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Contact: Sara McElmurry, Communications Coordinator
312-351-3890 • smcelmurry@latinopolicyforum.org



phone 312-376-1766
fax 312-376-1760
web latinopolicyforum.org
20 E. Jackson Blvd., Suite 1550
Chicago, IL 60604

**For-Latinos, By-Latinos Parent Program ‘Opens Doors’ in Metro Chicago
*Curriculum teaches Latino parents to be their child’s first teacher***

Chicago – November 8, 2010 – Parents are their children’s first teachers and their home is their children’s first school. Research shows that parents’ involvement in children’s preschool years has profound effects not only on academic outcomes during formal schooling, but also on their learning potential throughout life. Equipping local Latino parents with tools to build solid academic foundations for their children, the Latino Policy Forum recently announced the first cohort of an *Abriendo Puertas* (Opening Doors) program.

“Empowering parents, more than any other factor, reaps immeasurable benefits for children,” said Sylvia Puente, executive director of the Latino Policy Forum. “In Latino communities, where too many children are already cognitively behind their peers before setting foot in kindergarten, work to level the educational playing field begins at that child’s first school: their home.”

With support from the J.B. and M.K. Pritzker Family Foundation, the Latino Policy Forum will convene a “train-the-trainer” program in December 2010, training representatives from 10 Latino-serving early care and education organizations to in turn deliver the program to 20 Spanish-speaking parents at each of their sites. Program implementation will run throughout 2011. In its first year offering *Abriendo Puertas* in Metro Chicago, the Latino Policy Forum expects to reach 200 parents.

Abriendo Puertas is an evidence-based parent leadership program for primarily Spanish-speaking parents of children 0-5 years old. The interactive curriculum focuses on cultural values, key strengths, and experiences of Latino families. This “for-Latinos-by-Latinos” curriculum was developed in partnership with Latino parents, researchers, and program specialists. The “train-the-trainer” model will teach facilitators to use culturally-relevant activities to develop parent leadership.

Participating organizations receive the facilitator training free of charge, along with a stipend to implement *Abriendo Puertas* at their program sites. Participating organizations include Casa Central, Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese Chicago, Federación de Clubes Michoacanos en Illinois, Centro San Bonifacio, El Hogar del Niño, Family Focus, Logan Square Neighborhood Association, Mount Sinai Hospital’s Child and Adolescent Behavior Program, Nathaniel Hawthorne Early Childhood School at Community Consolidated School District 21, and YWCA Lake County.

About the Latino Policy Forum

The Latino Policy Forum is the only organization in the Chicago area that facilitates the involvement of Latinos at all levels of public decision-making. The Forum strives to improve education outcomes, advocate for affordable housing, promote just immigration policies, and engage diverse sectors of the community. It does this by conducting analysis to inform, influence and lead, all with an understanding that advancing Latinos advances a shared future. For more information, visit www.latinopolicyforum.org.

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