



## **Transcript of**

### **Employment and Recovery in the Latino Community**

Sponsored by the STAR Center

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Moderator: Majose Carrasco, Director of Multicultural Action Center, NAMI

Panelists: Lupe Morin, Juany Lopez, David Gonzalez

Technical facilitation by the call Operator.

MC: Good evening, everybody, I would like to welcome all of you to this STAR Center's conference call on recovery and employment in the Latino community. Thank you very much for joining us and we look forward to hearing from you later on. My name is Majose Carrasco and I'm the director of the multicultural action center of the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill. And I feel truly honored to be invited today to be your moderator for this call.

The STAR Center is one of five national consumer support and technical assistance centers that are funded by the Center for Mental Health Services. STAR stands for support, technical assistance and resources and the mission of the center is to promote cultural competence and self-help adaptation for people living with mental illnesses. Today, we have three wonderful panelists who are going to share with us their experience with employment in the Latino community. They are three leaders at the national, state or local level and I'm sure all of us have great things to learn from them.

So today I'm going to briefly introduce them, then each panelist is going to give us a 10 to 15 minute presentation about the topic and after that, we'll have time for questions and answers. So I want to introduce Lupe Morin, Juany Lopez, and David Gonzalez. Lupe Morin has served as family resource coordinator at the Center for Health Care Services in San Antonio, Texas for 14 years. She has extensive experience in supportive employment assisting consumers in getting and keeping a good job and in helping families and consumers in San Antonio and Texas. Closely with Lupe, I want to introduce Juany Lopez who works really close with Lupe. She works at the Center for Health Care Services. She's a consumer who has made the transition to employment as a community services worker. She's also planning to return to college in the near future. I also want to introduce David Gonzalez who is a coordinator of support services for the mental health empowerment project. He's also the founder of a anti-stigma, anti-abuse Website, [www.cinemaniastigma.com](http://www.cinemaniastigma.com). He also served as employment coordinator for the New York works research project. So as you can see, all of our panelists have a lot of experience in this area.

So we're going to talk about employment and the benefits for people with mental illness. The first thing we're going to do is Juany is going to share with us what does it mean to find meaningful employment, what motivates a person to find it, and how you can get the

support that you need when looking for employment. Juany, could you share your information with us?

JL: Sure, Majose. Good evening, everyone, and I want to give thank you for give me this wonderful opportunity to share my personal experience and helping you. And I think and I have benefit from this job because my family has seen the difference in my behavior. They give me more support because I – and values because they see that I want to change, I don't want to be in home, I want to be more active. I want to do something for myself because I – in that time I think there was – that was enough for me because I feel then somebody can help me when I need it.

So I decide to look for a job when I was doing volunteer work. I start doing volunteer work here in the clinic. When I start attending the support group, they give me the opportunity to come to help. And I come two or three times a week to clean the office, to do copies, to prepare coffee for the other consumers, to set up the tables and put magazines for the families. And that made me feel then they – I'm important in that day. I feel and I do something for them. And I feel that they need me and maybe they give me opportunity in the future. So I never think to get a job because in that time I don't feel that I have the capacity to do some thing with responsibility, but I was working very hard with myself. I was attending different conference, different workshop, different support group and I'm try to talk with somebody that understand my illness in that time.

So and I'm not going to say it was easy, it was very difficult for me because in that time I don't speak enough English and I can see the barrier when the people they can communicate in our language. So and I was having many problems in that time. So in I was working with myself and I was attending schools and sometimes I feel I come and relax because of course I was putting a lot of pressure on me and my mind and my brain. And I think that I guess I was fortunate people because I come to meet different people and they give me support. They understand what happened with me. They found exactly resources for me. They give me direction for me. So and I was – I want to show them how much I can do for myself, but I need the help, so they understand in that time.

And I feel like they key points to talk to someone with a mental disability are support, education, good opportunities and perseverance. One day one consumer come to ask me Juany can I do a personal question?' and I said 'Well, depends.' And she start she smile and she asked me 'How do you do that? How you can do that?' And I told – my answer was 'Perseverance. Perseverance and education. You can do that. If you want, you can do that. I'm sure you can.'

And it's important for the person to count on his or her families, friend, employers and mental health professional support. It's also important to have self assurance and self esteem. I believe that person with mental illness should start by doing volunteer work to see if they can cope and handle with the responsibilities that come with having a job such as coming on time, clocking in, personal appearance, and interaction with others because if I'm doing a volunteer job, I'm not have enough responsibility, I'm going to be there when I want and I'm going to be attending the days when I want.

But when I have my job, I know I have big responsibility to be there and clock in and clock out on time and my presentation, my clothes, my interaction with others. That was very, very important for me. And my attitude need to be changed, too, because sometimes I feel scared to be around and with too many people and sometimes I don't want to go into the room because I feel that people was doing something to me or the people was talking to me or the people – I feel afraid to be inside of the room but little by little, the people helped me understand and nothing happened and everything is fine. If you don't feel comfortable, you can go out and talk and just be calm.

I feel that there should be more rehabilitation opportunities so that a person that has a mental illness can rejoin society instead of the person being a burden on society, give him the opportunity to be able to give back to society. I think that employers should be educated on different types of mental illness by providing workshops or conference that they can attend and by doing so the employers can see that by hiring a person with an illness he will benefit the community and his country.

There should also be an alliance between the mental health care providers, the government, employers and non profit organization like NAMI. And I want to mention a little bit the organization because they played a very important role for us like consumers because in my situation, the TRC, the Texas Rehabilitation Commission, they trust me. They give me the opportunity to attend a school and they give me the opportunity to demonstrate to myself, to the society, to my family that I can do that. I can – I want to attend this school, so they pay my school, my books, my uniform, my shoes, so and now, I give thanks God every day of my life.

MC: Thank you, Juany. Could you talk really briefly about the stress? How do you manage the stress at your job? What should consumers learn to do when they are dealing with a stressful situation?

JL: And if something is – when I feel something is frustrating for me, I'm try to talk with some professional and then has more responsibility than me and they – I'm try to talk with my supervisor. They helped me. It's very important for the consumer to come with somebody close because some things is not because we don't want to do the job, it's because sometimes we cannot because our condition is a different moods or different stages in different days. But in my personal situation, I love to read books and brochures, all of course mental illness brochures, all kind of information and I feel when I read something important for me, I can be in relax.

MC: Thank you.

JL: You're welcome.

MC: Now, Lupe, could you tell us about the basics of employment? What does it take to get a job?

LM: Well, it depends again like Juany mentioned earlier, first of all, let me say that I'm very proud of Juany, she's come a long way. I remember when she first came here and she was so scared even to walk into the room and she wanted to do something and I saw that in her and gave her the opportunity to volunteer. And now, she is a full time employee here and doing a wonderful job. I'm very proud of her.

I think that some of the things that you need to do to help a consumer; it can be a variety of things. For example, like I mentioned in the Spanish teleconference is that it depends on each consumer. There are some consumers that are what we call are more that have a lower level and so we need to start from the basic such as hygiene, are they able to get up early in the morning due to their medication or whatever other reasons? Are they able to take the bus to get to a job? Do they know how to even look for a job? Do they even know what to look for? Some people been away from being at a job or have never had the opportunity to work, so you have to look at all the angles, all the aspects.

For example, like I mentioned at the last conference call, we had a lady that we're going to call Patsy and Patsy, when she first came in, wanted to be a social worker. First of all, we had to sit down with Patsy and make sure that she had the right education, so we pulled out a book and I asked her 'Let's see what it takes to be a social worker so that we can make sure that this is what we're going to look for.' Well, of course, not even having a high school, she was not going to qualify to go look for a job as a social worker. So we started going into the details as what it is that she needs to be able to become a social worker.

She, herself, realized that she was not at that stage, yet, to become a social worker. But we were able to get her to work in part time in a clinic, two to three hours a day for about three days a week and she was helping the clerk up at the front office make copies, answer telephone calls, and so on and so forth and she felt that that was as close as it could be at that time for her to be a social worker. My understanding is that Patsy is now employed four days a week at a doctor's office for 20 hours a week where she helps with everything that needs to be done around the office and she told me that she is just thrilled at what she's doing and one day she says that she will be a social worker because she's taking one course a year. So I'm very proud of her, too.

Some of the other steps, for example, there was another consumer that what do I wear to work, just by teaching her the appropriate clothing to go out. She wanted to become a hairstylist. I took her to the place where they were doing hair and I just allowed her to sit there and ask her 'Is this what you really want to do?' Well, it turned out to be that she couldn't be around people, especially if she was going to be cutting hair because her voices were so severe. So we have to be very sensitive as to what the consumer can do, what stage the consumer is at at that time.

Some of the other things that I picked up working with consumers as a job coach was that there were consumers that it was very difficult for them to wake up in the morning, to get up in the morning, so we would have to work as far as with a time clock and then make sure that the alarm would be across the room so when the alarm would ring, they would be

able to get up and turn off that alarm because what they found out that if the alarm was right next to them, they would press on it and they would go back to sleep. So we decided that we would put the alarm across the room at a very high volume so that they had no choice but to get up and go turn off that alarm.

We went – we had one consumer where we did a poster on the back of the door, when he closed the door, he would see it in red big letters as to the steps that he needed to take when he got out of bed because he had had a head trauma and this would help him to remember what do I need to do first; wash my face, brush my teeth, get dressed, and we did it weekly. So Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday and he would check it. Now there were times when he would forget to check it, but that was OK because he was training himself, his brain.

There are some people that don't know how to take the job and – I mean don't know how to take the bus and again, the job coach, for example, I would get on the bus with them from their home to take them to the place that they were going to back and forth. This is the bus that you take, this where you get off, and so on and so forth. Another person wish not to disclose at work that she had a mental illness and we have to learn to respect that and a lot of people don't want to respect that. They want to force the person to go ahead and disclose. Well, not everybody wants to disclose.

And so what I would do as a job coach, I would wait for her to – I would go into the store and shop around pretend that I was shopping around and I would observe what she was doing and at the end of the day or at the end of the week, we would get together and we would talk about the things that I saw that were inappropriate or she would come and say 'What did you think about this? Or how did I handle so on and so forth?' So I would talk to her and then we would do a lot of role plays.

MC: So Lupe, sounds like job coaches are just wonderful resources. What can a person with mental illness do to access one of these coaches?

LM: I'm sorry. Will you repeat the question, Majose?

MC: How can one find a job coach? What are the steps that one needs to take to get one?

LM: I know that in the past, the MHMR's would – the mental health authorities for mental retardation they would provide a job coach. My understanding right now due to the lack of funding is that there are hardly any job coaches. I do know, for example, here in Texas, that TRC which is the Texas Rehabilitation Commission, they do have job coaches and what they do is that they plan some times with the center with local MHMR and instead of – they work out of contract. So the center might have some money to pay someone to help this individual find a job and keep a job. So those are – that's what I knew at that time that they were doing.

Now as far as we're doing here at Family Resource now, what we do is other consumers that are working we are asking them to help these other consumers that want to get back

into the job market. So they help them. Another thing Juany said that we were doing is we were having little support groups that we would call – I think it was called ‘The Clubhouse’ or ‘The Job Club’ – something to that effect and they would come in and they would talk to each other and the consumers themselves would say ‘Well, this is what you did wrong’ or ‘This is what I hear’ or ‘This is what I see that you are doing wrong’ and they would help each other, so.

But as far as job coaches, I think that that has gone away a lot and I feel very strongly that they – everyone should have job coaches to where they can just call.

MC: Could you also tell us about what resources are available for mono lingual consumers? People that do not speak English or do not it well.

LM: Well, I know that here in Texas there’s not very much. Like Juany was saying, for her, it was very difficult going out into the community and looking for employment because the obstacle of her not being able to speak the language, even though she was able to understand a little bit of what was going on, she was not able to communicate back. So we really don’t have a lot of resources as of yet, but I know that when we get consumers over here, we – if they ask us to help them with an application, we do. If we ask them to help them with a resume, we have done that in the past. I know that there is other consumers, for example, I know that Janet Calejo (ph), which is another pro – they call them “prosumers,” she would sit down with the individuals and talk to them about how to put a resume together and so on and so forth.

But it could be very difficult for a person who is not – does not speak the English language because that is the dominant language here and it can be very difficult for a consumer who does not speak the English language.

MC: Thank you. And how long do you think it usually takes a person to find a job? And just based on your experience?

LM: It depends on the consumer. For example, it took Juany about three or four years before she found a job, a real paying job because of her depression and the reason I’m disclosing because she’s here and she has given us permission. Because of her depression, it was very hard because she was at that stage to where she wouldn’t even open the door for anyone. So we had to go back to work with her to start learning to do – get away from that fear. So it just depends on the consumer. There might be other consumers that are more prompt and they go to find a job and they can stay working now. There’s other consumers that it can take a long time it just depends on the consumer.

MC: Thank you. And now David, could you tell us about any services and resources that are out there that help someone find employment that can make this easier? And what services do you know about? Could you talk a little bit about vocational rehabilitation and ...

DG: Sure. I’ll do my best.

MC: Thank you.

DG: First of all, I want to say it's really an honor to be able to share among such a distinguished panel. And hopefully, I'll be able to share something that will help someone. Just real briefly, I come from an extensive history of mental illness myself, including substance abuse, incarceration, and homelessness. And the reason why I share that is because I was one of them so called hard to serve individuals who was often accused of being non-compliant and treatment resistant terms that I'm sure most of us are familiar with. And I was often told that I wouldn't be able to return to work, that the stress of returning to work would exacerbate my symptoms.

And so, that kind of robbed me of any hope of recovery and I found that it was important to redefine myself and that's why most of what I'm going to share comes from the strengths-based approach. I had to shift my focus from the illness to a wellness, from limitations to strengths, what qualities, talents, abilities, skills did I have that I could build upon to maximize my potential for employment. I couldn't – of course, there were limitations and I was on medication and those were things that I felt were very important for me to address. But I couldn't stay stuck in the illness, I had to move forward into wellness in order to really have faith and believe that I would eventually be able to return work, which thank God I did.

I think one of the greatest fears I experienced when I first considered returning to work was the fear of losing my benefits. So I think that's one of the first issues that really needs to be addressed when helping an individual with a psychiatric disability who wants to return to work. Give – if possible, have a benefits advisor that can advise him and assure him that there are certain safety nets in place so that they won't lose their benefits if their job doesn't work out. And how their benefits will be impacted if they do indeed return to work based upon whatever amount of monies they're earning.

I guess this varies by – from state to state, but like here in New York City, we have like what they call the pass plan, the trial to work – the trial work period, the expedited reinstatement which was something that was just recently passed for individuals who may end up working and zero out and no longer get a cash check from SSI, if they should lose their job, they can have their benefits reinstated. And they don't have to go through the process of reapplying for SSI. So that's kind of one of the things that I think helps an individual to overcome the fear of losing benefits is having a good benefits advisor.

One of the other things that I felt was important was to have concrete skills and once again, that goes back to the strengths based approach. What talents, qualities, abilities did I have that I could build upon? In my particular case, I enjoy helping people. So for me it was almost like a natural progression to move into the work that I do. Even though I had a limited work history, a limited education, and I was struggling with other issues such as substance abuse history and a history of mental illness. But for me, I guess the first thing was targeting a work objective. So when I say concrete skills, I mean things like targeting a work objective, being able to write an effective resume. If you have long periods where

you were unemployed, what type of resume would be most effective? A chronological resume? A functional resume?

And I think that these things may seem kind of intimidating initially to the average consumer, but once they're actually guided through the process like for me, I know – because I have to speak from my own experience. For me it was very intimidating, the thought of putting together an effective resume. I was like 'Wow, nobody's going to be interested in me. When they see my resume, they're not going to think I'm worth hiring.' But then I started realizing that I had did a lot of things that I could include in my resume that would make me very marketable. Such as I had did a lot of volunteer work, in fact for three years, I worked on things like affordable housing, presumptive Medicaid eligibility and these were things that I was able to include in my resume that made me look – to make me look better.

And of course, I had the honor of earning certain awards, which I also mentioned in my resume and I had taken certain vocational training courses and I had certificates of completion, which I also included in my resume. So these are just little things that a person can do to make their resume more effective and to make them more marketable.

And then of course, job hunting skills. Where are you going to go to look for work? There's different ways, of course, the Department of Labor, the Internet, the classifieds. For me, I found that the most effective way of really being able to find a job for most consumers is networking. Networking with other consumers, I'm a big proponent of the self help peer support movement. And I believe that the peer support movement plays a big role when it comes to networking and everyone sharing information with one another. The job I have right now was because someone sent me an e-mail, saying 'Hey, Dave, they're looking for a coordinator of support services up at Manhattan. I think you would have a great shot at that job. Why don't you drop your resume – send them your resume?' And I did and I got the job.

So that and of course, interview preparation. I think for a lot of people, even whether they have a psychiatric diagnosis or not, the thought of going on an interview can be pretty intimidating, especially if you really want the job because I think most people when they go on an interview really want the job. So how can you be prepared for an interview so that you'll be able to present your best side and hopefully get the job.

Then other things that I had to look at were the different types of employment and that includes things like transitional employment. When I was working as an employment coordinator for the New York Works Research Project, I found that transitional employment was very helpful for a lot of the folks on my caseload to finally be able to move into mainstream so called competitive employment.

MC: Could you expand a little on what that means please?

DG: Transitional employment?

MC: Yes, please.

DG: OK. Transitional employment is usually something that is offered – a service that is offered through – here in New York City, it's offered through the clubhouses. I believe they have clubhouses in most of the states, right?

MC: Yes.

DG: Everybody's familiar with what a clubhouse is? Psycho-social clubhouse? And the clubhouses here in New York City have contracts with different corporations and companies and agencies to hire consumers on a limited basis, usually it's a six months period and it's usually a part time job to give them the opportunity to learn skills and to gradually transition back into the workforce. And in many cases, I found that often times, the employer was so pleased with the consumer, that they would tell us 'Can we keep this guy for another three months or keep this girl for another three months?' And in some cases, even got hired to work full time. So to me, that indicated that it was a very important form – a very important step in eventually returning to full time employment.

So that's basically in a nutshell what transitional employment is and then there's supported employment, volunteer work, like I had mentioned before, I had did a lot of volunteer work and I encourage consumers not to underestimate the importance of doing volunteer work. Just because you're not getting paid for the – you're not getting a paycheck, doesn't mean that you're not benefiting from it because you're learning work skills, you can get a potential letter of reference from the employer. You may even get hired at a place where you're doing volunteer work, after a certain amount of time, maybe the employer might be so impressed with your work skills, they might hire you. And plus, it's something you can put on a resume. Just because you didn't get paid for it, doesn't mean it doesn't qualify as work experience. If you did a year volunteer work, say working in a hospital with the elderly, that's something you can put on a resume as a – I guess as a health care attendant or something to – something like that.

So I encourage people not to underestimate the value of volunteer work. Like I had said when I first opened up, I actually did three years of volunteer work and I benefited greatly from it because that was how I was able to kind of set a foundation for me and I had set a strong foundation, so when I did eventually go to work like I think it was Lupe who shared that she started part time and then eventually was able to move on into full time. That's pretty much the way I went; I started part time because I wanted to be sure that I would be able to deal with the stress of returning to work because I had internalized that belief that the stress of returning to work would somehow end up causing me to end up back in the hospital.

And I found out that usually the stress of work is much more bearable than the stress of being home alone with nothing to do and no one to socialize with and no money in your pocket. So I can deal with the stress of being at work, in fact, I'm in the office right now. So I just encourage people not to underestimate the value of volunteer work.

And then, of course, there's work internships which are usually offered once you've completed a vocational training program and there are lots of community agencies, at least here in the city, and once again, this might vary from state to state, but here in the city, there are a lot of community agencies that offer vocational training for individuals with psychiatric disabilities.

MC: Let me go back a little to the clubhouse, where people in the audience might not know about it. How can they find a clubhouse?

LM: I know here we just opened up a clubhouse about a year ago and there is some limitations that I really don't agree with, but we do have a clubhouse here and we do have consumers that are going to the clubhouse that are going for the purpose of trying to see if that one day they can successfully gain employment. And I know that our local MHMR here was one of the sponsors for the clubhouse.

MC: Thank you. And just – will you also make sure that the STAR Center Website has a link to all the clubhouses in America.

DG: All right. That would be great.

MC: That's a very important resource.

DG: Do you actually have the link like that?

MC: We have a link to a database that has all that information.

DG: Really? Wow, that's great. I didn't even know that. OK. See how networking is so important?

MC: That's true.

DG: Anyway, I also want to emphasize what – I think it was Lupe who stressed the word perseverance.

MC: Yes.

DG: Perseverance that's such an important word because we can't – most of us can return to work if we're willing to persevere and put in the foot work. It's not an easy process, I'm not going to say it's a walk through the park. But it's a rewarding process, someone also before mentioned about how it made them feel worthwhile and how it gave them a sense of like belonging and like they felt like they were doing something important. And that's why work is so important. For me, working is probably 75 percent of my recovery. If I were unemployed right now, my recovery would be in serious jeopardy. So I think that the word perseverance is definitely a word that needs to be stressed.

And then last but not least, I also wanted to just mention like the different community resources and once again, this would vary from state to state. Such as the Department of Labor, we mentioned community agencies, like psycho-social clubhouses, which usually offer, at least here in New York City I know they offer job coaches, job clubs, the opportunity to network with peers, the Internet – access to the Internet. Another community resource would be job fairs, the public library is a community resource and then of course, disclosure; should you disclose, shouldn't you disclose. Is disclosure mandatory? If you decide to disclose, when do you have to disclose? Or who should you disclose to? And then the additional considerations such as traveling requirements, your physical health, and having a good support network.

MC: David, let me stop – could you answer those questions? Should a person disclose? How should they do it? And to whom?

DG: Wow, that's such a personal question. I'll do my best. I think if the person is familiar with the agency that say they're going to interview for a job with and they know that the agency is sensitive or if diversified and hires people with disabilities, then I think that they probably wouldn't have to fear disclosing because there are a lot of progressive corporations today that do like – that do hire people with disabilities and want to hire people with disabilities because it makes them look good also. But unfortunately, sometimes there are also companies that will discriminate against people with disabilities and that's why it's such an independent decision – on a case by case basis.

With me, it was a simple decision because I went straight into the mental health field. So nowadays a lot of agencies, especially like within the human services profession, tend to hire people that had life experience. So for me, it was almost in my interest to disclose because basically what I was saying is I've been there, I've done that, I've learned how to navigate the system and make it work for me because for so long the system hasn't really worked for a lot of us. A lot of us have been intimidated by the system and we need to learn how to be able to use the system and make it work for us. And that was one of the things, too, that fortunately I was able to do with the help of peers. So once again, I'm stressing that peer support piece.

But once again, for me, it was an easy decision, but it's such a case by case decision that I – what I usually – when I was an employment coordinator for New York Work what I would usually tell people is that it's probably safer not to disclose until after you get the job. Once you get the job and you've nurtured a relationship with the employer or the supervisor or with the human resources department at the agency or organization, then you can say 'Well, look, I want to disclose just in case I need an accommodation made' because that's the tricky part about disclosure. If you don't disclose, you're not eligible for any accommodations. If you want to qualify for accommodations, you have to disclose and that's what makes it such a kind of tricky thing.

But it's such a personal decision...

MC: Thank you.

DG: ... I can't answer.

MC: We are getting to time for questions and answers and before we do, that I just want to thank all the panelists for all of their amazing information that they have shared. And Nancy, could we open the lines now for Q&A?

OP: Thank you. The floor is now open for questions. If you do have a question or a comment, please press star one on your touch-tone telephone at this time. Once again, everyone, the floor is now open for questions. To pose your question, please press star then one on your touch-tone keypad at this time.

Thank you. The first question comes from Luis Trevino.

LT: Hello. I'm calling from Monterrey, Mexico. I am an economist and I have had my disease bipolarity for 16 years and I just wanted to share this; I didn't chose the disease, I dragged it for 10 years, but I chose to minimize it's weight. I chose to minimize the weight of the disease by being open with my employer, actually my current boss is aware of my condition and he has been more than supportive. And also, I chose to minimize the weight of my disease by recognizing skills peculiar to the disease such as creativity.

So I was listening to one of the panel members mentioning that sometimes mono lingual have a hard time in the United States. So during my worse years, I picked up languages. So I learned German, Norwegian, Danish, Swedish. So I think that language learning can be an important strategy mostly in the United States and now that they are saying no child left behind, no mental – I don't know how to word it, but I think there are plenty of things to do. So one thing we did here in Monterrey was to work with Jim and Catherine McNulty in the translation of the peer to peer program into Spanish. We had a seminar last September and it took us around six months to finish up the translation. So David mentioned something about networking, peer to peer is one of that possibilities.

Now, other strategies that can be used in coping and the feeding the stigma of mental illnesses is social marketing. That is if we give a well witness – well balanced witnessing of who we are as persons and how we are willing to overcome our limitations and the well balanced witnessing will be friendship, marriages, children, and ultimately, working. So nobody of us chose this disease, but we have the option to select what to do to get rid of many unnecessary borders. Thank you.

MC: Thanks for sharing.

DG: Great. Great comments.

MC: Yes.

OP: Thank you. The next question comes from Kay Davis.

KD: Because we're talking about working with people with a background of Latino, Hispanic culture, is there something that we can be more sensitive to and aware of when placing people on jobs?

LM: What I have learned here today – this is Lupe. Today I was over at our central administration office and one of the things that caught my attention was that us as Hispanics, Latinos, we are a (INAUDIBLE). We hug people a lot and one of my colleagues told me 'How come people always when bump into them they go with (INAUDIBLE) the hugs?' And I told her that that is part of our culture. So she says that it's hard for her to understand that because she felt that in a way it was inappropriate that every Hispanic that I bumped into, male or female, it was the (INAUDIBLE).

KD: Thank you.

LM: I think that we should be sensitive to people's culture.

KD: Yes.

LM: And I want to mention this real fast, in our Spanish support groups, people would ask me 'How come you take so long when you do a support group where in other places it takes about an hour to an hour and a half?' And with us, it can take up to two and a half hours at the most, it's because we come in and we do the (INAUDIBLE) and (INAUDIBLE) and how are you, how are things like that and then we start the support group and when we end, we do the same thing. We want to follow up with the how can I help you, here's my number and so on and so forth. So I think it all goes back to the way that we were brought up.

OP: Once again, if anyone does have a question or a comment, please press star one on your touch-tone keypad at this time. Thank you. The next question comes from Lynn Borton. Please pose your question.

LB: Yes, I was interested if you could make any suggestions about things that you think of as being sort of assets in the Latino community in going into the workplace. Sort of advantages from your cultural experience or perspective.

MC: Who was your question for?

LB: Any of you. In terms of whether or not ...

MC: Would you please repeat it? We can barely hear you.

LB: I'm sorry. My question was whether or not there's anything that you think of as being an asset as a Latino going into the workplace. Or was there something of your experience that you find is particularly helpful in that transition into employment?

MC: I'd like to think that we are very empathetic and we are a very happy culture.

LM: We seem to be more sensitive when someone comes to us with a need, I feel.

LB: I would also imagine that, for those of you who do speak two languages, that being bilingual is actually an employment asset in this country.

DG: Yes, I was just going to say that.

MC: Definitely. Definitely.

DG: I was just going to say that. I think there are more barriers for individuals who are monolingual and I would just like to stress that, at least emphasize that bilingual Hispanics should reach out and try to help mono lingual Hispanics to overcome their barriers that they face in pursuing employment because they don't speak English or speak it very little. So I'm actually thinking trying to come up with what are some assets that some one who is monolingual might have. The only thing I could come up with is if they have a good education, good like maybe a college degree or something, that they might be able to use or have a good work history obviously, but other than that, I think that there are more barriers than something they could use in their favor.

LB: One thing that ...

JL: Let me share some of the things that I think. I think actually do you think about Latinos, many people think people with a lot of passion. And I think that's a very important asset that we bring. Usually you see Latinos bringing a lot of commitment to their jobs, they are very committed to their employer, they are very committed to what they do and often times, they really love what they are doing. And I think that's invaluable. Another thing that I think many people bring is the experience of being bi-cultural, experience a different world and I think that brings a new perspective that allows people to see things in different ways. And that could be very valuable in this very diverse society. You have people that can navigate different cultures at the same time.

LB: It also occurs to me that the Latino community, as I know it, is a very connected community and you all have spoken a lot about the importance of networking. So it sounds as if culturally, that's actually something that you have to your advantage.

MC: Definitely.

JL: One of the things that I learned from one of my mentors, (INAUDIBLE) my life I tried to hire as many Latinos as I could. So he hired a lot of Latinos, but he said the key was to hire good Latinos, people that had the skills and that could get the job done. But this (INAUDIBLE) take care of your own community and bring on board those people that have the skills necessary to get something done.

LM: I know that over here on this side, Juany, you said the right word, we are very passionate at what we do. We stay long hours until it gets – the job gets done and we want to make

sure that everything is just right before we turn it in or whatever. So you hit the nail right on the head.

MC: Also into the support group, the families they want to be available when somebody have some problem and they don't find a solution. So they interchange phone numbers and you can feel then – you can speak with them and you can see the difference because in our Spanish support group, you can feel the people is very interested in your problem and they give all the support they can.

OP: Thank you. We have a follow up question from Luis Trevino.

LT: Yes. I wanted to ask you whether there are some physical incentives for – we're calling from Mexico and practically, we don't have any support, actually its abhorrent to be diagnosed with a mental illness. What kind of support do you get in the United States? Yes?

LM: I missed the first part of your question.

LT: Yes, ma'am. I was asking are there any kinds of physical incentives or benefits for people who suffer mental illnesses in the United States. Because in Mexico, we don't have any.

DG: Well, here we get what's called SSI; I think that's what you're referring to. We get Social Security Income if we have a psychiatric diagnosis.

LM: Like Mr. Gonzales said, we do have the benefit Social Security benefits. We over here in Texas, we have what we also call care link, which is a collaboration with the University Health System and our local MHMR that this type of support is there for them in case they need any financial assistance for them to get services or be able to get some – the medication that is needed for them.

JL: And also it's very difficult for people – they are living in Mexico because I'm come from Mexico and United States they have opportunity to provide education for different organization like NAMI. So and I know in Mexico it's very difficult because Mexico is fighting with the barrier like a stigma, it's very difficult for the people understand than somebody has a mental illness.

LT: Has NAMI reached any deals to get discounts on medicines directly from the laboratories? From the pharmaceutical industry?

LM: Sometimes. Sometimes that is possible, we do have an application form that we help the consumer fill out the application and we do turn it in for them. And now some of the pharmaceuticals are making this application in Spanish available and so that it's easier for them also to be able to fill it out and turn it in.

DG: Yes, there are some pharmaceuticals that actually have Websites where you can see if you applied for like lower cost on medication or in some cases, even free medication. I know

there's a Website called [www.helpingpatients.org](http://www.helpingpatients.org) and they link you up to all the different pharmaceuticals that offer lower reduced prices and medications and in some cases, even free medications depending upon what your income level is.

MC: Announcer, we have time for one last question.

OP: We have no further questions at this time, ma'am.

MC: That's perfect timing then. Well, once again, I just want to thank Lupe, Juany, and David for sharing with us the wonderful information that they have. This has been very informative and very helpful I'm sure for many of us. Thank you to all the participants for taking time to be part of this call. I want to – before we go, I want to acknowledge Ramiro Guevara, the director of the STAR Center. Under his leadership, the STAR Center is moving forward with a lot of great programs for people of color. I want to thank the STAR Center for inviting me to host this call and I want to remind everybody that the STAR Center has posted wonderful resources on their Website about employment and other issues. So please visit the Website at [www.consumerstar.org](http://www.consumerstar.org).

And finally, because we care a lot about the quality of the calls and the products that we produce, we want to call you and just hear from you what you have to say about the calls, what you like about them, what you didn't like about them. So I ask you if you could please take five to 10 minutes to talk to us, a STAR Center staff will be calling you tomorrow and on Monday. If you don't have time to do this, please feel free to just e-mail (INAUDIBLE) share with us any concerns or positive feedback that you may have.

So again, muchas gracias a todos and I hope you have a good evening.