

Servicios de La Raza (SDLR) is in support of house bill 21-1281. My name is Bianca Munoz, I am the Team Lead for our Crisis Counseling Program (CCP) at Servicios de La Raza. CCP is a FEMA funded program designated to assist individuals and communities in recovering from the effects of COVID-19. We assist those impacted or affected by COVID-19 in helping them understand their current situation and reactions, mitigate stress, develop coping strategies, provide emotional support, and provide resources and referrals.

SDLR been serving our communities throughout this pandemic. SDLR has led various vaccination clinics in the Denver Metro area with the assistance from Senator Julie Gonzales and other State Representatives. Additionally, SDLR is traveling statewide to reach those hard-to-reach communities who may not have access to the COVID-19 vaccines and to reach those that have impacted by COVID-19.

CCP has partnered with an organization to assist our undocumented community that have been impacted by COVID-19 and lost their job or had a reduction in hours to receive a one-time cash assistance.

These services and more are imperative to our communities in these hard times. CCP hotline specialists answer over 100 calls a month, individuals are seeking several different resources ranging from crisis intervention to mental health to basic needs. Individuals seeking mental health services due to the pandemic reported experiencing isolation, depression, and anxiety. Individuals call our hotline not knowing where to access food because they have COVID-19 and are unable to leave their home, others call us requesting rental assistance because they have lost their job due to the pandemic. Our hotline specialists and crisis counselors are trained to assist our communities.

Our hotline received a call last week from a Spanish speaking caller in Eagle county, she noted being in distress and calling the Colorado Crisis Services for support but ended hanging up because of the language barrier. This caller searched around and found our hotline number, we provided crisis counseling right when she called, she reported this is what she was looking for, someone who spoke her language and someone who understood her. This caller was experiencing anger, blame, and fear due to her parents having COVID-19 and not knowing if they would make it.

Why wait until a disaster reaches FEMA level? We should have a behavioral health disaster program dedicated to support those affected by disasters, big or small. Our communities need us to advocate and serve them right then and there. Servicios de La Raza supports House Bill 21-1281, we urge for your support.