

## **Project Title: "Brave Hearts: CHD Education, Awareness, and Mental Health Support for the Hispanic Community"**

**(Corazones Valientes: Educación, Conciencia y Apoyo de Salud Mental sobre CC para la Comunidad Hispana)**

### **Project Summary:**

“Brave Hearts” is a community-centered initiative focused on increasing awareness, education, and emotional support for Hispanic families impacted by congenital heart disease (CHD). The project combines culturally relevant CHD education with mental health resources, empowering families with knowledge, resilience, and tools to navigate the lifelong journey of CHD.

### **Project Goals:**

1. **Raise CHD Awareness** among Hispanic families using language-accessible, culturally sensitive outreach.
2. **Educate** caregivers and youth on early detection, treatment options, lifelong care, and patient rights.
3. **Provide Mental Health Support** to CHD patients and their families, addressing trauma, anxiety, and caregiver burnout.
4. **Empower Community Leaders and CHD Survivors** to become ambassadors for health and emotional well-being.

### **Target Audience:**

- Hispanic families with children diagnosed or at risk of CHD
- CHD survivors and caregivers
- Healthcare workers serving Hispanic populations
- Local schools, churches, and community centers

## **Key Components:**

### ***1. CHD + Mental Health Workshops***

- Bilingual sessions covering CHD basics, emotional well-being, caregiver stress, child anxiety, and family dynamics
- Led by pediatric cardiologists, psychologists, and community leaders

### ***2. Emotional Support Circles***

- Monthly group sessions (in-person/virtual) facilitated by mental health professionals
- Safe space for parents, teens, and siblings to express and process their experiences
- Culturally responsive practices: storytelling, mindfulness, guided conversations

### ***3. "Voices of the Heart" Media Campaign***

- Combines CHD awareness with mental health education
- Stories of resilience, self-care tips, coping strategies, and expert insights
- Formats: Instagram reels, WhatsApp videos, printed flyers, Spanish-language radio and TV segments

### ***4. Community Health Fairs***

- CHD education booths + mental health screenings + resources for ongoing care
- Connection with local providers, support groups, and emergency counseling referrals

### ***5. Youth & School Engagement***

- Age-appropriate CHD + emotional health activities: "My Brave Heart" classroom kits
- Encourage empathy, body literacy, and positive self-image among students

## 6. CHD Ambassador + Mental Health Advocate Program

- Train CHD survivors and parents to share their stories and promote mental well-being
- Emphasis on the emotional journey of CHD, fostering peer mentorship and hope

### Expected Impact:

- Reach 5,000+ community members through education and mental health outreach
- Provide mental health resources to at least 300 families
- Conduct 12 workshops, 6 health fairs, and launch 1 major bilingual media campaign
- Train 20 community ambassadors for CHD and emotional health

### Why Mental Health Matters:

Living with CHD — as a patient or a caregiver — brings emotional challenges often overlooked. Anxiety, depression, and trauma are common but unspoken in many Hispanic households due to stigma. By normalizing mental health care as part of medical care, we foster stronger, more resilient families.

### Problem Statement:

In the United States and across Latin America, thousands of Hispanic families face a critical barrier to accessing quality care for congenital heart disease (CHD): **language**.

For parents of children with CHD — and for adult patients themselves — navigating a complex medical system becomes overwhelming when educational materials, diagnoses, and treatment plans are only provided in English or medical jargon that is difficult to understand. This gap in language accessibility leads to:

- **Delayed diagnoses** due to lack of understanding of warning signs
- **Fear and confusion** about treatment options and procedures

- **Low treatment adherence** from misunderstanding follow-up care
- **Increased emotional distress** from feeling uninformed or excluded
- **Lack of empowerment** to advocate for their children or themselves

Despite CHD being the most common birth defect in the world, Spanish-speaking families often receive little to no guidance in their native language. Educational disparities persist, and families are left to navigate one of the most critical health battles of their lives — without the tools they need to make informed decisions.

In many cases, the result is not only **poorer health outcomes** but also **heightened emotional and mental strain** on already vulnerable families.