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Improving Outcomes for Latino Children and Youth: Promising Practices in North Carolina

Latino children make up the fastest growing segment of North Carolina's child population, jumping 34 percent in just three years. An examination of the data reveals that too many Latino children and youth in our state are denied the opportunity to be healthy, safe, well-educated and financially secure. Action for Children's recent report, *Latino Children in North Carolina*, provides more detail on these data.

Organizations and individuals across the state are working with Latino children and their families to improve both short- and long-term outcomes in the Latino community. This factsheet highlights just a few of these promising practices as examples of some of the exciting work going on in our state.

The Tomorrow Fund: Grants for North Carolina Hispanic Students

The Tomorrow Fund, a new Triangle Community Foundation fund, aims to strengthen North Carolina's Hispanic community through increased post-secondary educational access by addressing financial aid gaps faced by Hispanic youth at North Carolina colleges and universities. The impetus behind the Fund was to address the needs of talented Hispanic students of low-income families, many of whom are not able to pursue higher education because of financial need. Its goals are not only to strengthen the Hispanic community through improving access to higher education, but also to encourage diversity and Hispanic cultural awareness within North Carolina's colleges and universities.



The Fund issues grants directly to colleges and universities with an interest in admitting and enrolling Hispanic students to be used for the sole benefit of Hispanic students. The Fund is guided by three advisory committees at the state and national levels.

The Tomorrow Fund made its first grants, totaling \$39,000, in June 2010 to three North Carolina colleges: Meredith College, High Point University and N.C. A&T.

For more information about The Tomorrow Fund, please visit their website at:
<http://www.thetomorrowfundhispanicstudents.org>.



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North Carolina Healthy Start Foundation - Latino Health Program

The North Carolina Healthy Start Foundation launched the state's first statewide, public health education campaign developed solely for Latinos in 2000. The Ana María Campaign, with guidance from a Latino advisory group and input from focus groups, shared information about relevant health issues and promoted state and local health resources for Latina women and their children. Educational materials and messages distributed by the Foundation are developed in Spanish, by Latinos, with the understanding that culturally and linguistically appropriate messages are the most effective means to raise awareness of health issues among Latinas.

The campaign received the Latino Diamante Award in 2004 in Health and Science and the Impulso a la Comunidad Hispana Award in 2006 for its contribution to North Carolina's Latino community in health.

The Foundation has contributed to understanding the needs of the Latino community through qualitative research focused on women's health knowledge and behavior, acculturation, attitudes towards families with children with special health care needs and teen sexual behavior and beliefs. Based on this research, the newly expanded Latino Health Program will expand its focus from mothers and babies to also include health education for older youth and their parents. The Foundation's newsletter, *N.C. Healthy Start Happenings* (formerly *Maternidad Latina* and *iNCite*), includes information for health and human service providers who work with Latino populations on topics such as cultural norms, obstacles faced by many Latinos and how to best address them.

For more information or to order materials to use with Latinos, please visit the Foundation's website at: <http://www.nchealthystart.org>. For health resources for Latino mothers and children, visit their Spanish-language website at: <http://www.mamasana.org>.





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Hablando Claro/Plain Talk in Chatham County

Chatham County Together! is the local organization responsible for implementing the *Hablando Claro/Plain Talk* initiative in Siler City. It is a neighborhood-based initiative that helps adults, parents and community leaders develop the skills and tools they need to communicate effectively with young people about personal responsibility and decision making. The goal of this project is to increase communication between adults and adolescents and to reduce teen pregnancy for Hispanic youth.

The community-based program includes classes at CCT! for local parents and youth, “home health parties” in neighborhood homes, and a newly formed youth group and Latino dance troupe. The interventions are focused on topics



such as communication skills between parents and teens, STD/HIV prevention, anatomy, adolescent behaviors, and birth control.

The program is in its fifth year in Siler City and has won numerous awards, including the 2006 Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention Coalition of N.C. Hispanic Outreach Award for preventing adolescent pregnancy in the Hispanic community and the 2007 June Stallings Award for Creative Effort in Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention in N.C. (won by Maria Soto, who runs the program). In 2008, the Siler City program won first place in a nationwide competition of all the Plain Talk programs in the country.

In 2009, the Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention Coalition of N.C. highlighted the Siler City program as a highly successful one. The program does pre- and post-evaluations of families and youth and keeps track of graduates. Only a handful of young women who went through the program have become pregnant in the last five years. The program has been adopted by the local juvenile court system and families and youth are referred there from the courts.

CCT! is working in partnership with the Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention Coalition of North Carolina, the Annie E. Casey Foundation and Public Private Ventures. The project is funded by the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services. Teen Pregnancy Prevention Initiatives and Public Private Ventures provides training, technical assistance, and evaluation.

To learn more about the *Hablando Claro/Plain Talk* initiative, please visit <http://www.plaintalk.org> or the Chatham County Together! website at: <http://www.chathamcountytogether.org>.



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Enlaces: El Centro Hispano Makes Linkages in Durham

El Centro Hispano (ECH) is a grassroots, community-based organization dedicated to strengthening the Latino community and improving the quality of life of Latino residents in Durham, Carrboro, Chapel Hill and surrounding areas. ECH accomplishes its mission through service, education and community organizing. ECH provides a number of programs for Latino children, youth and families, from early childhood education and parenting classes to youth support groups.



In 2009, El Centro Hispano and Duke University's Office of Durham and Regional Affairs launched the Enlaces ("Linkages") program to support Latino children in grades 4 through 7 by increasing their protective factors to resist risky behavior. Enlaces outreach specialists also work with families and teachers to address obstacles to school success the youth might be encountering, including involvement in gangs.

To date, over 80 youth at four Durham Public Schools have participated in the program. Preliminary evaluation results of Enlaces workshops indicate an increase in communication skills among parents and youth, knowledge of gang prevention, students' self-esteem and knowledge of school resources. During the 2010-11 academic year, Enlaces will work with 100 students at five Durham Public Schools.

El Centro Hispano offers a number of other programs to the Latino community in Durham, Carrboro and Chapel Hill. Highlights include:

- **Circle of Parents**, a parent support group program that lets Latino parents share in each other's challenges and successes while developing a network of support
- **Early Childhood Education** while parents are in parenting classes (ages birth to 5 years)
- **Motheread**, which works with Latina mothers and their children to develop comfort and joy in reading
- **Jovenes Lideres en Accion ("Youth Leaders in Action")**, an educational program for Latino teens focused on leadership development and community organizing
- **Bilingual tutoring** for grades K through 12 focuses on helping children with homework and improving students' grades in reading and math

For more information about Enlaces or any of ECH's other programs for Latino children and youth, please visit their website at: <http://www.elcentronc.org>.



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Nuestros Niños Program: Promoting School Readiness for Dual Language Learners

A group of researchers at the FPG Child Development Institute at UNC-Chapel Hill, led by Dina Castro, Ph.D., is studying the effectiveness of an intervention developed specifically for pre-school children who are dual language learners.

The Nuestros Niños intervention consists of an array of strategies that teachers can use to specifically support young dual language learners' development and learning in the areas of language, literacy, math and social competence. These strategies are designed to supplement core curriculum activities and are organized to be used in two levels: classroom-wide and in small groups. Teachers will participate in professional development that consists of: (1) acquisition of content knowledge through a series of interactive training institutes; (2) ongoing support from a bilingual consultant to help teachers implement new instructional strategies in the classroom; and (3) opportunities for reflection and shared inquiry with other teachers through professional learning community meetings.

The research study will evaluate the effectiveness of the Nuestros Niños program on the language, literacy, math and socio-emotional outcomes of Spanish-speaking pre-school-aged dual language learners. It will also examine the extent to which the effects of the intervention are maintained at school entry and beyond for Spanish-speaking dual language learners. Researchers will also determine whether specific child, family, teacher, program and professional development factors influence the effects of the intervention on the language, literacy, math and socio-emotional outcomes of Spanish-speaking dual language learners.

For more information on the Nuestros Ninos program and associated research, please visit <http://www.fpg.unc.edu/~nrrp/>.





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Get Folic: N.C. Folic Acid Council Latina Outreach Campaign

The North Carolina Folic Acid Council is a nationally recognized, award-winning campaign created to improve infant and maternal health by promoting the benefits and consumption of folic acid. The program is designed to reduce the occurrence of neural tube defects (NTDs) in newborn children by encouraging women of childbearing age to take a multivitamin containing 400 mcg of folic acid every day.



The Council's Latino Campaign was created because Latinas are twice as likely as other races and ethnicities to have babies born with NTDs. The Folic Acid Council currently has two staff members dedicated to

Latina outreach and has created special programs and advertising in Spanish using culturally relevant messages. The Campaign was selected by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to pilot their *promotora* health education model for folic acid in Wake and Johnston counties. In conjunction with the CDC, they have created a social marketing campaign in Spanish that includes radio, TV, newspaper ads and public service announcements.

In 2009, the Latino Campaign trained more than 75 Community Ambassadors about folic acid and multivitamins, who then educated more than 1,875 Hispanic women face-to-face. The campaign also conducts cultural awareness trainings for community health centers, local health departments and other health care providers so they can better serve the Hispanic community.

Through research it has conducted on North Carolina women over the last few years, the Council has seen an increase in knowledge and awareness of the need for folic acid in the Hispanic community and a decrease in neural tube defects among Latinas.

Last year, the North Carolina Legislature approved funds for free multivitamins for all low-income women of child-bearing age. The Council has since trained all 100 health departments and more than 60 community health centers to give out the vitamins.

For more information on the importance of folic acid, please visit www.getfolic.org, or <http://www.getfolic.com/espanol/index.htm> for information in Spanish.