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Theme: **"Influence of Religion on HIV Prevention for Latinos "**

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Q. What was the “Answering the call” study about?

A. Through a partnership with Esperanza and the University of Notre Dame, a survey was conducted with a couple of hundred clergy in the Chicago areas (2004) to better understand how Latino churches are involved in helping people living with HIV/AIDS. In addition, the study included how Latino congregations in the Chicago area were responding to HIV/AIDS. Mr. Lastra followed the purpose of the study with some study findings.

Q. At a national level, what efforts have been made to integrate religious views and HIV preventive efforts?

A. Feedback from focus groups done with clergy concluded that church leaders need to acknowledge the limitations of their theology when dealing with HIV and HIV prevention. Moreover, the positive messages within the scriptures talk about compassion which highlights our commitment and obligation to step forward to be leaders in the community.

Q. How have you overcome the challenge of integrating religious views and HIV?

A. Getting to know community gatekeepers and establishing a working relationship with them so that they give you permission to move forward with our efforts. In addition, we have to build trust with them in order to become a partner and have advocates inside their organization. There is also the issue of how far communities will go regarding HIV prevention. A lot of communities are not comfortable with talking about condom. We at Esperanza push the issue of people getting education and tested. People in the pews need to understand that [their church] is a safe place. In addition, we have to understand what church community we are approaching in order to know the limitations of how far we can go regarding HIV prevention.

- Q. Do you feel faith-based oriented HIV prevention is doable in rural areas as it is in urban areas?
- A. It's a little bit harder, but when you're talking about faith-based communities, even in rural areas there are churches that have oversight, i.e. a bishop that oversees 20 churches in a particular region. So, by approaching the right person, leaders in those rural areas can also be reached.
- Q. How do we engage health departments and CBOs in faith-based communities?
- A. It doesn't really matter what organization people belong to, it's just like you do with anything else. Conduct survey research to determine faith-based groups in the community and determine services provided to avoid duplication of services. Hold open houses to invite church leaders as an outreach process.
- Q. Do you know any intervention that addresses the issues of HIV prevention and religious views?
- A. I don't, but I will pass that question to Dr. Hernandez who's doing more of this work in partnership with the University of Notre Dame.
- Q. Do the resources that you put together reach a broad spectrum of churches or is it more specific to the previously mention study?
- A. I think it's more specific to the study because our network of faith-based organization is predominately Evangelical, Pentecostal, Baptist, and to a lesser extent Catholic. The film resource uses a mainstream singer as a strategy to have a broader reach. We have also used what Hispanics are familiar with, telenovelas. This film, No Te Rindas/Don't Give up, is not an educational documentary. It's now on You Tube in two parts. We also developed a music CD with Christian singers that is included with the purchase of the film. Other musical CDs were produced using well known Latin singers to have a broader reach. A book, There Is An Answer, is also available for the use of all the Latino communities. Additional resources will also be available.

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