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Contact: Sara McElmurry, Communications Manager
312-351-3890 ▪ smcelmurry@latinopolicyforum.org



**Program to Train 500-Plus Local Latino Parents,
Improve Latino Academic Outcomes and Graduation Rates**

For-Latinos, By-Latinos “Abriendo Puertas” Program Launches Second Year in Metro Chicago, Training Latino Parents to be Child’s First Teacher

Chicago – December 6, 2011 – As three in every five new entrants to Metro Chicago’s labor force was Latino over the last decade, improving their academic outcomes is critical to ensure the region’s future economic vitality. Building on research that demonstrates the profound effect that parents’ involvement in a child’s preschool years has on future academic success, the Latino Policy Forum launches the second year of its *Abriendo Puertas* (“Opening Doors”) program in Chicago, with the ambitious goal of equipping a total of 540 local Latino parents with the tools to build solid academic foundations for their children.

“One-in-four Illinois children under the age of 5 is Latino. The overwhelming majority of these kids—90 percent—are US-born. But their parents are likely immigrants, unfamiliar with the local educational system,” said Sylvia Puente, executive director of the Latino Policy Forum. “The time to prepare these children and to help their parents lay that first academic foundation is now. As a region, we need these children to excel in school and to finish college.”

Abriendo Puertas is an evidence-based parent leadership program designed primarily for Spanish-speaking parents of newborns to children up to 5 years old. The interactive curriculum focuses on cultural values, key strengths, and experiences of Latino families. The “for-Latinos-by-Latinos” curriculum was developed in partnership with Latino parents, researchers, and program specialists. First implemented in Metro Chicago in 2010, *Abriendo Puertas*’ first year successes in the region include:

- *Improved confidence in fostering early language development:* Before the program, 13 percent of parents lacked confidence in their ability to help their child learn language. After the program, almost all (97 percent) felt self-assured in their role of stimulating language learning.
- *Increased knowledge about school expectations:* At the start of the program, 18 percent of parents claimed to know “little” or “nothing” about school expectations versus 74 percent at the program’s end.
- *Confidence in educating children before formal schooling:* At the program’s end, almost all of participants (98.5 percent) felt confident teaching their children basic skills for kindergarten, such as counting, and learning colors or letters.

With support from the Pritzker Children’s Initiative and the McCormick Foundation, Latino Policy Forum recently convened a “train-the-trainer” program, training representatives from 17 Latino-serving organizations to in turn deliver the program to Spanish-speaking parents at each of their sites. Building on the program’s success in training nearly 200 parents in the first cohort, the organization hopes to reach an additional 340 parents in its second year, for a total of over 500. The second year of *Abriendo Puertas* runs through 2012.

Abriendo Puertas Program Second Year//2

Participating organizations receive the facilitator training free of charge, along with a stipend to implement *Abriendo Puertas* at their program sites. Organizations from the inaugural program include Casa Central, Casa Michoacán, Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese Chicago, Centro San Bonifacio, El Hogar del Niño, Family Focus, Logan Square Neighborhood Association, Mount Sinai Hospital's Child and Adolescent Behavior Program, and the YWCA of Lake County. New participants include Carole Robertson Center for Learning, Erie Neighborhood House, Gads Hill Center, National Museum of Mexican Art, Onward Neighborhood House, Prairie Oak School (with support from the Chicago School of Psychology), Through A Child's Eyes, and West Chicago Elementary School District 33.

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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