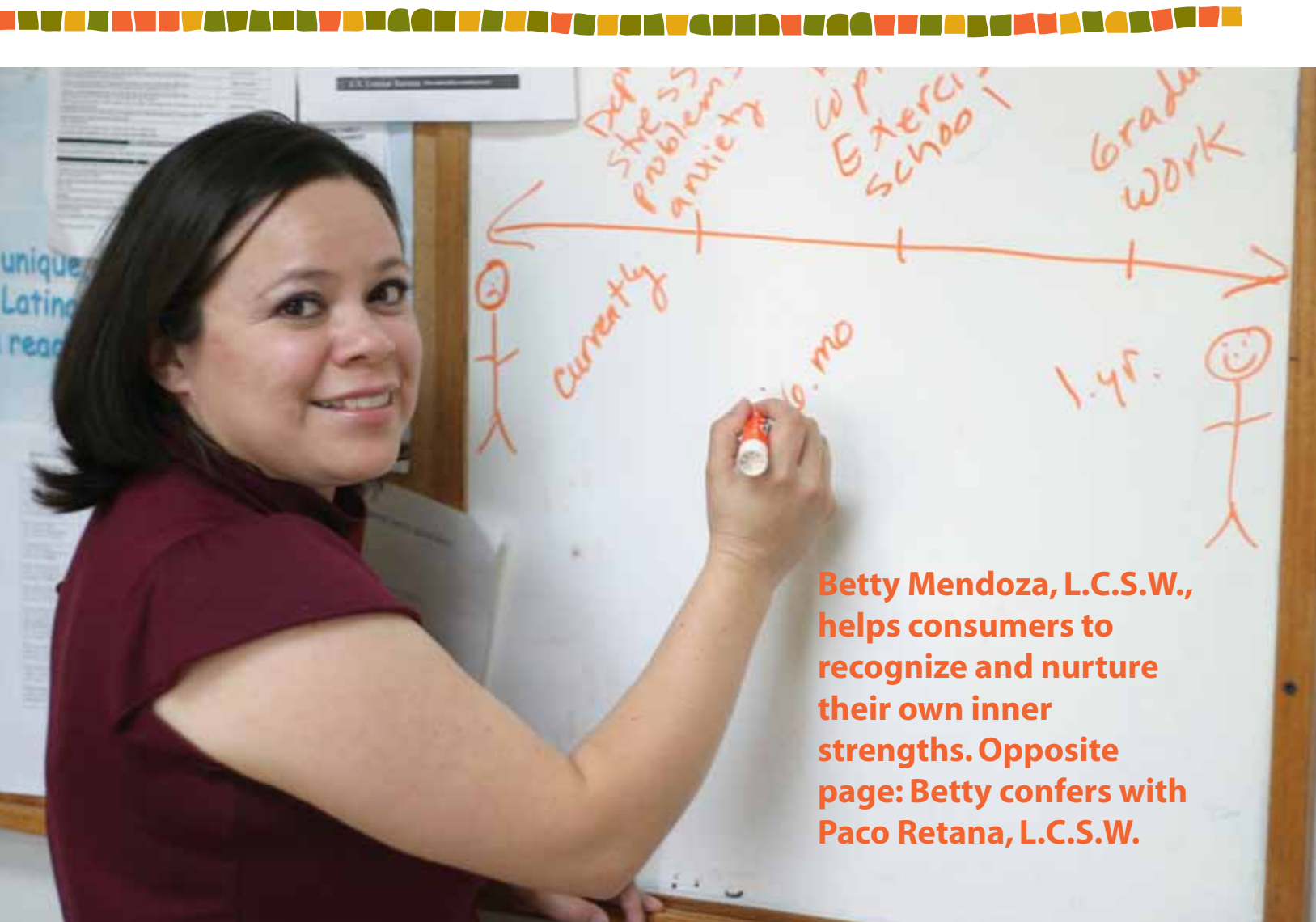


# COMMITMENT



**Betty Mendoza, L.C.S.W., helps consumers to recognize and nurture their own inner strengths. Opposite page: Betty confers with Paco Retana, L.C.S.W.**

## **Standards of Effective Care**

The Clinic designs its services recognizing numerous barriers to access, including language, economics, stigma, and culture. . . .

The Clinic is committed to individualized services planning for each client, which includes honoring their preferences for where they receive their services.

## Leading the Way With 'Personalismo'

In South Los Angeles, the Latino community faces, among other barriers, linguistic isolation when trying to access mental health services. There are only five bilingual therapists for every 10,000 monolingual Spanish speakers, compared to 45 to 50 English-speaking therapists for every 10,000 English speakers. Nationwide, the Latino population has the lowest rate of mental health services use of any ethnic group.

The Los Angeles Child Guidance Clinic is committed to closing that gap with its own brand of “personalismo”—the personal interest Latinos expect from their health care providers. “It’s a different kind of intervention, hands-on and personal with the consumer,” says Paco Retana, L.C.S.W., Director of Outpatient Services at the Exposition Park site.

It means going to where families live and play—in their homes, at a park or the local *panaderia* (bakery), even a family *quinceañera*, a coming-of-age ceremony for girls turning 15. “Working in the field opens up a whole different perspective for me,” says Betty Mendoza, L.C.S.W., clinical supervisor and therapist, Outpatient Services. “It also helps me to demystify mental

health services for consumers.”

Ms. Mendoza is part of a highly trained staff that enables the Clinic to connect with marginalized families through a combination of traditional models of psychotherapy and in-depth appreciation of cultural nuances. Ms. Mendoza’s first job after graduating with a bachelor’s in psychology from the University of California, Berkeley, was as a family advocate in the Clinic’s Walk-in Clinic/Access Center. There she met children who were reunited with their families after lengthy separations caused by immigration from countries like Guatemala and El Salvador.

The experience opened her eyes to their psychological and socio-economic stresses. “I realized I wanted to do more to help.” She went back to school to earn her master’s in social work. Following that, she was promoted to therapist and, this year, to clinical supervisor, primarily working with clients in the Clinic’s California Work Opportunities and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) program. Recently, she gained additional training as a domestic violence counselor.

In the 1980s, then only five years old, Ms. Mendoza made her own passage to



the United States, escaping the violence of war in El Salvador with her parents. Though her parents divorced soon after arriving, her father remained her confidante and her mother’s resilience inspired her interest in single mothers. “I try to empower them and focus on the skills and strengths they already have in them.”

She runs two weekly groups—*Chicas Arriba* (Go, Girls) and *Si Se Puede* (Yes, You Can), using humor, references to popular Spanish-language soap operas, and colloquial Spanish sayings to encourage trust and help the participants build their own support system. “I tell them they’re the knowledgeable people and encourage them to share what they know with each other.”

In her office, she draws a timeline for each client’s unfolding journey. At the beginning, she writes, “This is you here.” At the end, it says, “This is your future.”

"The Clinic's Standards of Care do not shy away from the tough questions facing organizations trying to deliver genuinely community based, customer-focused supports and services. It contains a values approach that is both affirmed in the research base and in substantial data collected from customers about what matters to them, and it clearly operationalizes those values into the daily work life of employees. The Standards both talk the right talk and walk the right walk."

— Bruce Anderson, Managing Partner  
Community Activators, Inc, which provides training  
and coaching for community activist organizations to help create innovation