

## Fact Sheet

### Services for Latino Children and Families

#### Demographic Profile of Mexican Immigrant Families

- *The majority of all Latinos in Oregon are of Mexican origin. About half of the Mexican population is foreign-born but with the other half being born in the United States. Most Mexican immigrants have less than 9<sup>th</sup> grade education, and they have limited English proficiency. Most recent immigrants live in two-parent families.*
- *Although men and women both have high rates of labor force participation, they are employed in low-wage jobs that do not provide health insurance. Almost half of all Latino adults live in food-insecure households (meaning that they have had limited or uncertain availability of nutritional food during the past year). Despite these challenges, Latinos in Oregon earned enough income to pay more taxes than they have used in public services.*
- *In a political climate increasingly hostile towards Latinos, they experience discrimination, a special type of stressful life experience that produces negative health outcomes and increases risk of disease. In a study of Latinos in Salem and Independence, about one-third reported stress due to negative comments about their language, their hair, their skin color, or their social status.*

#### Acculturation

- *Immigrants attempt to deal with discrimination by eagerly embracing life in the U.S. As time passes, the difference in cultural adaptation or “acculturation gap” between parents and children tends to widen. Such gaps make it more difficult to use traditional parenting techniques. Unacculturated parents respond by reducing support, communication, and monitoring with their teens, a response that increases peer influence and can be the origin of problem behavior.*
- *Monolingual parents rely on their bilingual children for help. These children become “language brokers” to translate and interpret for their parents on important occasions (healthcare visits, bank transactions, parent-teacher conferences). This role reversal may lead to parental disempowerment and serious effects on the families.*

#### Education

- *Many Oregon schools are now contending with institutional barriers that prevent the success of Latino students. A study of Oregon’s middle school students enrolled in English as a Second Language programs showed high levels of anxiety and alienation from school counselors, teachers, and classmates. There is also a lack of adequate procedures to identify gifted and talented students in ESL programs.*
- *The drop-out rate of Latino students continues to be very high in Oregon—although it improved in recent years. Low-academic performance is alarming because it correlates with a host of negative behaviors.*
- *Higher levels of academic and institutional barriers, dissatisfaction with school resources, and feeling unwelcome at school all correlate with unsuccessful academic performance. However, positive family support (cohesion, frequent interaction, reciprocity, pride, and respect) can offset those negative effects. Even small improvements in boosting parenting effectiveness and deterring youth behavioral problems can be critical in preventing serious outcomes among youth who are immersed in competing demands.*