site outreach demonstration project in Miami, Florida, associate director of the NIH-funded Latino HIV/AIDS Behavioral Sciences Center at Florida International University and coordinator of the North Carolina Statewide Latino HIV/AIDS Initiative.

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