



FOSTER CARE

RECRUITMENT NEWS

Spring, 2011
Edition

Latino Consortium Recruitment News

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Editor's Note

We have survived a rough winter and once again we proved to ourselves that Chicagoans can withstand anything that comes our way. Within this past year, the Latino Consortium experienced several significant changes. It began with the loss of two key Latino member agencies that included Lifelink and Casa Central foster care programs. This was a significant loss for the Latino Consortium because they provided comprehensive services for Latino families and children. Additionally these agencies generated a significant amount of Burgos homes. More close to home, the Latino Consortium changed office locations from Lifelink to UCAN.

That being said, this year the Latino Consortium had their first Yo Lo Hice\ You Can Too! Latino Youth Career Event at Northeast-

ern Illinois University on March 7th. The planning committee was comprised of a group of various professionals. This event was attended by nearly 80 students from three local Chicago high schools. In attendance 20 professionals from various careers came together to serve as mentors for a speed networking session that lasted for two hours. The students were able to ask questions about their career interests and hear a panel of professionals personal journeys in obtaining a college education.

On March 29th I was invited by our PR consultant Anamary Torres to present on the emotional and psychological implications of teenage bullying. Anamary Torres was part of a small planning committee who were able to produce a successful seminar in a short period of time. The seminar was sponsored by Cook County Commissioner Edwin Reyes and the Cook County Commission on

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Consortium Member: Child Link

Child Link Mission:

To make human services available to all children and youth in need of support.

We strive to provide:

- comprehensive child protection services
- support services for children and adolescents
- individual, family and group counseling
- comprehensive substance abuse services and referrals
- information and referral services in conjunction with all agency services
- homeless youth intervention

Child Link
1100 W. Cermak Rd. STE B404
Chicago, IL 60608
312-377-4735

Child Link offers the following programs throughout the community.

Foster Care: We are proud to announce that upon our most recent DCFS review we were ranked Number One in the State for ensuring that the children in our care are placed into stable homes with loving families. Our scores are excellent in all the areas DCFS reviews: child safety, legal support, and court performance.

Adoption: Annually we place 10-15 children in foster-to-adopt homes with concurrent planning. We coordinate *no fee* adoptions to perspective parents following state mandated background checks and home studies

Transitional Living Program (TLP), has been established with the goal of supplying young adult women, who will soon be aging out of the system, with the skills needed for self-sufficiency and independence. The program provides an understanding of commu-

nity resources and how to use them, and teaches resourcefulness via practical hands-on learning techniques that emphasize development of educational, vocational, financial, domestic and personal safety skills.

Homeless Intervention: We provide homeless youth with immediate intervention support and coordinate delivery of emergency supplies, clothing, and recreational items. We provide clinical services within 24 hours of contact. We also arrange for an intake evaluation to determine the cause of their homelessness, and begin to develop an Individual Service Plan around their needs.

Youth Counseling: Our licensed professionals work with the youth and their families to formulate a plan to provide them with the treatment required. This may include individual, group and family therapies, as well as referral linkage for other needed services.

This information was obtained through Child Link's website at www.childlnk.org

Director's note continued

“...We have many challenges ahead to improve the lives of our families, especially those that are involved in the child welfare system.”



Picture above: Tom Dart, Cook County Sheriff;
Pictured right: Hilda Ramos, Director of Latino Consortium

Women’s Issues who joined forces. The seminar “Hurting in Silence, Breaking the Barrier” was attended by approximately 150 students at Mirta Sanchez Computer Science Charter School. In addition to my presentation, other guest speakers included Elizardi Castro, a New York based attorney and comedian, and Cook County Sheriff Tom Dart. The seminar was well covered by media outlets that included Telemundo, Univision, Fox News, CANTV, Hoy and El Dia newspapers. CANTV aired the entire seminar during the months of April and May.

I am also very excited to report that the Latino Consortium will be redesigning its website to make it more informative in providing resources in Spanish and English to stakeholders, child welfare professionals, and existing and potential foster parents. We will also be adding a Facebook page and possibly a blog that will facilitate efficient communication between member agencies and the community at large.

Another important announcement is that The Latino Consortium will be resuming their trainings on cultural competency with Latino families in East St. Louis. A local judge in that area has requested that his court staff and child welfare workers be trained to improve their ability to provide cultural competent services to Latino families. The first training is scheduled to take place in June.

Finally, I attended Capital Day in Springfield, IL and was motivated by many dedicated leaders who are working on behalf of Latino children and families. Agencies serving the Latino community are facing budget cuts and a lack of resources such as not having enough bilingual and bicultural staff to adequately meet the needs of our Latino families. I do not wish to end my message on a gloomy note, but instead, emphasize that we have many challenges ahead to improve the lives of our families, especially those that are involved in the child welfare system. More than ever the Latino Consortium will continue to be at the forefront of raising awareness and advocating on behalf of our children who are in need of bilingual and bicultural foster homes.



Educational Opportunity Center

The Educational Opportunity Center assists Chicago adults seeking to advance their educational credentials. This includes pursuing a GED, ESL courses, vocational training, certificates, advanced certificates, an Associate’s degree, a Bachelor’s degree, and other opportunities that will bring one’s current educational credentials to an advanced level. Participation in the program does not require enrollment at Malcolm X College. We are enthusiastic to assist participants in obtaining acceptance to any institution of post-secondary education of their choosing within the United States.

Participants must be at least 19 years of age (some exceptions may apply), be from a lower-income background, be a potential first-generation college student, or be a veteran. All services coordinated by the Educational Opportunity Center are free of charge to participants.

The Educational Opportunity Center is a TRIO program administered by Malcolm X College and funded by the U.S. Department of Education. For more information, please call 312-850-7495 (English) or 312-850-7109 (Spanish) or visit us at Malcolm X College, 1900 W. Van Buren St, Room 1314, Chicago, IL.

Website: <http://tinyurl.com/EOC-Chicago>

Engagement of the Latino Family: *Leyendo Juntos/ Reach out and Read*

Reading can, and should, be used as an engagement tool for providers. The Reach out and Read program launched *Leyendo Juntos*, an initiative to develop linguistically appropriate training materials for medical providers. These materials help providers to encourage Spanish speaking parents and extended family members to read to their young children...***in their own language.***

- Children of Spanish-speaking families are more than twice as likely to fail fourth-grade reading assessments than non-Latino white children
- 58 percent of Latino fourth-graders read below the basic level.
- Latino families average 20 fewer books in their homes than their English-speaking counterparts.
- 46 percent of young Latino children (0-8 years) have mothers who did not graduate from high school.
- 28 percent of Latino children in the United States live in poverty.
- 22 percent of all children in the U.S. under the age of 5 are Latino, but they are 20 percent less likely than other groups to be enrolled in early childhood education programs
- The A KIDS COUNT Special Report from the Annie E. Casey Foundation reported that reading proficiently by the end of third grade is a crucial marker in a child's educational development. Failure to read proficiently is linked to higher rates of school Dropout

It is important to dispel the belief that children should be exposed solely to the English language, a reason why Spanish speaking parents do not read to their children. Parents should be encouraged to create a positive love of books by using reading time as a tool for family bonding.

Reach Out and Read is an evidence-based non-profit organization that promotes early literacy and school readiness in pediatric exam rooms nationwide by giving new books to children and advice to parents about the importance of reading aloud.

Reach Out and Read builds on the unique relationship between parents and medical providers to develop critical early reading skills in children, beginning at 6 months of age. More than 3.9 million families served annually by Reach Out and Read read together more often, and their children enter kindergarten better prepared to succeed, with larger vocabularies, stronger language skills, and a six-month developmental edge over their peers.

A KIDS COUNT Special Report from the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

"Reading proficiently by the end of third grade is a crucial marker in a child's educational development. Failure to read proficiently is linked to higher rates of school Dropout..."

<http://www.aecf.org/~/media/Pubs/Initiatives/KIDS%20COUNT/123/2010KCSpecReport/Special%20Report%20Executive%20Summary.pdf>

For more information visit the Reach out and Read website at

<http://www.reachoutandread.org/providers/uniquepopulations/spanishspeaking.aspx>



ChildServ's Foster Care Program in the Chicago area is searching for loving parents willing to open their hearts and homes to provide foster care for children. This spring, the 116-year old Chicago-based child and family service agency is offering free information sessions in Cook County and Lake County. Each session features professionals in foster care delivery who present information about foster care services at ChildServ and explain the process involved to become a foster parent. The free sessions start at 5:30 PM until 7:30 PM. The dates in Cook County are on the third Tuesday of each month. ChildServ encourages self-sufficient adults to reserve a seat for the sessions held at in the agency's offices in the Harold Washington Professional Building, 5401 S. Wentworth, Suite 2N in Chicago. For more details and to register to attend, call (773) 867-7323.

Meetings are also in Lake County. ChildServ's Lake County Family Service Center located in Waukegan at 1105 W Greenwood. Make reservations for sessions in Lake County by contacting ChildServ at (773)867-7323.



SUPPORTING LATINO CHILDREN AND FAMILIES IN ILLINOIS



Latino Consortium

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Writing Resources

Young Chicago Authors

<http://youngchicagoauthors.org/blog/>

Chicago Youth Voices Network

<http://cyvn.org/>

Columbia Links

<http://www.columbialinks.org/>

Writing our Stories

<http://www.writersforum.org/programs/stories.html>

Editor's Note

I wrote a bit about reading to our younger kids as a form of family engagement, but what about our youth? The youth who clams up at being on display in front of an audience, or the youth whose words become muffled by background noise a.k.a life, what options do they have?

I attended a youth summit sponsored by Ceasefire a few months ago. Now, I've lived in the city's urban neighborhoods my whole life, from Chicago's Westside, to Chicago's South side. I've heard the horror stories of what our youth face in today's streets. I've known someone, or know someone who knows someone, who died from violence. I've worked with youth in some form so I "know" what they are going through. And yet, I know nothing.

Entering the church where the event was held, I noticed that there were three seating sections parted by rope. We were instructed that the visitors, or non-gang members, will be seated in the middle because two rival gangs would be joining us for the event. *Okay...* I thought. My nineteen year old nephew, who reluctantly joined me at this event, gave me a look like ...*what the heck did you get me into*. I smiled at him and told him it was okay. I knew the organizers. It was fine. We sat.

The youth began trickling in. First,

The Latino Consortium provides a holistic array of community-based bilingual and culturally competent social services to Latino children and families, through agencies who have demonstrated mission-based planning in its services to Latino children and families, as well as dedicated substantial resources to serving Latino families.

In their continued commitment to the Latino community, the Consortium will seek to build the capacity of other organizations to provide culturally competent services for unmet needs.

Consortium Members:

Arden Shore Child and Family Services
Association House of Chicago
Casa Central
Catholic Charities of Chicago
Child Link
Children Home + Aid Society
ChildServ
IDCFS/Office of Latino Services
La Casa Norte
Puentes de Esperanza
Seguin
SOS Children's Villages
UCAN
Youth Outreach Services

say. He did say, however, that dying for the streets is senseless. But what else is there?

I share this with you because these are the children that are filled with stories waiting to be told, to be acknowledged. We can point fingers at the "system", at parents, at the rising gas prices, but that doesn't make the problem go away.

I started looking at youth programs available in these neighborhoods. I even went to one to check it out. They have a great afterschool program, a great arts program that consists of dancing, music, theatre, art design, and set design. "What about writing?" I asked. The director scrunched his brow as if he had no clue what I was talking about.

"You know," he said. "I don't think our kids write."

I quote because those words burned into me. I refuse to believe that our kids—or more specific *those* kids—don't write. How many times have we picked up pen to paper to relieve some of our own trauma? How many times have we wrote and burned diaries? How many times have we felt relieved to have an outlet like writing?

Writing **is** a form of self expression. Challenge your youth to write.

Elizabeth