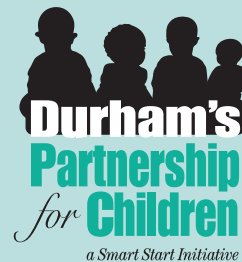


A Needs Assessment of Child Care in Durham County's Latino Community



June 2007

NEW DATA ON THE CHILD CARE NEEDS OF LATINO FAMILIES

Durham's Partnership for Children, *A Smart Start Initiative*
www.dpfc.net



FOREWORD

ABOUT THE STUDY

The findings in this report represent the culmination of a three-month project conducted by students enrolled in Duke University's Enterprising Leadership Initiative at the Sanford Institute of Public Policy. Under the direction of Professor Tony Brown, Director of the Enterprise Leadership Initiative, and Teddie Brown, Program Coordinator, the students managed a series of focus groups of Latino parents, collected and analyzed data on child care and the burgeoning Latino community in Durham County and authored this report.

The Focus Group format was chosen because it is a research method that emphasizes participants' perspectives, encourages dialogue between participants and provides a way to gather information from people whose written skills might be limited.

As with any study, this report offers interpretation of the substantial amount of data collected by Duke University students Ashley Arana, Sarah Fennell and Taylor Jacobson. This study, built on previous studies from around the country, was designed to identify the needs of area Latinos.

Focus group participants were able to both analyze and give potential solutions to the problems with their own voices.

From February to April 2007, Latinos and community leaders were invited to attend one of the focus groups or interviews scheduled. The group interviews gave people the opportunity to talk about their experiences and voice their opinions. Different groups of Latinos who use a variety of resources were purposefully sought out, which included groups who used little to no resources. Anonymity was assured to all the participants.

Every effort was made to create a comfortable, supportive environment for the interviews. Bilingual facilitators conducted the interviews in spaces that were already used for programs and events that were considered safe and comfortable for the groups.

To amplify the participants' perspectives, facilitators used an approach with as little facilitator involvement as possible. Facilitators asked and repeated the preset research questions and paraphrased responses without interpreting or judging the participants' responses. They encouraged dialogue among participants by listening carefully and staying silent, as well as through techniques like repeating the questions, paraphrasing and by asking questions such as "what

else?" or "other ideas?" This approach also facilitated connections between participant responses and drew out people who tend to speak less frequently.

Interview Questions for Latino Parents

What kind of activities do you engage in with your child?

Is child care frequently used?

Care in a family child care home?

Out of home—licensed child care?

Neighbor care?

Family care?

Do you see a need for child care?

How willing are you to use child care?

What will make you more willing to use child care?

Can you identify barriers encountered?

Do you belong to a Church (role of the church)?

Is there anything else you'd like to share about child care and how we might best meet your needs?

Interview Questions for Community Leaders

Do you know if your served population uses child care?

Licensed child care?

If not, can you share any information on why are people not using it?

Barriers and challenges Latinos face in your community regarding child care?

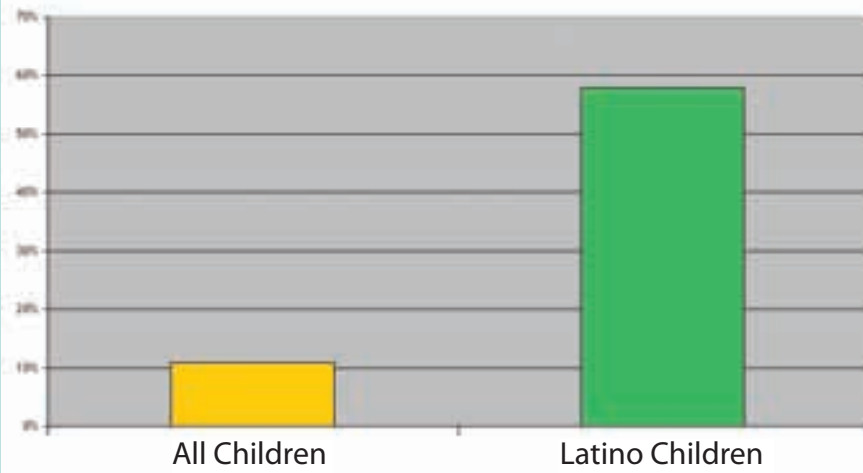
What challenges are you facing in trying to meet this need?

What else should we know about your experiences?

Are there any nights of the week that you have events (we can attend/we can speak to parents, etc)?

Unprecedented Growth

Population Growth in Children Ages 0 -17



The Latino population in Raleigh, Durham and Chapel Hill, North Carolina increased by 569.2% from 1990 to 2000. During the same period, by comparison, the white population only increased 27.5% and the black population only rose 33.1%.¹

The population growth of Latino children ages birth to 17 was 5.25 times the growth of all youths in Durham County.²

The Importance of Early Childhood Education

This signals the wave of the future, a quickly growing Latino population whose needs must be recognized and met. Moreover, it points to the population in greatest need of aid: Latino youth.

While the needs of Latino youth ages birth to five are wide-ranging, school readiness is of utmost importance. Literacy and basic language skills are the critical foundation through which they can experience success in other facets of life. Lack of school readiness for Latino children has been a national problem. It has significant implications for long-term development and academic success and contributes to an already wide gap in school performance. According to the National Taskforce on Early Childhood Education for Hispanics, “Hispanic children, especially those from disadvantaged circumstances, continue to lag behind non-Hispanic Whites on measures of school readiness and school achievement, including in reading and mathematics.”³ Starting to educate children at an early age and arming them with basic language skills will begin to close

the wide gap between them and their non-Latino classmates. Early education, either through daycare or pre-kindergarten programs, can significantly increase levels of school readiness in the Latino youth who are able to access them.⁴ To start, these programs help in the development of cognitive skills and language abilities in youth. Additionally, they ease separation anxiety and provide early socialization and integration with children of other races, making the future transition into school less stressful.

This needs assessment was designed to give Durham County’s most influential government, faith-based, and community organizations a better understanding of the needs of Latino children. This included examining the services that are currently in place to meet these needs, the obstacles to accessing these services, and the potential solutions that would be most beneficial. The interviews and focus groups conducted together represent the opinions of Latino parents and community service providers.

1. Raleigh-Durham-Chapel Hill: Summary Profile, <<http://diversitydata.sph.harvard.edu/profiles.jsp?ma=6640>>.
2. The Annie E. Casey Foundation, <http://www.kidscount.org/cgi-bin/cliks.cgi?action=profile_results&subset=NC#6>.
3. “Hispanic Children Gain an Academic Edge When Their Education Starts Early,” <<http://www.swiftpage4.com/Task Force. Amara/C070301161800/BIO/text.pdf>>.
4. “Hispanic Children Gain an Academic Edge When Their Education Starts Early,” <<http://www.swiftpage4.com/Task Force.Amara/C070301161800/BIO/text.pdf>>.

What's Working Well?

Durham County is fortunate to have a variety of organizations and programs in place to address the challenges associated with school readiness in the Latino community. A set of best practices exists within these programs, and culturally competent services are being provided. The types of programs include Durham County programs, non-profit community organizations and faith-based community efforts, including English as a Second Language (ESL) classes and North Carolina state programs, such as Smart Start and More at Four.

Welcome Baby

A part of the Home and Family services arm of the North Carolina Cooperative Extension program, Welcome Baby serves families with young children. Services offered include ESL classes, separation anxiety classes (for children and their parents), the Giving Closet (to provide clothing for babies and young children), as well as parental education workshops. All of Welcome Baby's services are bilingual in nature. Each publication is available in Spanish and English. And most of the staff members are bilingual.

Welcome Baby provides its services for free with funding from Durham's Partnership for Children. In addition, through the assistance of TROSA, a local non-profit residential turnaround program, Welcome Baby is able to provide transportation service for many of their programs. Welcome Baby makes these programs available at different times throughout the day to allow both working and stay-at-home parents to attend their programming.

El Centro Hispano

"El Centro" offers a variety of programs focusing on women, education, child development, health and youth. Both women's, men's and general ESL classes are offered at flexible times. The center is entirely bilingual, and the staff is comprised mostly of Latinos who can relate to the challenges and language barriers many Latino children and their families experience. The services offered to families and their young children free with funding from Durham's Partnership for Children.

Faith-based Community

A number of churches in Durham County are active leaders in the Latino community. Key players include Immaculate Conception and St. Paul's Methodist Church. These churches have thorough Latino community outreach programs and are well trusted by the community. Both churches offer ESL programs.

More at Four

More at Four is a North Carolina state and locally funded pre-kindergarten program. It is intended to give four-year-old children, who may otherwise be unable to attend, the resources for a high-quality educational experience. This school-day program provides young children with access to a specific curriculum and preschool experience to enhance their school readiness.



Smart Start

Smart Start is a public-private initiative that funds early education programs in each county in North Carolina. State funds are administered through non-profit organizations in each county called Local Partnerships, of which Durham's Partnership for Children is one. Smart Start funds are used to improve the quality of child care, make it more affordable and accessible, as well as support the needs of young children to be ready for school.

Head Start

Although it is a national program, Head Start is another program that provides funding to public and private agencies in order to furnish child development services to disadvantaged children and families. Its particular focus is helping preschoolers develop early math and reading skills needed to succeed in school. Head Start programs promote school readiness by supporting the provision of health, educational, nutritional, social and other services to children and families. They leverage parents as factors in their children's learning, helping parents as well with literacy, education and employment goals. Head Start focuses on children ages 3 and 4 in Durham.

Barriers for School Readiness in Durham

Unfortunately, many Latino children are unable to access these programs due to a number of barriers including cost, distrust, lack of information, lack of transportation, language and cultural insensitivity. In the face of any combination of these obstacles, many parents are unable to provide their children with the early education opportunities that could significantly increase their future success in school.

Cost

Affordability is one of the most significant barriers standing in the way of accessing child care for Latino and non-Latino parents alike. Paying the high costs of daycare and pre-K programs is often impossible for parents who are already working within a tight budget.

There are a few programs, such as More at Four and Head Start, which seek to remedy this situation by offering pre-kindergarten services to low-income families. However, many of the parents interviewed reported feeling discouraged by long waitlists.

There are also other ways of applying for subsidies, scholarships, or financial aid. Unfortunately, many of these have strict restrictions which block parents from being eligible to receive them. The most problematic of these is the legal status of the parents. It is a particularly difficult issue in early childhood education because while some parents may be illegal, their children are often American-born.

Moreover, one of our community partners explained that even if parents are legal, the subsidies, scholarships and financial aid available are limited, meaning that the burden of paying for child care lies exclusively with the parents. Because of these restrictions and the limited availability of financial aid options, the school readiness problem and education gap is likely to continue to grow.

Parents also pointed to a cyclical problem that they are caught in: the relationship between child care and employment. One mother pointed out that some child care providers have strict requirements regarding the employment of the parents. She explained that, since she did not have a job, the daycare center would not accept her child into the program through subsidy. Alternatively, since she had no trusted person to care for her child, she could not begin the job search and interview process to secure employment.

Additionally, parents struggle to afford high quality child care. Many members of the Latino community are working multiple low-paying jobs, and although they want to put their child in the best care available, their funds limit child care options. One community partner pointed out that lower quality child care services often have fewer staff members and resources. And the children in these environments may not be receiving the early education that will impact their school readiness.



Distrust

Upon immigrating to the United States, Latinos tend to form tight-knit communities with high levels of intra-community communication. They share stories about their struggles and successes in adjusting to their new surroundings and lives. They develop confidence in the opinions of fellow Latinos. If the stories shared are of bad experiences, they develop strong negative stereotypes that are nearly impossible to negate.

This is often the case with impressions of traditional child care in the Latino community. One mother reported a number of stories she had heard from her friends about daycare centers that mistreat and neglect children. She explained that she was afraid of what they would do to her children and simply did not trust strangers to take care of them. Moreover, she believed that they would be particularly neglectful of her children because they were Latino. She concluded that she would rather her children be cared for by a family member, friend or herself than by a stranger.

Other parents explained that they wanted to observe their children at the site in order to feel more assured that their child was well cared for and safe. A few reported that many centers would not permit parents to sit in on activities. This further convinced already skeptical parents that there was a reason to be distrustful. The tight-knit nature of the Latino community and the limited contact between daycare service providers and parents presents a serious threat in this case. If daycare providers cannot contradict the negative stories parents hear, they will continue to hold onto these beliefs. Without breaking down these feelings of distrust, Latino parents may never feel comfortable using early education services, thereby putting their children at a serious disadvantage later on in school.

Additionally, child care is in many ways culturally incompatible. Many Latino mothers explained that in their home countries it is usually assumed that the mother, other relatives or close friends will care for a child. The concept of leaving a child with a stranger for long periods of time seemed foreign to many them. This makes the concept of child care a particularly difficult cultural norm for Latino parents to adjust to.

Information

Lack of information may be the biggest obstacle for Latino parents in Durham. There are two distinct components to the information issue: collaboration and distribution. Both parents and community partners need to collaborate and communicate with one another more effectively. Second, fliers, forms and documents need to be distributed and displayed more prominently.

Parents are great resources for one another, but without an opportunity to come together and share their knowledge, information is not shared. Without these venues, valuable mentoring opportunities are forfeited, and parents miss out on available and helpful services and programs that could benefit their children. In one focus group, a well-informed and experienced mother explained the benefits of Head Start to three expecting mothers who had never heard about the program and had not yet considered early education programs for their children.

Collaboration is equally important among community partners. In one faith-based organization, although the church had no Latino congregants, the Pastor planned on spending up to \$3.6 million on a project to target and serve the neighboring Latino community. If this organization could collaborate with existing programs that are inundated with Latinos but often lacking in resources, they could combine their strengths to better serve the target population.

Besides communication by word of mouth, it is also critical to distribute information through fliers and pamphlets. Many mothers reported feeling overwhelmed and confused by the options. Others said that they felt uninformed and cut-off; they did not know how to access the type of information they needed. Almost all the parents and community partners interviewed pointed to lack of clear and visible information as a major barrier in accessing early childhood education.

Transportation

There are multiple reasons for lack of transportation in the Latino community. The first is that many of the Latino community cannot afford a car; therefore, they rely on public transportation to convey them where they need to go. This problem is made more difficult when a mother is traveling with her children while her husband is at work.

The second reason for lack of transportation is that many of the Latino community are unable to obtain driver's licenses because they are in the country without proper documentation; they are left in the same situation as those who cannot afford a car, relying on public transportation or transportation provided by individual programs.

The third reason identified through the interview process is isolation. Many Latino women are isolated, having little access to any kind of transportation. One of the community partners interviewed told a story about a mother who refused to leave her house with her children when she was alone; her husband had told her that someone would take the children while they were out. She lived in fear something would happen to her children if she tried to do anything outside the home during the day because she never ventured outside the home with the children without her husband.

Language

Another barrier to child care in the Latino community is language. Most of the information available about child care, including that given by child care centers, is only available in English. Although most child care facilities have at least one bilingual staff member, the information about child care and the information sent home with the children are primarily in English. Many Latino parents are attempting to learn English, however, is it a lot more difficult to read English as a second language than it is to hear it; therefore, many parents do not realize the opportunities available for their children and themselves. Latino parents do not find the material helpful and instead may find it confusing.

As a result, the Latino parents do not understand what is occurring at the child care center, adding to the feelings of distrust and uneasiness; they are unable to take an active interest in their child's learning process.

Cultural Sensitivity

Based on past experiences and word of mouth, there is a fear of racism and prejudice of which many in the focus groups spoke. This in itself makes it difficult for parents to enroll their children in child care as they fear the same type of racism will be expressed to their children.

Differing Beliefs about Early Care and Education



Through interviews and focus groups, it was discovered that the Latino parent population is essentially divided into two groups: those who are interested in traditional child care and those who are not. Those who are interested in traditional child care are a much smaller group, comprising approximately one-sixth of the Latino population.

The other much larger group, not interested in traditional programs, carries the prevailing sentiment that if child care can remain at home, then there is no reason to go outside of the home network.

In order to most effectively increase school readiness, the following recommendations came from the data collected and are based on the distinct needs of these two groups.

Those Interested in Child Care

There are a number of Latino families who are interested in child care. Unfortunately, there are a number of serious barriers that stand in the way of accessing adequate child care services and improving school readiness for this particular population. The recommendations below address each barrier and propose ways to break down these barriers to allow better access to child care for those who need it.

Cost

- Secure funding for more subsidies and financial aid.
- Disseminate information about potential subsidy programs and clearly outline the restrictions and application process for each of these in both English and Spanish.

Distrust

- Invite all parents to join pre-school classes for lunch or a group activity to raise the parents' comfort level and provide Spanish translation.
- Reach out and form personal contacts with the parents early on. Provide introductory seminars or "meet-and-greet" programs for parents to better understand the general benefits of early education and the specific activities their child will engage in. Use translators if lacking bi-lingual staff.

Information

- Compile a packet or directory of available early child care education programs. In it, include in Spanish the forms and documents necessary to apply for each of these programs.
- Distribute information to the places most frequented by Latino parents.

Connecting to Organizations

- **Faith-based Organizations**
Religion plays a major role in the Latino community, which makes churches an especially effective avenue for distributing information. Almost every parent we interviewed said that they went to church on a regular basis and identified the faith-based community as one of the main ways they currently accessed information.
- **Community Centers**
Upon entering the country, most Latino immigrants find one organization they can trust and continue to rely on this one location. They are often unwilling to try new options or shift their allegiance. Because of this, community centers are high traffic locations where information can be spread.
- **Healthcare Clinics**
Two mothers suggested that because every pregnant woman has to go to the gynecologist, a wider range of Latino women could be reached by posting information in doctor's offices and clinics.

Establish a forum for government organizations, faith-based organizations and community centers to share information about their best programs and most effective methods of targeting the Latino community.

Transportation

- Implement a voucher system for public transportation to help parents afford daily transport.
- Create a program which supplies vans or buses to bring Latino mothers and their children directly from their homes to the child care centers.
- Increase information available about child care providers located in Latino neighborhoods to parents to identify the most convenient one. One mother reported that if she could find a child care center within walking distance of her home, transportation would not be a problem.

Language

- Require (or subsidize) child care providers to hire at least one bilingual employee and encourage other staff members to take Spanish classes through community or technical colleges.
- Require that all materials be properly translated and distributed to Latino parents to prevent parents from feeling lost and to encourage maximum levels of involvement in their child's education.
- Advocate for a better understanding of how children learn and develop a first and second language. Teach techniques specifically tailored for bilingual education.
- Increase availability of translation and interpretation services for child care providers.

Cultural Sensitivity

- Offer programs and presentations for teachers and parents to raise awareness of cultural, racial and class prejudices that can be detrimental for Latino children. Include in this a basic overview of the cultural norms and specific needs of Latino children and their families.
- Advocate for funding for further research on the Durham Latino community and on the specific cultural issues that need to be addressed.



Those Not Interested in Traditional Child Care



For the second group identified, those not currently interested in using child care programs, there are two ways in which children can be exposed to structure, a learning environment and the English language.

Half Day Programs

The first option that discussed with Latino Participants was the option of a half day program—a part time daycare program, which would run in the mornings. Enrolled mothers would be able to drop off their children a couple times a week for a few hours at a time throughout the morning. This way, separation anxiety would be minimal while the children were exposed a few hours a week to a structured, learning environment. Also, the mothers also could transition into allowing their children to be exposed to new environments independent of familial or parent supervision.

Play Groups

Afternoon or weekend playgroups would allow both working mothers who use friend, family and neighbor care (FFN) and stay at home mothers to participate, along with English speaking mothers. This way, both parents and children can learn from each other while interacting. Additionally, mothers would be able to watch their children (a major concern for many mothers) and speak with each other.

Recommendations: Overall Improvements Needed

While the specific suggestions above are crucial, many fall under two broad categories of needed improvements: funding and collaboration and communication.

Funding

North Carolina spends almost \$204 million through Smart Start statewide each year. Although these programs are working well, the total funding allocated to the Latino community in Durham County is insufficient. Non-state organizations initiate collaborative efforts to address and resolve this lack of funding. For those families that are fortunate enough to both qualify for and be accepted to More at Four, the children receive excellent preparation for kindergarten. However, the illegal community, for instance, has no access to subsidy funds; even many legal families are not fortunate enough to partake in More at Four. Rather than highlighting the good fortune of those who do participate in More at Four, we need to focus on the vast majority of pre-school children who do not.

Collaboration and Communication

One of the most glaring problems encountered in our research was a severe lack of collaboration amongst community organizations. A previously mentioned anecdote highlights this problem. The pastor of St. Paul's Lutheran Church of Durham has several million dollars on hand, which the church intends to use to branch out to the Latino community. Although the church is located in a major Latino area of Durham, the church has no Latino congregants and has had a limited amount of communication with other faith-based organizations in the area that have extensive experience.

In this type of situation, communication and collaboration could lead to resource brokering and information sharing that is useful to all parties involved.

Communication between other community organizations has also been very limited. The two main organizations serving the Latino community, El Centro Hispano and Welcome Baby, do not traditionally work together and deal with separate groups of people. The amount that could be learned from talking to each other, to the faith-based organizations in the community and to other organizations trying to address school readiness (Durham Public Education Network, Durham's Partnership for Children) is immense.

A third area of communication is between Latino parents. In one focus group held, a few of the Latino mothers spoke up at first. After nearly a half hour had passed, one expecting mother addressed a question to another woman who had until that point not spoken. Once she had been included in the conversation, she started opening up and had a wealth of knowledge about services that she had utilized when raising her young children. The mothers learned information that would surely change the course of their children's lives. Because Latino families have a cultural tendency to interact only with family and neighbors, they have a limited network from which they can learn information about child care.

Ultimately, it is clear that many of the right programs exist, great challenges impede improvements and much more funding is needed.

Works Cited

Collins, Ray and Angela Willson-Quayle. "Hispanics and Child Care: The Changing Landscape." September 2004.

"King County Child Care Program: Latino Needs Assessment." Department of Community and Human Services. <<http://www.metrokc.gov/dchs/CSD/ChildCare/LatinoNeedsEG.htm>>.

"Hispanic Children Gain an Academic Edge When Their Education Starts Early." Para Nuestros Niños: National Task Force on Early Childhood Education for Hispanics. March 8, 2007. <<http://www.swiftpage4.com/TaskForce.Amara/C070301161800/BIO/text.pdf>>.

"Immaculata Faith Based Initiative." Immaculata Conception Catholic Church.

"Investing in Our Young Children: 2005-2006 Annual Report." Durham's Partnership for Children. 2005-2006.

"Profile for North Carolina." The Annie E. Casey Foundation. <http://www.kidscount.org/cgi-bin/cliks.cgi?action=profile_results&subset=NC#6>.

"Raleigh-Durham-Chapel Hill: Summary Profile." Metropolitan Quality of Life Data. <<http://diversitydata.sph.harvard.edu/profiles.jsp?ma=6640>>.

Schulman, Karen and Helen Blank. "Close to Home: State Strategies to Strengthen and Support Family, Friend, and Neighbor Care." National Women's Law Center. February 2007.

"Steps to the Future: Ten-Year Impact Study of Smart Start in Durham County, North Carolina." Durham's Partnership for Children. February 2005.

"The Caring Community Study: New Data on Child Care and Child Rearing in Durham County." Durham's Partnership for Children. Fall 2006.

"Wisconsin Five-County Latino Needs Assessment Project: A Summary Report." UW Extension. Spring 2003.



Acknowledgements

Durham's Partnership for Children would like to thank Duke University students, Ashley Arana, Sarah Fennell and Taylor Jacobson for conducting the focus groups, collecting research data and writing this report.

Durham's Partnership for Children would also like to thank the the numerous Latino families who were interviewed for this report. The organization appreciates their open and honest answers and their recommendations for making child care more accessible to Durham's Latino community.

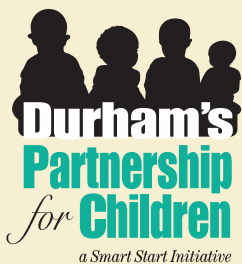
The organization also recognizes the good work of many nonprofit organizations that support Latino families with young children across Durham County in the areas of early care and education, family support, health and early intervention.

Editors: Marsha Basloe, Executive Director Durham's Partnership for Children

Karine Stallings, Community Development Coordinator

Tina Register, Administrative Assistant

Graphic Design: Karine Stallings



Durham's Partnership for Children
1201 S. Briggs Ave
Suite 210
Durham, NC 27703

919.403.6960
919.403.6063 fax
mail@dpfc.net
www.dpfc.net