

2019

# Talking it Through

(Evaluation Report)



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HACER

11/13/2019

## About Hispanic Advocacy and Community Empowerment through Research (HACER):

HACER's mission is to provide the Minnesota Latino community with the ability to create and control information about itself in order to affect critical institutional decision-making and public policy. General support for HACER has been provided by Minnesota-based philanthropic organizations and the Minnesota Council of Nonprofits.

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# Summary

In the fall of 2019, Hispanic Advocacy and Community Empowerment through Research (HACER) put on a program called Talking it Through, which was aimed at creating a dialogue between police officers and Latino/a youth. HACER was motivated to create this program to address the hostility between the police and people of color and the profiling and discrimination from police officers that affect nonwhite people. Since we are a Latino organization, we chose to focus this project on Latino and Latina youth. The project involved two workshops: One informative session in which the youth participants could learn from police officers, lawyers, psychologists, and other community workers about their rights when interacting with the police and the services and resources that are available to them; as well as one interactive session in which the youth and police officers could talk about their perceptions and experiences in a safe environment. The outreach for this project was difficult, as getting youth, especially those who have had problems with the police, to attend a workshop and speak with police officers, is not easy. However, the youth, police officers, and other who attended all came away with new and valuable knowledge. HACER learned a lot about how to conduct a program such as this and is now looking to replicate and improve on the program.

## Resumen Ejecutivo

Durante el Verano del año 2019, HACER implementó un programa bajo del nombre “Talking it Through (Hablando de Frente), encaminado a abrir un diálogo entre oficiales de la policía y jóvenes latinas y latinos. Lo que motivó a HACER a crear este programa, fue el hablar sobre la hostilidad que existe entre la policía y la gente de grupos no de raza blanca, así como la discriminación con base en el prejuicio racial que se ha documentado por parte de los oficiales de policía y que afecta a grupos diversos. Dado que HACER es una organización con perfil de trabajo orientado a las comunidades latinas, elegimos como objetivo el trabajar con la juventud latina. El proyecto supuso la realización de dos talleres de discusión. El primero buscó que los jóvenes participantes tuviesen información sobre sus derechos al interactuar con la policía, así como de los servicios y recursos disponibles para ellos. La información fue presentada por oficiales de policía, abogados, psicólogos y otros trabajadores comunitarios. El segundo taller se sustentó con base en un formato interactivo en el que los jóvenes y los oficiales de policía pudieron conversar sobre sus percepciones y experiencias, todo dentro de un ambiente amistoso y seguro. Atraer participantes a los talleres no fue sencillo, sobre todo entre jóvenes latinos, y en particular entre quienes habrían tenido problemas con la ley en el pasado. Sin embargo, los jóvenes que asistieron, los oficiales de policía y otras personas asistentes, contribuyeron en nuestros talleres con importante e invaluable información para continuar con la conversación. En HACER, logramos aprender sobre formas de conducir un programa de estas características, y buscamos poder hacerlo de nuevo.

## PROJECT BACKGROUND

The Talking it Through program was designed to create a dialogue between Latino youth and police officers. HACER has long been aware of the issues that Latino youth, and youth of color in general, have with the police. Many youth of color have had to deal with racial profiling and discrimination from police officers, which has contributed to a vicious cycle of distrust between both parties. HACER wanted to open a dialogue between police officers and Latino youth, in the hopes of improving this trust. We knew this would be very difficult to do, since most teenagers are not very enthusiastic about talking to the police, particularly those who have had issues with the police in the past. However, we saw this as an opportunity to conduct a pilot project that we could learn from and improve on in the future, since we consider this to be an extremely important issue for which we want to create lasting solutions.

We designed this program to include two sessions. The first would be an informative session for Latino youth to learn from police officers, a psychologist, representatives from the Mexican and Ecuadorian consulates, including a lawyer, and others involved in juvenile justice about their rights when interacting with the police and where to find services that could help them. They were also asked to speak about common crimes that are committed by youth, how a criminal record can affect someone's life, how to get your record cleaned, methods of crime prevention, among many other topics. The second session would be an interactive dialogue between the police, other community workers, and the youth, including an activity that would facilitate the discussion and get the youth talking about their experiences with the police. This would be a safe space where youth could share any experiences they have had with the police and both groups could share their perspectives, learn from each other, and hopefully find some common ground. We also wanted to specifically include Latino police officers, so that the youth who participated could hopefully see them as role models and see Latinos represented in a profession where Latinos are greatly underrepresented.

# Results

As we expected, doing youth outreach for this program was quite difficult. Many Latino youth we spoke with expressed a lot of reluctance towards participating in a discussion with police officers. We utilized our typical channels of outreach such as social media, the HACER website, and emails, as well as implementing new methods of outreach. These new techniques included visiting an alternative middle and high school, and churches that offer services in Spanish, to share information about the program.

20 youth signed up to participate. In our initial registration questionnaire, 35% of the youth had had experience with the police, and about half of the youth said they felt uncomfortable or unsafe around police officers.

We had great success in our outreach to police, lawyers, psychologists, and others who expressed a lot of enthusiasm about participating in a program like this. We even had several people reach out to us who heard about the program and wanted to be a part of it.

## Session I

In the first session, we had five youth participants, four girls and one boy. The median age of these youth was 15.5 years. HACER always conducts an evaluation of its programs to determine their effectiveness and how we can improve. Therefore, we asked each participant to complete a short survey (the pre-test) at the beginning of the first session. They would take this same survey (the post-test), as well as a more general survey asking how they felt about the program overall (the overall evaluation), at the end of the program. All surveys were written in both Spanish and English. The pre/post-test and the overall evaluation can be seen in the appendix. The results of the pre-test are shown below in figure 1 (Pre evaluation Test).

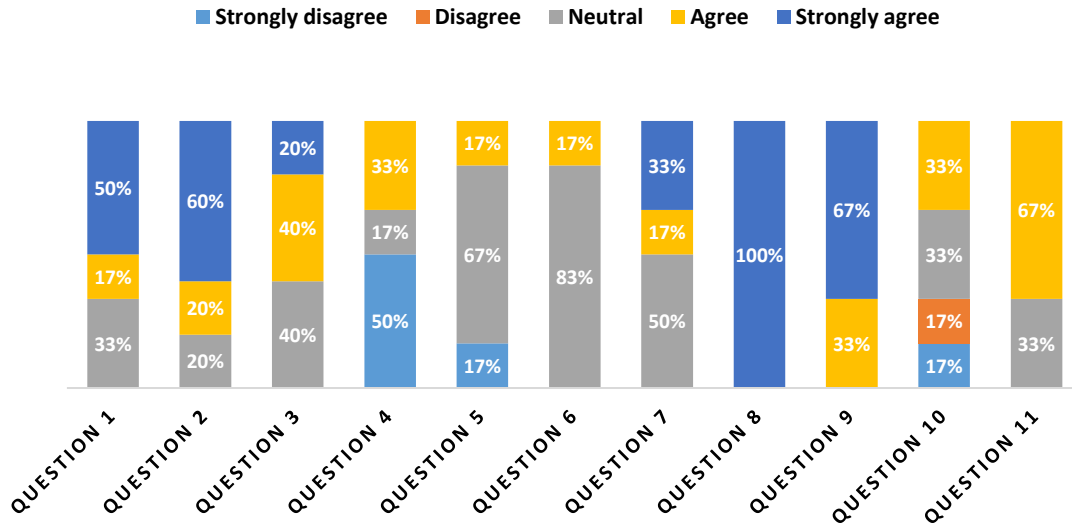


Figure 1

### Questions

1. I normally feel comfortable in the presence of police officers.
2. I have had positive interactions with police officers.
3. I understand my rights when interacting with police officers.
4. I know how to talk and act when with the police.
5. I would know where to get help if I were ever detained by the police.
6. I know when to assert my rights in interactions with police.
7. I would feel comfortable asserting my rights in interactions with police.
8. I would contact the police if I thought I or someone else was in danger.
9. I trust the police to protect me and my family and friends.
10. I know of services that could help me if I were ever in trouble with the police.
11. I understand the perspectives of police officers and how they might react to my actions.

The majority of participants reported that they did already feel comfortable in the presence of police officers and that they had had positive interactions with police officers. This exemplifies the other main problem we found with our outreach for this program. In addition to low levels of youth participation, we found that the youth who did participate were not the youth we were really trying to serve with this program. The youth who participated hadn't had significant problems with the police. Convincing youth to participate in a program involving discussions with the police is already difficult, and getting those who have had problems with the police was of course even more challenging. However, the results of this survey also show that there was still a lot of doubt among participants about how to act around the police and what services were available to them, so there was still much they could benefit from during this program.

In the first session, we did have great involvement from several police officers, several others who work in police outreach, and representatives from the Mexican and Ecuadorian consulates. These people shared a lot of valuable information about the services they offer, why they became involved in law enforcement, how they are already working to improve relationships between youth and the police, how to prevent youth from getting involved in crime, and what more needs to be



done. A couple officers from the National Latino Peace Officers attended, and spoke about how they connect with Latino youth through events, volunteering, and building trust. The group discussed methods of crime prevention for youth, as well as cultural differences in family involvement between many Latino parents' countries of origin and the U.S. The Mexican and Ecuadorian consulates shared information about the services they offer for those who have had problems with the police and for people who are detained.

## Session II

Three youth participants attended the second session, two girls and one boy. Two of these participants had also attended the first session. This session began with an activity led by Margaret Buchanan, who is currently conducting research on issues surrounding youth-police relationships. During this activity, Margaret showed the youth pictures of the various stages of someone getting pulled over by the police, including seeing the police car in the rearview mirror, pulling over to the side of the road, and the police officer approaching the window. She asked them to describe what was happening in each picture, what they would do in that situation, and how they would feel. This activity got the youth actively participating in the discussion and then launched a broader conversation about the issues that were brought up. We were again very happy and impressed by the participation and useful information that the police officers and community workers shared. They shared their perspectives of how they feel when pulling someone over and how they recommend someone to act in that situation. Several police officers encouraged the youth to get involved and report bad police behavior after an incident. Many also emphasized that there are many resources that can help people who are in trouble with the police, but people often don't know about them or don't put in the work to seek them out. One community worker said that events like this are "connecting the dots" between people and resources.

## Interactive Picture Activity

The picture activity was designed to elicit information and themes, which could lead to further conversation both during and after the workshop. Ideally, the benefits would be threefold: informational gaps could be revealed and existing erroneous assumptions clarified, positive experiences with law enforcement could be made prior to a traffic stop, and regular conversations regarding police encounters could be encouraged within the community. Encounters with law enforcement at a traffic stop call on drivers' linguistic and cultural knowledge, strategies, and the ability to successfully manage heightened tension, and this activity succeeded in creating a conversation surrounding all of these areas.

In the workshop, we observed the following informational gaps revealed:

- How long it might take for a police officer to walk to the car after you have pulled over: One youth participant gave "30 seconds" as an estimate; one police officer later replied that they would take some time, more likely around "5 minutes." The importance of this information could be crucial, as should it take longer, one could imagine a driver might step out of the car to go to the police car.
- What to do during that period of waiting: A police officer mentioned that traditionally they might wait to assess the situation, which would mean that too much movement within the car, even if it is looking for your driver's license, is not an ideal choice.
- What to do with your hands and where to put them during a traffic stop.
- That it is important to pay attention to the officer's name; even that it could be possible to ask for a card or that the name of the officer is on the ticket. This information would be necessary to have if one were to report bad behavior from the officer after the traffic stop.

At the end of the session, we asked each participant to complete the overall evaluation. These results can be seen below in figure 2 (Overall Evaluation).



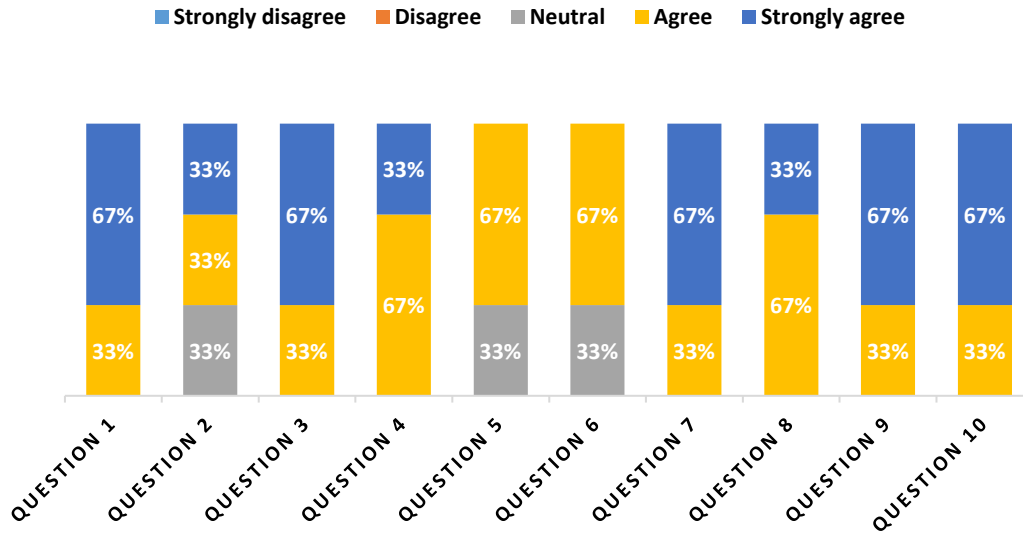


Figure 2

### Overall Evaluation Questions

1. In general, these workshops have been a good experience for me.
2. I felt comfortable sharing my ideas and asking questions during the workshops.
3. I would recommend these workshops to a friend.
4. I would like to attend other programs like this in the future.
5. The location of these workshops was convenient for me.
6. These workshops took place at a convenient time for me.
7. I learned new things about my rights when interacting with the police.
8. I learned how and when to best assert my rights.
9. I learned new things about the services available to me if I have problems with the police.
10. These workshops have allowed me to feel more comfortable with the police.



Given the small group of participants who took this survey, it's difficult to take too much away from these results, but it is good to see that the participants who did attend had a positive experience and learned new things. Based on the open-ended questions that we asked, the participants learned about how to best interact with the police and what rights they have if they are pulled over by the police. They also responded that the biggest problems Latino youth have with the police

are talking back to the police, believing that the police are bad and not trusting them, not having enough information, and not knowing their rights. Overall, the participants shared positive feedback about the workshops. One said that her favorite aspect of the program was that "everyone can share ideas, thoughts, and stories".

At the end of the second session, we also asked each police officer and community worker who attended to briefly share what they learned or how they benefited from this program. We were happy to hear that they had generally enjoyed their experience and learned valuable new information as well. One person who works for the St. Louis Park police department said that she learned new information that she could take back to the St. Louis Park community and improve the work that she is doing there. One of the officers from the National Latino Peace Officers said that she enjoyed talking to other Latina women and bridging the gap between police officers and Latino youth. She emphasized that it's helpful for youth to see people of color in uniform. Others spoke about how there is "a lot of power in spaces like this" and how it's good to target youth in this way, to improve their relationships with police.

*"There is a lot of power in spaces like this."* - **Talking it Through participant**

There were also a few other moments that seemed poignant. One civilian member spoke out and, explaining that they had given multiple trainings on how to engage with police officers; he described the best way to act during a traffic stop, highlighting "not to be nervous, but to put on a big smile and say 'Hello, Officer'". During the workshop, three Latinx police officers shared different personal experiences of being pulled

over by the police themselves or being nervous upon seeing a police car behind them. The youth participants' body language changed upon hearing these stories – turning towards the police officers talking about their own fears and experiences. As they faced them, they uncrossed their arms and ankles and smiled intermittently. In addition, some informational gaps were addressed, some cultural strategies provided. More importantly, this experience (and other future workshops) will promote discussions and conversations at home and among peers about taboo subjects, that often remain shrouded in silence.

*“I believe having such personal experiences with police officers who express well-chosen vulnerabilities and highlight commonalities with the participants will allow the emotional divide between Latinx youth and police to be bridged.”* – **Margaret Buchanan,**  
**researcher and Talking it Through participant**

While we were disappointed with the youth attendance during both sessions of the program, we decided to go ahead and complete the program, trying to make it as successful and beneficial as possible and learning everything we could in order to improve and create a better program in the future.



## What's Next

HACER is very excited to build on what we learned from this program to create a better Talking it Through program. We plan to look for new opportunities to implement this program in a way that will more specifically target Latino youth who have had previous problems with the police. We would do this by expanding our outreach and focusing on visiting several middle and high schools throughout the metro area. We would consider holding a future event in one of these schools, to make it more convenient and accessible for the youth. We want to continue to work in Minneapolis and St. Paul, but also expand the program to the suburbs, which was one of the suggestions we received from the police officers who participated.

We would also plan to improve our execution of the interactive picture activity. This was a very successful activity, but now we can use our experience to improve it for the future. We would like to make it more interactive by having a police officer or an HACER staff member walk through the steps shown in the images and explain the expected behavior, which would allow for a more secure sense of knowing the ideal steps of action. Also, with more participants, gender and age could be grouped separately. In the second session, one of the younger participants often looked to another older, male participant for answers during the picture activity. Having several smaller groups might seem less intimidating and allow for personalized conversations. We would also consider having same-gender groups and including older peers in their twenties who could be helpful in bridging interactions between youth and police officers. A separate workshop just on filing reports for issues such as contesting a fine or reporting bad behavior from a police officer could also be extremely helpful, since this information doesn't seem to be easily accessible.

We did have low levels of youth participation in this program, but we also saw great enthusiasm from police officers and many who are involved in juvenile justice, who showed a lot of desire to be involved in the program. We were able to learn a lot from this program and have many ideas of how it needs to be improved in the future. This makes us hopeful that we can make this a more successful and beneficial program in the future.

# Appendix

## A: Pre/Post-test

### *Talking it Through Survey*

#### **Pretest/Pre-evaluación**

*Por favor marque en el cuadro correspondiente eligiendo el que mejor describa su sentir con respecto a cada una de las siguientes preguntas.*

*Please mark the box that best describes how you feel about each of the following statements.*

¡Gracias por su colaboración!

Thank you for your collaboration!

Question/Pregunta	Strongly disagree / Totalmente en desacuerdo	Disagree / En desacuerdo	Neutral	Agree / De acuerdo	Strongly agree / Totalmente de acuerdo
I normally feel comfortable in the presence of police officers. / Normalmente me siento cómodo en la presencia de la policía.					
I have had positive interactions with police officers. / He tenido interacciones positivas con la policía.					
I understand my rights when interacting with police officers. / Entiendo mis derechos cuando interactuando con la policía.					
I know how to talk and act when with the police. / Conozco como hablar y actuar cuando estoy con la policía.					
I would know where to get help if I were ever detained by the police. / Yo sabría dónde conseguir ayuda si estuviera detenido por la policía.					
I know when to assert my rights in interactions with police. / Yo sé cuándo hacer valer mis derechos en interacciones con la policía.					
I would feel comfortable asserting my rights in interactions with police. / Me sentiría cómodo hacer valer mis derechos en interacciones con la policía.					
I would contact the police if I thought I or someone else was in danger. / Yo contactaría a la policía si sintiera que yo o alguien más estuviera en peligro.					
I trust the police to protect me and my family and friends. / Confío en la policía protegerme y a mi familia y amigos.					
I know of services that could help me if I were ever in trouble with the police. / Yo conozco servicios que podrían ayudarme si estuviera en problemas con la policía.					
I understand the perspectives of police officers and how they might react to my actions. / Entiendo las perspectivas de la policía y como podrían reaccionar a mis acciones.					

## Appendix B: Overall Evaluation

Question/Pregunta	Strongly disagree / Totalmente en desacuerdo	Disagree / En desacuerdo	Neutral	Agree / De acuerdo	Strongly agree / Totalmente de acuerdo
In general, these workshops have been a good experience for me. / En general, estos talleres han sido una experiencia buena para mí.					
I felt comfortable sharing my ideas and asking questions during the workshops. / Me sentía cómodo al compartir mis ideas y hacer preguntas en los talleres.					
I would recommend these workshops to a friend. / Recomendaría estos talleres a un amigo.					
I would like to attend other programs like this in the future. / Me gustaría asistir a otros programas como este en el futuro.					
The location of these workshops was convenient for me. / La ubicación de los talleres era conveniente para mí.					
These workshops took place at a convenient time for me. / Estos talleres fueron desarrollados en un tiempo conveniente para mí.					
I learned new things about my rights when interacting with the police. / Aprendí nuevas cosas sobre mis derechos cuando interactuando con la policía.					
I learned how and when to best assert my rights. / Aprendí como y cuando es la mejor manera de hacer valer mis derechos.					
I learned new things about the services available to me if I have problems with the police. / Aprendí nuevas cosas sobre los servicios que están disponibles para mí si tuviera problemas con la policía.					
These workshops have allowed me to feel more comfortable with the police. / Estos talleres me permitían sentir más cómodo con la policía.					

# Resources @ Hand

## DONT BE AFRAID TO ASK FOR HELP



**Consulado de México en St. Paul**  
(651) 771-5494  
[contacto@consulmexstpaul.com](mailto:contacto@consulmexstpaul.com)



**Consulado de Ecuador en St. Paul**  
(612) 721 6468  
[cecuminnesota@cancilleria.gob.ec](mailto:cecuminnesota@cancilleria.gob.ec)



**Minneapolis**  
City of Lakes  
**Office of Immigrant and Refugees Affairs**  
612-673-6103  
[michelle.rivero@minneapolismn.gov](mailto:michelle.rivero@minneapolismn.gov)



**Volunteer Lawyers Network**  
612-752-6677  
<https://www.vlnmn.org/contact>



**Teens against Bullying**  
[www.pacerteensagainstbullying.org](http://www.pacerteensagainstbullying.org)



**National Latino Peace Officers Association**  
651- 231-7063  
[www.nlpoa.com](http://www.nlpoa.com)



**Casa de Esperanza**  
651-772-1611  
[www.casadeesperanza.org](http://www.casadeesperanza.org)



**Immigrant Law Center**  
1-800-223-1368  
[www.ilcm.org/](http://www.ilcm.org/)



**Open Door Health Center**  
(507) 388-2120  
[www.odhc.org](http://www.odhc.org)



**International Institute of Minnesota**  
651-647-0191  
[www.iimn.org](http://www.iimn.org)



**Comunidades Latinas Unidas al Servicio**  
612-746-3500  
[www.clues.org](http://www.clues.org)

**Report a crime or incident  
CALL 9-1-1**

**If the situation changes before help arrives  
call 9-1-1 again and update the operator.**



**HACER**  
Public Advocacy and Community Empowerment through Research

Appendix D: Program Flyer



**TALKING IT THROUGH:**

# **A LATINO YOUTH- POLICE DIALOGUE**

Aprende tus derechos, y charla  
sobre seguridad y prevención,

**OCTOBER 22ND  
(3:00PM-5:00PM)**

**MIDTOWN GLOBAL MARKET  
CONFERENCE ROOM G10  
BUSCA LAS SEÑALES**



¡Contáctanos si tienes preguntas!

Teléfono:  
612.767.5634

[www.hacer-mn.org](http://www.hacer-mn.org)