While significant progress has been made, in recent decades, in raising awareness about the devastating effects of domestic violence, and many lives have been protected and saved, domestic violence continues at epidemic proportions. It continues to tear families apart regardless of their race, ethnicity, religion, or economic background, leaving in its path physically, emotionally, and spiritually injured women, men, and children.

According to a report published by the Centers for Disease Control in February 2008 (*Adverse Health Conditions and Health Risk Behaviors Associated with Intimate Partner Violence, Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*
) one in four women is abused by a current or former spouse, partner or boyfriend at some point in her life. Another study by the U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics (
Intimate Partner Violence in the United States
) says that on average more than three women a day, in the United States, are murdered by their husbands or boyfriends.

Domestic violence is just as serious and damaging a problem in **Latino communities** as it is in other ethnic and racial groups. However, Latinas/os face particular obstacles and challenges to addressing domestic violence and require culturally and linguistically specific services and resources in order to adequately address the problem.

The shortage of bilingual and bicultural personnel, in shelters, in police departments, in the courts, and throughout the continuum of services, prevents access and adequate services for Latina survivors and their families. This can pose a further threat to their safety and often results in alienating survivors from the very services they so desperately need.

Fear of deportation, jeopardizing their legal status, or having their children removed are also primary concerns for immigrant women, which prevent them from seeking assistance from service providers.

Understanding Latino Cultural Values and Developing Our Own Solutions

From its very beginnings, Alianza has affirmed the need to develop systems of support for victims/survivors within our communities; the need to create solutions that take into consideration the challenges and obstacles facing Latinas/os, our belief systems, our values and norms, the positive and negative aspects of our culture.

Culturally based approaches need to look at elements of our culture that have been used to defend violence, to reinforce secrecy, and to allow abuse. They also need to acknowledge the many aspects of our culture, our traditions, and our beliefs can serve as protective factors; can provide guidance and positive influence.

This calls for identifying and critiquing traditions and values that make women more vulnerable to abuse and that support men's oppressive relationships with women, on the one hand, and for acknowledging and supporting practices and values that are protective and that model and support healthy and functional relationships between men and women.

Culturally appropriate programming should also take into account the diversity-within-diversity of "the Latino community." Failure to respectfully embrace both our differences and commonalities places us at risk of division. We have many nationalities; we have race and class differences, internal racism, and privilege; we have mixed nationalities; we have gay and lesbian families; we have recent immigrants as well as those whose ancestors lived in North America prior to the founding of the United States; we have monolingual Spanish speakers, monolingual English speakers, bilingual Spanish/English speakers; as well as individuals and families whose mother tongue is one of the dozens of indigenous languages of this continent. We have different religious/spiritual beliefs and practices; we have people with disabilities; and we have young and old. Embracing our internal diversity challenges us to confront our own racism, homophobia, classism and other forms of internalized oppression and privilege.

Men, Women, Boys and Girls Need to Work Together

Because of the magnitude of the problem and its far-reaching effects on our families and communities, we need the involvement of multiple sectors of our population. Families and members of our communities have crucial roles to play in preventing and ending domestic violence. Women and men, boys and girls need to work together to prevent and end domestic violence and to jointly promote healing in our families and communities.

Programming for both Latinas and Latinos should involve a systematic and culturally based effort to address issues such as poverty, unemployment, low educational attainment, housing, child care as well as risk factors such as alcohol and drug abuse.

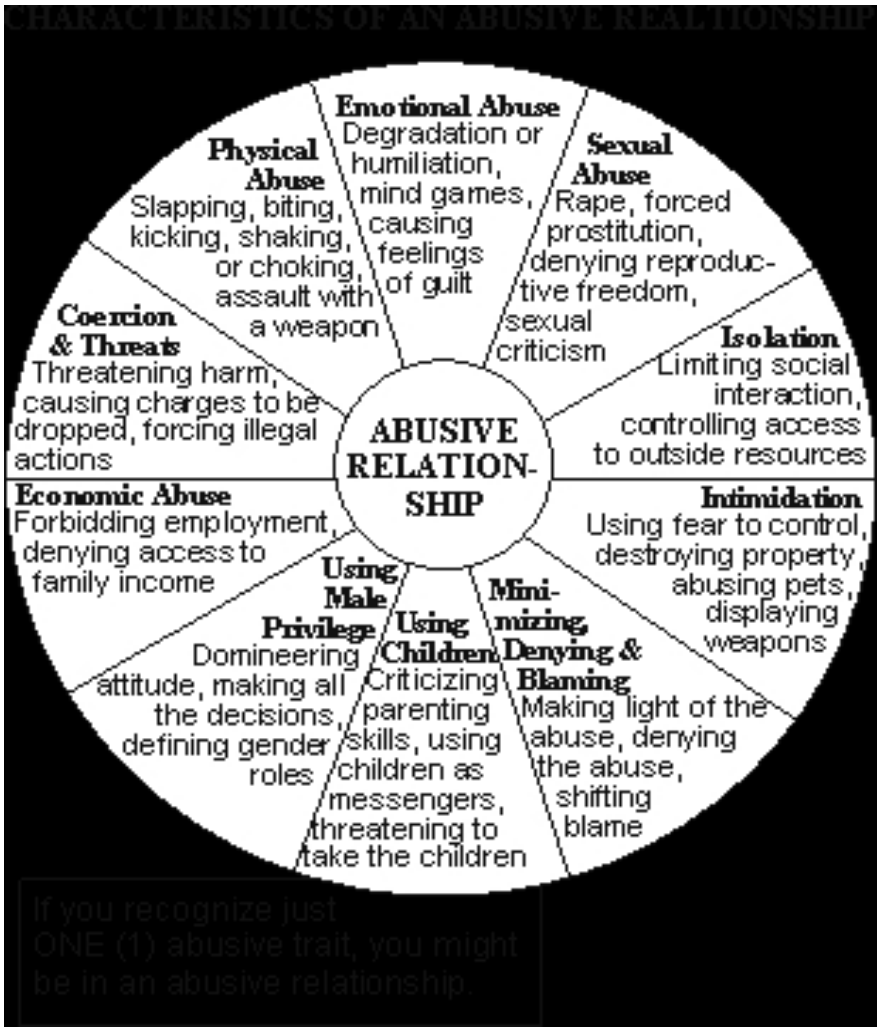
Latina survivors need to be recognized as experts in meeting these challenges; they must be involved in program design and service delivery at all levels. Programs need to include services that will give survivors better options and opportunities for becoming independent and more

able to create relationships and homes free from violence.

What are the different forms of violence and abuse?

Many times individuals are not sure if they are victims of domestic violence and don't know what to do. There are various forms of violence and abuse, including the following:

- **Verbal or emotional abuse** — insults, name calling, shouting, criticisms of how you dress, talk, or look
- **Threats with words or gestures** —against you, your children, family members or pets
- **Physical abuse** — hitting, pushing, slapping, kicking, choking, burning, stabbing, shooting, or other harmful acts
- **Sexual abuse** — forcing you to have sex or engage in sex acts against your will
- **Destruction of objects in the home** —furniture, clothes, and other property
- **Financial control** — denying you access to money or bank accounts, car, or requiring you to account for every cent you spend
- **Isolation** — does not let you see your family or friends, controls the phone or reads your mail.


CHARACTERISTICS OF AN ABUSIVE REALTIONSHIP
ABUSIVE RELATION-SHIP
Emotional Abuse
Degradation or humiliation, mind games, causing feelings of guilt
Sexual Abuse
Rape, forced prostitution, denying reproductive freedom, sexual criticism
Isolation
Limiting social interaction, controlling access to outside resources
Intimidation
Using fear to control, destroying property, abusing pets, displaying weapons
Minimizing, Denying & Blaming
Making light of the abuse, denying the abuse, shifting blame
Using Children
Criticizing parenting skills, using children as messengers, threatening to take the children
Using Male Privilege
Domineering attitude, making all the decisions, defining gender roles
Economic Abuse
Forbidding employment, denying access to family income
Coercion & Threats
Threatening harm, causing charges to be dropped, forcing illegal actions
Physical Abuse
Slapping, biting, kicking, shaking, or choking, assault with a weapon
If you recognize just ONE (1) abusive trait, you might be in an abusive relationship.