

**ADANN SPANISH LANGUAGE OUTREACH PROJECT**  
**Research Brief: Understanding Regional Context**  
**REGION 5 Great Lakes ADA Center**



**Background**

The Spanish Language Outreach Project (SLO) is a new five-year collaborative national initiative of the ADA National Network (ADANN), ten regional ADA Centers, and the ADA Knowledge Translation Center. The first stage of the SLO project (2022-2023) aimed to develop a deeper understanding of the context of Spanish-speaking communities and assess their ADA-related information needs through research and expert consultation nationally and within each of the ten regions.

**Region 5 Summary**

This research brief reports on the key findings from the ADANN Region 5, Great Lakes ADA Center. Region 5 includes the states of Michigan, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Wisconsin, and Minnesota. As of 2021, Latinos were the second largest minority group in the region with a population of about 4.5 million people. Illinois had the largest group of Spanish speakers at approximately 2.5 million individuals identifying as Hispanic or Latino. In each state, more than 7% of the Hispanic population had a disability.

**Findings and Key Highlights**

In Region 5, language barriers occur due to a lack of information in Spanish, reduced availability of bilingual staff, and poor quality of translation services. Fear was another barrier as people are usually afraid of asking for help or asking questions in terms of services and resources. Fear may be connected to immigration status or discrimination based on race. Participants from Region 5 also expressed that the information about available services, programs, and benefits is not getting to the Spanish-speaking community. Additionally, the lack of education in terms of disability and understanding how disability is an approach in Latino culture continues to be a barrier to accessing services. Last, immigration status continues to be a significant barrier, specifically when individuals attempt to access services they know or hear about from others.

**Data and Methods**

Using a participatory process, the project team identified community members and conducted semi-structured interviews. Participants interviewed included 10 community members: 4 in Illinois, 2 in Minnesota, 2 in Wisconsin, and 2 in Michigan. Most of the participants were female and had minimal knowledge about the ADA. Most of the interviews were conducted in English. Community members were staffing community resource centers, non-profits, and disability organizations with each having roles such as parent, director of programs, program coordinator, social worker, and community analyst among others.

**Barriers**

Lack of information in Spanish  
 Health literacy  
 Translation and interpretation services  
 Fear lack of awareness  
 Lack of information about rights  
 Disability awareness and education  
 Immigration

*"We need more access to the information that could benefit the community all around because realistically that's one of the biggest barriers in many communities. If you don't have a son, daughter, granddaughter who's fluent in English and can help you translate something, like where do you go?"*

*"There is mostly fear, and like if I say something, I might not be heard, and where do I even begin? You know, to look for the resources is scary. Like, there's so many people that didn't know that some resources even existed."*

**Access to Information**

Social media  
 Word of mouth  
 TV and radio

*"The parents especially because they talk, all of them talk to each other. If one of their kids forgets to take it [flyer] out of their book bag or something and show it to their parents, then someone else's mom is going to be like, 'Oh, did you see like what paper they got in their book bags today?' and like they'll start talking about it."*

**Recommendations**

Recommendations include outreach training, community partnerships, increasing disability awareness and education, and making written information more accessible. Specific strategies included:

- Cultural competency trainings for staff in organizations
- Educational sessions on disability rights and the ADA
- Partnerships with community leaders
- Making information applicable and easy to understand

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