

## SEPTEMBER 2023 BIPOC MEMBER SPOTLIGHT



**Blanca Campos, MPA, CAE**  
**Chief Executive Officer**  
**Community Behavioral Healthcare Association (CBHA)**

### **What does the word “community” mean to you? How would you describe your community?**

Community to me means having a group of people who are supportive of one another and celebrate and embrace each individual’s uniqueness. Community helps shape and strengthen us.

### **What is your primary responsibility at your job?**

Blanca Campos, MPA, CAE, is the CEO of the Community Behavioral Healthcare Association (CBHA), one of the leading trade associations for safety-net mental health and substance use providers in Illinois.

My primary responsibility is to be a voice for community mental health and substance use providers with state agencies and the legislature. Our mission at CBHA is to ensure access and availability of a comprehensive system of accountable, quality behavioral healthcare services for the people of Illinois.

### **Who has been the most influential person in your career?**

I come from a family of strong, caring women, my mom, sister, my aunts, are all people who have influenced my life and career.

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### **What motivates you in your field? What inspired you to get involved in this field initially?**

I have a huge admiration for my association members. My members are the salt of the earth. I get to work with individuals who are mission-driven and have devoted their professional careers to providing care to the most vulnerable among us. They do their work with heart and kindness. I am extremely humbled and grateful to work alongside them. They are a huge motivation for me.

### **What was it like when you were just starting out in your field? What obstacles did you have to overcome to get to the position you have?**

As the first female, Latina to lead CBHA, I feel a strong sense of pride and responsibility. When I got the job, I received many messages from a lot of people congratulating me. I was especially touched by some of the things my female family and friends expressed. One of them said, "You are an inspiration to me and my daughter that women can be CEOs and leaders in today's sometimes scary world. I also had several friends who said they were excited to share the news with their kids that their friend, a Latina, who comes from an immigrant family like theirs was chosen to lead CBHA.

I also echo the sentiments that many individuals who are "the first to accomplish something" feel, while I may be the first in this role, the goal is to work hard to make sure I am not the last female, or person of color to take on such a role. I want to use my platform to help build inclusive environments where we can uplift one another and create leadership opportunities for underrepresented communities.

Also, as a daughter of immigrant parents, I always want to do well to show them that their efforts and sacrifices were worth it. Making my parents and family proud fills me with great joy.

### **Do you feel that BIPOC folks are adequately represented in executive/leadership positions in the behavioral health realm? If no, what do you feel needs to change?**

We are moving in a better direction, but we are not adequately represented in executive/leadership positions in behavioral health yet. Organizations need to be intentional about being inclusive and that means creating environments where people feel genuinely heard and valued and creating opportunities for mentorship and growth as professionals and people. I know mentorship was critical for my career development.

### **What advice do you have to BIPOC individuals as they work towards becoming leaders in their own communities? Any lessons learned?**

I would advise folks to be authentically them. You'll be much happier and will find the right place, where you're meant to be, when you are authentically you.