



## **The Facts on Latinos and Early Childhood Education in the U.S. and Illinois**

### **U.S.**

- Population projections estimate the overall Latino population in the U.S. grew by 28% between 2000 and 2006.
- Latino children represent the fastest growing segment of the U.S. child population. Over 97% of Latino children under the age of two are U.S. citizens.
- 67% of Latino children under the age of three belong to families with incomes 200% below the poverty threshold compared to 39% of White families with same-age-children.
- A 2007 report by the National Task Force on Early Childhood Education for Hispanics indicates that Latino children enter kindergarten significantly behind White children in early literacy skills such as recognizing letters and understanding beginning sounds of words.
- The same study finds that by fifth grade, Latino children continue to lag behind White children in important reading comprehension skills.
- According to the National Task Force on Early Childhood Education for Hispanics the educational benefits to enrolling children in preschool programs are: higher academic achievement in school; lower special education referral rates; higher rates of high school graduation; higher rates of college attendance; and long-run cost-effectiveness.

### **Illinois**

- Census 2000 data show only 35.6% of eligible Illinois Latino children participate in preschool which is far below the state average of 52.5% for other children.
- Since 2002, state policymakers have increased funding by \$135 million to provide quality early childhood care and education programs for three- and four-year-old children.
- In 2007, child care center enrollment capacities in Cook County (by zip code) indicate that there are only 2.4 child care centers operating per 1,000 Latino children under the age of five.
- Top reasons cited for low attendance and enrollment rates of Latinos in preschool were: parents' lack of knowledge about program availability in their community; inability to afford preschool; and inadequate preschool capacity to meet demand in Latino communities.
- In Chicago, more than 6,000 Latino children are on waiting lists because Chicago Public Schools are too overcrowded to offer preschool services.
- The Illinois Facilities Fund has identified ten mid- to large-sized municipalities as most in need of early childhood education services. Six had very large and growing Latino populations, including Cicero, Berwyn, Aurora, Elgin, Waukegan, and Chicago.