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## Study lists challenges to nonprofit organizations to serve Latinos better

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A new study recommends nonprofits have more bilingual and bicultural employees to serve the growing Latino population.

The study released this week identifies gaps where funding was needed to serve the Latino population in the Chicago metropolitan area. In Lake County the Latino population has more than tripled from 38,570 in 1990 to 125,908 in 2005.

The organizations that authored the study, IFF and Heartland Alliance in Chicago, held focus groups in four growing Latino communities in Round Lake Beach, Chicago, Woodstock and Aurora with Latino leaders and organizations.

Language is a barrier for Spanish-speakers seeking services, according to the study, especially in mental health and health fields. It is estimated that for every 10 clients that seek services from a nonprofit in the Chicago metropolitan area, three will be Latino and one of the three will not speak English well.

The study also found undocumented parents often don't seek services for their U.S.-born children, fearing disclosure of their own immigration status. Other barriers mentioned in the study include transportation limitations and working adults having limited access to services during the day.

The study recommends nonprofits focus planning services for Latino children from preschool through postsecondary education, addressing issues such as teen pregnancy and dropout rates.

Carolina Duque, director of Mano a Mano Family Resource Center in Round Lake Park, participated in one of the focus groups and said looking for funding to maintain programs is her biggest concern. She also said language, literacy levels and transportation are other barriers for new immigrants getting the services they need.

"You can give them materials in Spanish but they might not be able to read well," she said. "The problem of transportation means there might be programs but they don't have a way to move around to get to programs."



