



October, 2009

Mental Health Counselor joins Bienestar Staff

Bienestar is pleased to announce that Leocadia Montero, MA, has joined the Resident Services staff. She will provide individual, couples, family and group therapy for Bienestar residents. She will also offer special training presentations and workshops on mental health to the Promotores and to residents. A recent graduate of Pacific University in Forest Grove, Oregon, Leocadia has a Master's degree in Counseling Psychology and previous experience with Adelante Mujeres, Iris clinic, Catholic Charities' El Program Hispano, and Volunteers of America. A native of the Dominican Republic and a former attorney there, she also served as Municipal Prosecutor, acting as mediator and counselor to the disadvantaged, especially with cases involving abused women and children.



Bienestar Staff Counselor Leocadia Montero

"We are delighted to welcome Leocadia to Bienestar", says Executive Director Karen Shawcross, adding: "This year we became increasingly alarmed at the rising incidence of mental health problems among our residents, many exacerbated by the financial crisis. Promotores and staff observed increased numbers of residents experiencing severe depression, anxiety, and family problems. After conducting due diligence, we learned that there are very, very few mental health services available in western Washington County for the uninsured, and even fewer bilingual, bicultural services available for Latinos. We felt that the problem was so urgent that we recruited Leocadia to our staff so that we can offer counseling services onsite for

our residents. We were seeing members of our Job Club who had been laid off, for example, suffering from such severe depression that they were unable to get out of bed to come to the weekly program we offer to help residents get re-employed as quickly as possible. We also knew that we were facing barriers that include cultural resistance to treatment, and that place-based counseling services endorsed by our trusted staff and Promotores would offer the best solution. We feel so fortunate that we found Leocadia at this time."

Montero primarily uses Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) with her clients. CBT is an approach based on scientific principles, and research has shown its effectiveness in the decrease of symptoms in a range of psychological problems, such as depression, posttraumatic stress disorder, as well as anxiety. She uses other assessment tools, such as the Beck Depression Inventory II (BDI-II), and the Outcome Questionnaire-45 (OQ-45). The BDI measures the severity of symptoms of depression, and the OQ-45 measures behaviors in the domain of symptoms of social distress, interpersonal relations, and social roles. Both of these measurement instruments measure client's symptoms at the beginning of the evaluation as well as a client's progress through the course of therapy.

Montero offers: "Some of the main objectives that I will work on with the clients will be:

- Help clients reduce the frequency of emotional distress, sadness and anger related to their relationship with others and with their environment.
- Help couples learn to manage conflicting situations in their relationships with their partners.
- Help clients reduce tensions when communicating with their family members.
- Help families identify behavioral options for solving conflicting marital and family situations in an effective manner.

Adding, "In order to accomplish these objectives, some of the interventions I will use are:

- Cognitive restructuring, where clients will learn to identify the situations that trigger and maintain the development of their distressing symptoms, and later reevaluate and reinterpret the given situations.
- Schema-focused interventions, to teach clients about the links between the coping skills that they learned in their childhood and help them change maladaptive responses to life problems.

- Problem-solving, to help clients learn alternatives to solve conflicts with their family members. Clients will be taught how to implement an action-oriented approach, and learn to solve problems without anger.

A treatment plan with specific concerns, specific objectives and specific interventions will be developed, signed and implemented with the collaboration of the clients."

Bienestar residents can make appointments for counseling and/or home visits with Leocadia by calling 503.693.2937, extension 105.