Blueprint for Latino Health in Montgomery County, Maryland 2017–2026 for Community Outreach
**Acknowledgements**

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About the Latino Health Initiative of Montgomery County

The mission of the Latino Health Initiative (LHI) is to improve the quality of life of Latinos who live in Montgomery County by contributing to the development and implementation of an integrated, coordinated, and culturally competent health system that supports, values, and respects families and communities.

Since its beginnings in 2000, LHI has been analyzing the reality of Latinos living in the county and implementing action plans that respond to their health needs. In the past 18 years, LHI has played a key role in developing solutions to problems that impact our health and wellness. With the participation and guidance of its Latino Health Steering Committee, LHI has been publishing a Blueprint for Latino Health in Montgomery County, Maryland since 2002, and it has now released its third edition.

The Blueprint identifies priority areas for improving the health and wellness of Latinos in the county and has been an essential resource for the development of policies, programs, and initiatives that make it possible to address the health and medical care issues of Latinos in the county in a more systematic way.
Significant Moments in the History of the Latino Health Initiative

- Latino Health Initiative (LHI) is officially launched (2000)
  - 1st study on the health needs of Latinos in the county

- La Clínica, video on early colon cancer detection, is released (2001)
  - Conference on Healthcare Policies and Practices

- Data Working Group is organized (2002)
  - 1st Blueprint for Latino Health is published

  - LHI leads Pedestrian Safety Campaign
  - Health Professionals Working Group is organized

- Health Promoter Program is adopted and expanded (2004)
  - Report on study of need for licensure of foreign-trained nurses
  - Community forum coordinated with members of the County Council

- Montgomery Best Honor Award program (2005)
  - NACo Achievement Award for cancer prevention program
  - First Ama tu Vida health fair

- Asthma Management and Smoking Cessation programs begin (2006)
  - Article on physical activity of Latina girls is published
  - Pilot program for nurses begins

- First cancer survey in Montgomery County (2007)
  - Guide for service providers on “How to Deal with Latino Data”
Second Blueprint for Latino Health is published 2008
NACo Award for Pilot Program of Foreign-Trained Nurses

Maryland’s first workshop on Latino Health 2009
Publication of second community version of the Blueprint

Launching of the Welcome Back Center of Suburban Maryland 2010
Community meeting with Healthy Montgomery to gather information on the needs of Latinos

Pluribus Unum Award for performance of Welcome Back Center 2011
"Encuentro de Líderes: Planeando el Futuro" workshop

Internationally-Trained Behavioral Health Professionals Program is launched 2012
Technical assistance provided to MD Health Department on improving healthcare delivery to Latinos

Support for establishment of Leadership Institute for Equity and Elimination of Disparities 2013
Community forums on how to sign up for “Obamacare”

Workshop on Latino Health at the National Immigrant Integration Conference 2014
Family Reunification pilot program begins

Participation in White House experts meeting on the integration of immigrants 2015

Development of support curriculum on Latino access to the Affordable Care Act (ACA) 2016
Welcome Back Center co-sponsors forum at Capitol to gain legislative support to foreign-trained health professionals

Publication of third edition of the Blueprint 2017
Strengthening infrastructure. Creation of four permanent positions.

Publication of third community version of the Blueprint 2018
Our Priorities for 2017-2026

A. Expand health and wellness promotion and prevention efforts for Latinos.

B. Ensure access to quality healthcare and social services for all Latinos.

C. Ensure Latino participation in decisions that affect the health and wellbeing of Latino communities.

D. Ensure the availability of culturally and linguistically competent services.

E. Improve the collection, analysis, distribution, and utilization of data on Latinos.

F. Increase the number of bilingual and bicultural health professionals in Montgomery County.
Latinos in Montgomery County

A little over one-third of the Latino population in the state of Maryland lives in Montgomery County.

35%

Latinos are the second largest minority (19%) in Montgomery County after African-Americans (20%).

3 of every 10 residents of Montgomery County were born outside of the United States. (2015)

5 of every 10 Latinos who live in Montgomery County were born outside the United States.

We are a diverse population.

Most Latinos in Montgomery County come from Central America (54%)

The three main countries of origin for Latinos in Montgomery County are:

EL SALVADOR 39%
MEXICO 8%
PERU 7%
Our families are young and large

Latinos in Montgomery County are younger than the general population of Montgomery County.

- Average Age: 31 años vs. 39 años

- Latino households have more members (Approximately 4 members) than other households in the county (Approximately 3 members).

Approximately one-third of Latinos are under 19 years of age (34%).

We live in certain areas of Montgomery County.

- MONTGOMERY VILLAGE: 27%
- GAITHERSBURG CITY: 24%
- GERMANTOWN: 20%
- ROCKVILLE: 16%
- ASPEN HILL: 30%
- WHEATON: 40%
- FOREST GLEN: 19%
- SILVER SPRING: 27%
- TAKOMA PARK: 15%
Many of us speak Spanish at home.

8 of every 10 Latinos speak a language other than English in the home (2015).

25% do not speak English or do not speak it well.

75% speak English well.

Our level of education is growing.

3 of every 10 Latinos older than 25 did not finish secondary school.

2 of every 10 Latinos have a high school degree or the equivalent.

1 in 10 Latinos has had at least one year of university or vocational school education.

2 of every 10 Latinos have a college degree.

Of all students enrolled in Montgomery County Public Schools:

28% are Latinos

31% are white

21% are black or African-American
We are hard workers with high unemployment levels.

Latinos have higher unemployment levels than the population in general and as compared to the white population.

6% of Latinos  
5% of general population  
3% of white population

Approximately 6 of every 10 (60%) Latinos in Montgomery County work in:

- Production, transportation, and movement of materials: 7%
- Services: 34%
- Natural resources, construction, and maintenance: 19%

Many of these jobs pay low wages and do not have benefits like health insurance or paid vacations.
The State of our Health

Primary causes of death among Latinos in Maryland:
- Cancer
- Heart diseases
- Accidents
- Diabetes
- Strokes (cerebrovascular disease)

Social causes that keep Latinos from accessing health services:
- Can't pay to see a doctor
- Don't have an annual physical exam
- Have never had regular medical care
- Do not have a primary care provider
- Receive late pre-natal care

Social and economic factors contribute to a situation in which we are more likely to:
- Die of a chronic illness
- Have diabetes
- Develop asthma in childhood
- Be overweight or obese
- Have higher teen pregnancy levels
Behavioral Health Issues and Needs

Latinos are more likely to suffer from depression, anxiety, stress, and trauma-induced stress such as separation from family members, social isolation, moving to an unfamiliar country, and the violence experienced in some Latin American countries.

As Latinos, we face many obstacles to gaining access to mental health care.

These include the lack of:

- Spanish speaking mental health professionals
- Understanding about mental health problems
- Treatment centers
- Services for treating chronic mental conditions or illnesses
- Health insurance
- Knowledge about available resources
Contributions of the Latino Population

Montgomery County is the most diverse county in Maryland thanks to the presence of Latinos and communities from other continents. The cultural, social, political, and economic contributions of Latinos are many, and as our population grows so do our contributions.

We come from many countries with different histories, climates, geographies, cuisines, and ways of living; and though the Latino population is diverse and changing, we share a strong sense of cultural identity. The Spanish language continues to be our strongest common bond.
## Contribution of the Latino Population

### Economic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Our purchasing power is high</th>
<th>We own 2 million businesses</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>2014</strong> $1.3 billion</td>
<td><strong>2019</strong> $1.7 billion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Our businesses employed almost 2 million people in 2007.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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- We pay taxes and use few government resources.
- We contribute to the Social Security system.
- We have a strong work ethic.
- We have enormous political influence through our participation.

### Social

- We have experienced and trained health professionals.
- We have Spanish language communications media with a wide audience.
- We participate in churches and religious organizations whose support goes beyond the religious and spiritual needs.
- We participate in social and political arenas and we have influential leaders.

We have community organizations with a great deal of experience.
Health Priorities and Goals for Latinos in the Next Ten Years

The Steering Committee has identified six critical priorities for improving the health of Latinos in Montgomery County.

The following pages present these priorities and a summary of the Committee’s recommendations. The priorities are not in any order of importance since all are crucial for our community.
Prioritize A

Expand health and wellness promotion and prevention efforts for Latinos.

Montgomery County’s Goal for 2026:
Successful health promotion activities have improved the health and wellness of the Latino population of the county.

Health promotion is recognized as an essential component of high quality health systems. Currently health promotion efforts in the county are insufficient for effectively addressing the needs of the rapidly growing and increasingly diverse Latino population.

The goal of health promotion is to help people stay healthy and to attain their highest level of wellness. Through the use of various strategies, it empowers and motivates people to choose and maintain a healthy lifestyle. Effective health promotion efforts involve people, families, communities and organizations in building skills and capacities for improving health and wellness.
Some Recommendations:

Proposals for promoting health and wellness among Latinos should include the effective participation of the community and representatives of the organizations that provide them with services.

The county should expand and improve services for prevention, early screening, and timely treatment of illnesses and health conditions that affect Latinos, including mental health, environmental health, workplace health, and disabilities that may limit a person’s activities.

Health promotion activities for Latinos should:

- Be age appropriate
- Be available in places where Latinos live, work, learn, pray, and play.
- Include new approaches like gardening and artistic expression.
- Take into account the language that the community prefers, their beliefs, cultural values, and reading levels.

The county should expand the health promoter model to address social factors that influence health and wellness.
Prioritize ensuring access to quality healthcare and social services for all Latinos.

Montgomery County’s Goal for 2026:
Improvements in access to, use of, and quality of health and human services programs have led to noticeable progress in the health and wellness of Latinos in the county.

We have made significant gains in gaining access to services. However, Latinos continue to have unmet needs that create barriers and differences. These include:

- Access to health insurance
- Low income levels
- Legal obstacles and immigration status
- Barriers related to transportation, hours of service, and waiting times
- Few professionals who speak Spanish and understand Latino culture

Eliminating these barriers is an essential part of meeting our needs and improving our health.
Some Recommendations:

County agencies and community leaders should ensure that all people, especially Latinos who live in Maryland, have equitable access to health insurance coverage.

Public and private agencies of the county should help community members - individually and in the language of their preference - to sign up for health insurance and choose an appropriate health plan.

The county should develop a system that allows all community members to have access to health and social services in different parts of the county and with flexible hours.

The county should offer and support programs that educate the Latino community about how to access and use social and healthcare programs.

The county should promote and strengthen the capacity of health promoters and navigators and include them as an essential part of the healthcare team.
Ensure Latino participation in decisions that affect the health and wellbeing of Latino communities.

Montgomery County Goal for 2026:
The Montgomery County health and human service system will actively and consistently collaborate with the Latino population on efforts to improve health outcomes.

The commitment and participation of the community are essential for creating healthy environments and improving the health and welfare outcomes of the county’s Latino population.

It is essential for community organizations, advocacy leaders, and all people who work to protect our rights to participate actively in the development of health policies and decisions.

Our participation benefits us in many ways:

- It increases the level of trust between clients and health and social services personnel.
- It increases awareness, knowledge, and understanding of our community’s needs and desires.
- It reduces barriers that have a negative impact on the health and wellness of our community.
- Health and social services are designed and provided in more effective ways.
- We feel a sense of ownership and responsibility for efforts made to improve our health outcomes.

A number of recommendations have been identified for this priority.
Some Recommendations:

The County Executive and County Council must continue to provide funds to support community empowerment and leadership programs, especially programs aimed at Latino youth.

Latino community organizations should promote civic participation through education and mobilization as a way to improve the health and wellness of the community.

The county and service providers must ensure that their clients are cared for with respect and must create a system that allows Latinos to report their experiences and the quality of services received.

All entities that receive county funds for health and social services should include Latinos in decision-making and should direct resources towards the elimination of any cultural, economic, and language barriers that may impact those who desire to participate in these services.

County leaders and personnel should recognize the diversity of the Latino population and gain experience in creating welcoming environments where people can participate actively in leadership and decision-making towards common goals.
Ensure the delivery of culturally competent services in Spanish to the Latino community.

Montgomery County’s Goal for 2026:
All entities that receive county funds provide information and services in Spanish and understand the cultural needs of Latino communities.

Providing Spanish-language health services to Latinos in ways that are respectful of and receptive to different beliefs and cultural health practices helps to improve the quality of services, eliminate racial discrimination, and reduce disparities in access to healthcare among different ethnic groups. It changes the behavior of patients and providers and produces positive outcomes by helping healthcare providers to communicate and work effectively with people from different cultures.

Various recommendations have been identified for this priority.
Some recommendations:

- The county should expand its efforts to include the Latino community in evaluating, planning for, and disseminating information about national and local emergencies, paying special attention to how emergency preparation and response actions are explained, especially to Latinos with limited English proficiency.

- Cultural competency training should be mandatory for all county employees who work in the county’s health and social services, particularly for managers and supervisors who relate to clients and have an influence on the policies and systems that affect consumers.

- The county should ensure that groups that receive funds for providing health and social services have Spanish-speaking staff who have an understanding of Latino culture, or employ trained interpreters at no cost to the user.

- The county should ensure that all forms and applications for health and social services be translated into Spanish at a reading level that is appropriate for their clients.
Improve the collection, analysis, distribution, and use of data for the Latino community.

Montgomery County’s Goal for 2026:
Health and welfare data, including related social factors, are being collected, analyzed, and reported.

We don’t have enough health data on Latinos in our federal, state, or local systems. While data collection efforts have improved, significant problems remain which are obstacles to equity and wellness in the Latino community.

Data is essential for eliminating health disparities. Good data makes it possible to:

- track the community’s health and wellness.
- formulate policies.
- prioritize, plan, oversee, and evaluate services.

Efforts to collect, use, and interpret data should continue to improve in order to be useful, valuable, and reliable tools for decision-making, planning, and assigning funds to respond effectively to the needs of the various communities of the county.

Several recommendations have been identified for this priority.
Some Recommendations:

The county’s health and social programs should collect, analyze, and make available data on the race, ethnic origin, country of origin, and language preference of their clients.

The county and people with key roles in data collection should support activities to educate Latinos and emphasize the importance of giving basic information like: age, sex, race, ethnic group, country of origin, preferred language, educational level, and health status.

Organizations that do research with Latinos in the county should follow the principles and practices of including community participation.

Data collection strategies in Maryland and in the county should include methods that ensure that Latinos are adequately represented in research studies.
Increase the number of bilingual and bicultural health professionals in Montgomery County.

Montgomery County’s Goal for 2026:
The number of bilingual and bicultural Latino professionals who work in the county’s health and social service programs has increased to match the percentage of Latinos who live in the county.

When health professionals speak the same language as their clients, clients receive higher quality personal care. A warm interpersonal relationship increases the probability that patients will not miss appointments and will follow treatment instructions appropriately.

Foreign-trained health professionals can offer the county a diversity of languages and cultural identities. That’s why health and social-service professionals who graduated outside the country are now receiving support to obtain the necessary courses, licensing, and certifications.

Diversity in the labor force is essential for improving the health and wellness of all the residents of Montgomery County including Latinos.

Several recommendations were identified for this priority.
Some recommendations:

County and private sector agencies should hire, retain, develop, and promote staff who speak Spanish and understand Latino culture at all levels of the organization including high-level decision-making positions.

Maryland and Montgomery County should increase funding aimed at teaching English as a Second Language to health professionals and should integrate English classes into professional training courses. Scholarships should be offered to increase the number of participants.

The county, health and social service sector employers, and local educational and financial institutions should assist foreign-trained health professionals with scholarships, tuition assistance, and accessible loans in order to reduce financial barriers to licensing.

The county, non-profit organizations, and employers should provide Latinos with opportunities for internships, clinical practice, and practical job experience, as well as stepping-stone job opportunities.

Maryland and Montgomery County agencies, employers, and educational institutions should provide opportunities for Latinos who are already working in health services to obtain jobs at higher skill levels -for example, opportunities for a nursing assistant to become a registered nurse or nurse practitioner.