

# Casa Latinos Unidos de Benton County

*Promoting Family Well-Being*



## EDUCATIONAL ASSESSMENT

Improving Educational Equity for Latinos:  
A formative evaluation among parents, students, and educators in  
the Corvallis School District.

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# Casa Latinos Unidos

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## Summary

Latinos are the fastest growing minority population in the United States. In Oregon, Latinos account for 12% of the population and in 2010, Latinos accounted for 6.4% of the population of Benton County (7.4% for the city of Corvallis). In spite of the federal guarantee of access to K-12 education, Latino students still experience a dropout rate that is substantially higher than white non-Hispanic youth. A recent report by the Oregon Department of Education found that Latinos in Corvallis have a high school graduation rate of 56.9%. Also, Latino students in Benton County have much higher than average rate of harassment related to race/ethnic origin than the county and state averages. In addition, Latino students are more likely to live in poverty. Latino families have a median household income that is 17% lower than the national median income for Latino households, and 33% lower than the Benton County median household income.

Using a mixed-methods approach, Casa Latinos Unidos de Benton County (CLUBC), in consultation with the Corvallis School District, conducted a formative evaluation of educational expectations, experiences, and future directions among Latino parents, students, and educators in Corvallis.

Between April and August 2012, six focus groups and one community forum with Latino parents (44 participants), two focus groups with middle and high school Latino students (15 participants), and eight key-informant interviews with local educators and administrators were conducted.

Results indicate that parents, students, and key informants believe that while Corvallis is a relatively good place to live for Latino families, many Latino families experience challenges such as discrimination, fear of deportation, and struggle with the high cost of living in Corvallis. When asked about their experiences with the Corvallis schools, parents and students had a mix of positive and negative experiences. Parents acknowledged the importance and benefits of the Dual Language Immersion program; and value the bilingual/bicultural services provided in Lincoln and Garfield schools. However, parents, students, and key informants expressed the need to expand bilingual/bicultural services and resources beyond Lincoln and Garfield schools. Key issues affecting Latino families are immigration status, inability to obtain driver licenses, and economic instability, which can have life-changing consequences. Parents and key informants identified current organizations such as CLUBC, Benton County Health Department, 4-H, as well as workshops at Garfield and Lincoln as key resources for Latino families.

In this context, additional resources and services such as affordable preschool and after school programs, the ability to obtain driver licenses, the expansion of bilingual/bicultural infrastructure, and establishing a “welcome center” have the potential for improving the experiences of Latino families in both the schools and the broader Corvallis community.

## 1. Introduction

According to the 2010 U.S. Census, Latinos comprise 12% of Oregon's total population, an increase of 63.5% since 2000. In 2010, 5,467 Latinos accounted for 6.4% of the population of Benton County (7.4% for the city of Corvallis). U.S. Census data show that the Latino population in Benton County grew by 50% between 2000 and 2010, and is anticipated to grow by an additional 185% over the next decade. According to Corvallis Community Action Agency, the median household income in Benton County in 2000 was \$41,897, slightly below the national and state levels. The median household income for Latinos was just \$27,857, 17% lower than the national median income for Latino households, and 33% lower than the Benton County median household income.

Federal regulations guarantee access to K-12 education for all children, regardless of their immigration status. Children of immigrants are among the fastest growing segment of enrolled students posing both opportunities and challenges for the public school system. Figure 1 shows the dropout rates for students in grade 9 through 12 by race/ethnicity in Oregon. Although the dropout rate of Latino students has decreased substantially in recent years, it remains higher than that of white non-Hispanic youth. This is a loss not only for the students and their families, but for also for their communities. In order to encourage school achievement, educators should consider other concomitant factors for academic success such as household socioeconomic status, family structure, and acculturation (Martinez, DeGarmo et al. 2004; DeGarmo and Martinez 2006; Portes and Fernandez-Kelly 2008).

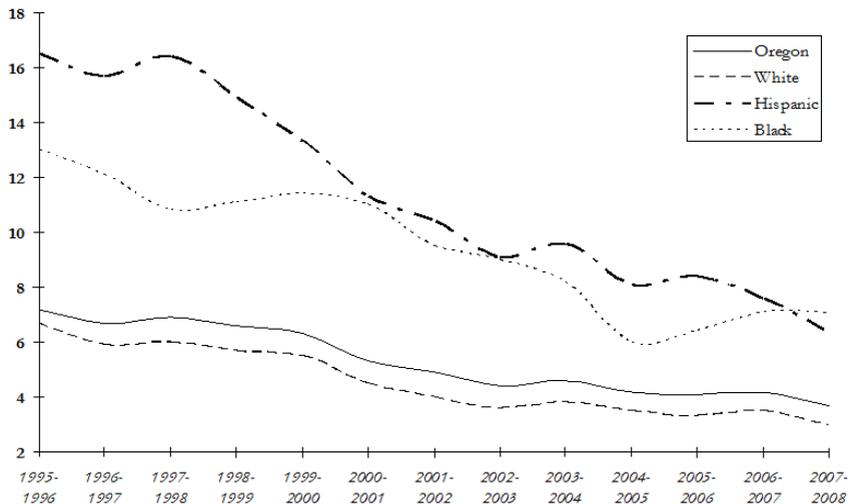
Nationwide, two-thirds of children with undocumented parents (about 3 million) are U.S.-born citizens who live in mixed-status families (Fix and Zimmermann 1999). Each year about 65,000 undocumented students graduate from high school in the United States. But many of these students are unable to attend college <sup>1</sup>. Although foreign-born youth may be at a slight disadvantage due to limited English skills, the commitment of immigrant parents to support their children's educational achievement mitigates this effect in second generation youth (Kao and Tienda 2005).

Eleven states, including Washington and California but not Oregon <sup>2</sup>, have approved legislation to ensure that undocumented children have access to higher education. Although the specific provisions vary by state, they generally allow undocumented students to pay in-state tuition at public institutions of higher education.

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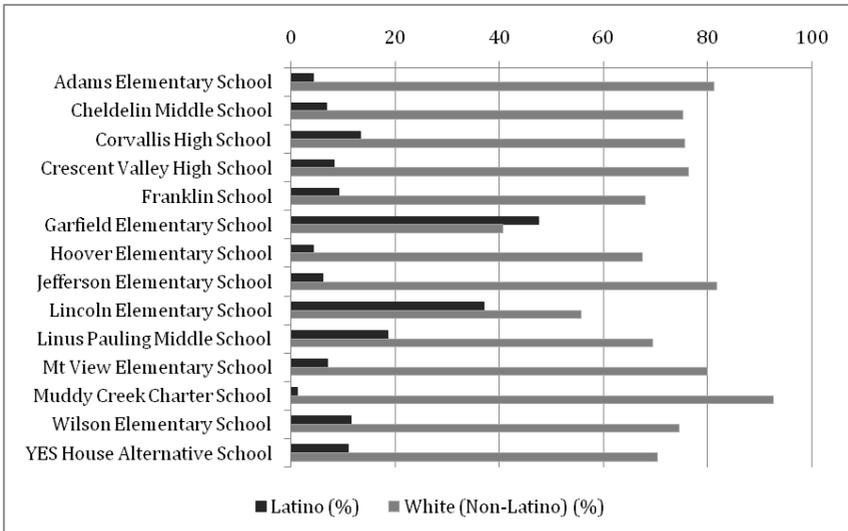


**Figure 1: Dropout rates (%) in Oregon, Department of Education, 1995-2008**

Oregon has achieved important successes in closing the educational gap between low income or minority students and their peers. In the 2008-09, Oregon's dropout rate reached an historical low of 3.4% with the greatest decreases occurring among Latino and Native American students. However, Oregon's African American, Latino, and Native American students still have higher dropout rates and lower graduation rates than their White or Asian peers. A recent report by the Oregon Department of Education found that Latinos in Corvallis have a high school graduation rate of 56.9%.

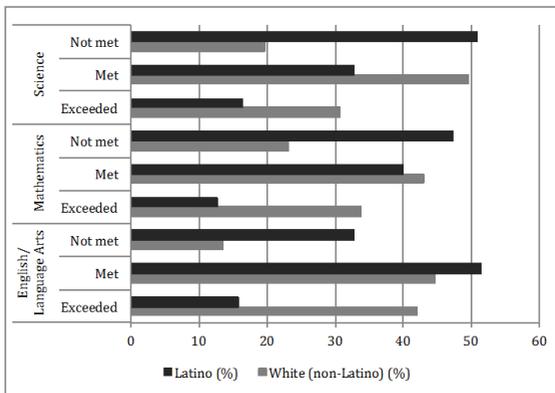
According to the Department of Education, 21% of students enrolled in k-12 schools in Oregon are Latinos. While lower in the Corvallis School District overall (14%), there are a number of schools with sizable Latino populations: 13% at Corvallis High School, 19% at Linus Pauling Middle School, 37% at Lincoln Elementary School, and 48% at Garfield Elementary School. Figure 2 shows the percentage of Latino and White (non-Latino) students across the Corvallis School District.

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**Figure 2. Latino and White (non-Latino) enrollment in the Corvallis School District, 2012.**

Figure 3 shows the results from the recent statewide assessment (2011-2012 Report Card). Compared with White (non-Latino) students, with the exception of English/Language Arts, twice as many Latino students in grades 3-8 and 11 in the Corvallis School District did not meet state standards in Science (51% vs. 20%), Mathematics (47% vs. 23%),



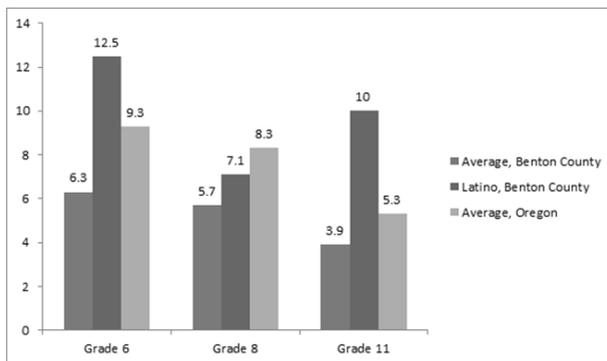
**Figure 3. Latino and White (non-Latino) students in grades 3-8 and 11 that did not meet, met, or exceeded state standards, Corvallis School District, 2011-2012 Assessment.**

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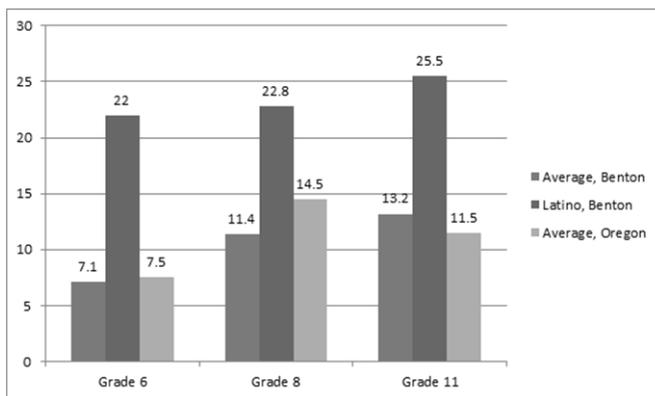
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Data from the 2007-2009 Oregon Student Wellness Surveys (SWS) show that on average <sup>3</sup>, a higher percentage of Latino students enrolled in 6th, 8th and 11th grades in Benton County missed school one or more times in the previous 30 days because they felt unsafe at school or on their way to or from school, compared to the county and state averages (Figure 4).



**Figure 4. Benton County students missing school, due to feeling unsafe, Student Wellness Survey, 2007-2009.**

Even more concerning, Figure 5 shows that Latino students in Benton County have much higher rates of harassment **related to race/ethnic origin** at school or on the way to or from school during the previous 30 days, than both county and state averages across 6th, 8th, and 11th grades.



**Figure 5. Benton County students experiencing race/ethnicity related harassment, Student Wellness Survey, 2007-2009.**

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Using a mixed-methods approach, Casa Latinos Unidos de Benton County (CLUBC), in consultation with the Corvallis School District, conducted a formative evaluation of educational expectations, experiences, and future directions among Latino parents, students, and educators in Corvallis. The present report summarizes the main findings of this evaluation and provides recommendations for improving educational equity for Latinos in the Corvallis School District.

### **2. Evaluation Design and Methods**

Between April 2012 and August 2012, Casa Latinos Unidos de Benton County conducted six focus groups and one community forum with Latino parents, two focus groups with middle and high school Latino students, and eight key informant interviews with local educators and administrators. In addition, a survey was conducted after each focus group/community forum to gather anonymous socio-demographic information from Latino parents and students. The focus groups, community forum, and key informant interviews asked similar questions (with small changes depending on the subgroup, e.g. Latino youth, adults) in five topic areas: 1) Latino families' experiences living in Corvallis; 2) parent experiences with the Corvallis schools; 3) Basic needs that interfere with the academic success of Latino students; 4) Existing resources in the schools and Corvallis community; and 5) Current needs to improve the academic achievement and school experiences of Latino families.

The questions asked during the focus groups and community forums were designed to document the experiences of Latino families living in Corvallis including their experiences with the schools, basic needs, resources, and current needs. The key informant interviews focused on the same topics as the parent and student focus groups and community forums. Appendices 1-3 show the community forum/focus groups, and key informant interview guides. For community forum and focus group participants, a survey was developed (see Appendix 4), that included questions about demographic, and socio-economic characteristics. Questions about acculturation (Marin, Sabogal et al. 1987), discrimination (Krieger, Smith et al. 2005), fear of deportation, and access to social programs were included.

The instruments were pre-tested and further revisions were made to enhance validity and cultural appropriateness. The instruments were translated into Spanish by a bilingual project team member, and back-translated to ensure consistency (Michael, Farquhar et al. 2008). Upon conducting the assessment, the information was transcribed and analyzed in its original language (Spanish or English) by two members of the research team using focused coding methods (Salazar, Crosby et al. 2006). Only the final codes and quotes were translated, as needed, from Spanish to English.

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**Table 1. Socio-Demographic Profile of Latino Parents, Educational Equity among Latinos in Corvallis, May-August 2012 (n=47).**

	<i>Mean (SD)</i>	<i>n (%)</i>	<i>Number of respondents n (%)*</i>
Age (years)	35.4(6.5)		43(91)
Female		32(70)	46(98)
Education level (years)	10.4(4.3)		43(91)
Marital Status			43(91)
Married		38(88)	
Single		5(12)	
Children under the age of 18	2.0(1.2)		44(94)
Children in school	1.5(1.1)		44(94)
Type of housing			42(89)
House		17(40)	
Apartment		23(55)	
Mobile home		2(5)	
Number of residents per household	4.0(1.0)		44(94)
Country of origin			
Mexico		40(85)	
United States		3(6)	
Other		4(8)	
Years living in the U.S.	15.4(7.4)		
During my childhood I lived:			44(94)
Only/primarily in Latin America		34(77)	
In Latin America and the U.S. equally		5(11)	
Only/primarily in the U.S.		5(11)	
Acculturation			46(98)
Less acculturated		40(87)	
More acculturated		6(13)	
Having fear of deportation			46(98)
Yes		41(89)	
No		5(11)	
Response to unfair treatment (discrimination)			44(94)
Engaged		34(77)	
Moderate		8(18)	
Passive		2(5)	
Experience discrimination		30(67)	45(96)
Getting services in a store or restaurant		20(44)	
On the street or in a public setting		19(42)	
At school		14(31)	
Getting hired or getting a job		11(24)	
At work		16(36)	
Getting medical care		10(22)	
Getting housing		8(18)	
Getting credit, bank loans, or a mortgage		6(14)	
From the police or in the courts		6(14)	

\* Indicated when number of respondents is smaller than the full sample (n=47).

## 3.Results

### 3.1. Demographic Survey

All parent participants (n=47) completed the demographic survey. A summary of the demographic data is presented on Table 1. The average age was 35 years and 70% of participants (n=32) were female. On average, participants have 10.4 years of schooling. The majority of the participants are married (88%), live in an apartment (55%), have an average of 2 children under the age of 18, and have an average of 1.5 children enrolled in the Corvallis School District. The majority of participants have an average of 15 years living in the United States; were originally from Mexico (85%); and only/primarily lived in the Latin America during their childhood (77%). Parents show a low level of acculturation (87%), and most expressed fear of deportation (89%). Even though more than half of respondents (77%) actively respond to unfair treatment (try to do something/talk to other people about it) they experienced discrimination. Participants experienced discrimination primarily when getting services at a store or restaurant (44%), on the street or in a public setting (42%), at school (31%), getting hired (24%), at work (22%), getting medical care (22%), and getting housing (18%).

Parents also participate in training and social services programs. A summary of the participation in social programs is presented in Table 2. Some of the parents participated in training programs, such as English, ESL (44%), job training (29%), GED (29%), and citizenship classes (12%), but 29% of the parents did not participate in any training programs. Parents also utilized social programs, such as free or reduced price school meals (52%), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) (24%), Medicaid/Oregon Health Plan (OHP) (55%), Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) (40%), as well as others services (24%), which included Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), disability insurance, unemployment insurance, social security, low income housing, general assistance/welfare, and legal services. Twenty-one percent of the parents did not utilize any of the social programs previously listed.

In addition to demographic data and information regarding participation in social programs, data was also collected on parents' property ownership in and outside of the United States (see Table 2). In the United States, 34% of parents own a house or a car/truck (47%). Few own a business (5%), a mobile home (5%), or a plot of land (2%). Thirty-five percent of participants do not own any property in the United States. Outside the United States 28% of participants own a plot of land, or a house (19%) and a few own a car/truck (11%), or other types of property (2%). Forty-two percent of participants do not own property abroad.

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**Table 2. Social Programs Participation and Property Ownership among Latino Families, Educational Equity among Latinos in Corvallis, May-August 2012 (n=47).**

	<i>n (%)</i>	<i>Number of respondents n (%)*</i>
Training Programs		41(87)
English, ESL	18(44)	
Job Training	12(29)	
GED	12(29)	
Citizenship classes	5(12)	
None	12(29)	
Social Programs		42(89)
Free or reduce price school meals	22(52)	
SNAP	10(24)	
Medicaid/OHP	23(55)	
WIC	17(40)	
Other†	10(24)	
None	9(21)	
Property ownership in the USA		43(91)
A plot of land	1( 2)	
House	15(34)	
Mobile home	2( 5)	
Car/truck	20(47)	
Business	2( 5)	
None	15(35)	
Property ownership outside the USA		36(77)
A plot of land	10(28)	
House	7(19)	
Mobile home	1( 2)	
Car/truck	4(11)	
Other	1( 2)	
None	17(42)	

\* Indicated when number of respondents is smaller than the full sample (n=47).

† Other includes TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families), disability insurance, unemployment insurance, social security, low income housing, general assistance/welfare, and legal services.

Students in middle and high school also participated in focus groups and completed the first page of the demographic survey (see Table 3). The average age was 14 years and 60% (n=9) were female. The grade of the participants ranged from 43% in 7th grade (n=6), 29% in 9th grade (n=4), 21% in 10th grade (n=3), and 7% in 11th grade (n=1). Eighty percent of the students were born in the United States (80%), and have an average of 11.7 years living in the United States. Almost two thirds of students are more acculturated (60%); while less than half (46%) fear deportation. The majority of the students (93%) reported responding to unfair treatment (try to do something/talk to other people about it) according the Krieger discrimination scale. Students experienced discrimination getting services at a store or restaurant (13%), on the street or in a public setting (33%), at school (27%), getting hired (7%), at work (7%), getting medical care (20%).

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**Table 3. Socio-Demographic Profile of Latino Students, Educational Equity among Latinos in Corvallis, May-August 2012 (n=15).**

	<i>Mean (SD)</i>	<i>Number of respondents</i>	
		<i>n (%)</i>	<i>n (%)*</i>
Age (years)	14.1(1.9)		
Female		9(60)	
Grade			14(93)
7th grade		6(43)	
9th grade		4(29)	
10th grade		3(21)	
11th grade		1( 7)	
Country of origin			
Mexico		3(20)	
United States		12(80)	
Years living in the U.S.		11.7(4.2)	
Acculturation			
Less acculturated		6(40)	
More acculturated		9(60)	
Having fear of deportation			
Yes		7(46)	
No		8(53)	
Response to unfair treatment (discrimination)			
Engaged		14(93)	
Passive		1( 7)	
Experience discrimination		6(40)	
Getting services in a store or restaurant		2(13)	
On the street or in a public setting		5(33)	
At school		4(27)	
Getting hired or getting a job		1( 7)	
At work		1( 7)	
Getting medical care		3(20)	
Getting housing		1( 7)	
Getting credit, bank loans, or a mortgage		1( 7)	
From the police or in the courts		2(13)	

\* Indicated when number of respondents is smaller than the full sample (n=15).

### 3.2. Qualitative Results

The parent and student focus groups, community forum, and key informant interviews asked similar questions (with small changes depending on the subgroup, e.g. Latino youth, adults) in the following topic areas: 1) Latino families' experiences living in Corvallis; 2) Parent and student experiences with the Corvallis schools; 3) Basic needs that interfere with the academic success of Latino/a students; 4) Existing resources in the schools; and 5) Current needs to improve the academic achievement and school experiences of Latino families. Overwhelmingly, Latino parents participating in the discussion highlighted the need for more resources within the local schools and the broader community. The middle and high school students echoed these concerns by elaborating on personal experiences that highlighted the need for more cultural awareness and support. Key informants discussed the current efforts to engage Latinos and provide resources, but also acknowledged the challenges faced. The following discussion elucidates the qualitative themes that emerged with key quotes from all of the participant groups—Latino parents, Latino middle and high school students, and educators/administrators as key informants.

#### Qualitative Themes and Key Quotes

##### Living in Corvallis

Participants were asked if they considered Corvallis as a good place to live, specifically for Latino families. All the participants agree that in general Corvallis is a good place to live. Although they agree that Corvallis is an expensive city, participants specifically like that Corvallis is safe for their children. They also believe because Corvallis is small town, the Latino community know each other, which provides some level of support almost as if the community is their extended family. Although, in general, parents believe Corvallis is a good place to live, there are concerns of lack of safety because of their immigration status. This is particularly true with regard to their not being able to obtain driver licenses and fear of discrimination from law enforcement.

*It is a small town, the Latino community knows each other, it's a safe place and you see less crime than in places like Salem or Eugene. It is quiet and I like that my children will grow up here. –Latina mother*

Key informants also believe that Corvallis is a relatively good place for Latinos to live. Free public transportation, safety, high educational levels were among the most salient characteristics. However, they also pointed out that Corvallis could be a difficult place if one is not from the “majority group”: White, high income and high educational levels. This socio-economic gap makes it difficult for low-income, Latino families to thrive because the majority does not necessarily “understand what it means to be poor in Corvallis”. Hence, Latino parents are advertently or inadvertently marginalized from mainstream discussions. A key informant exemplified this paradox:

*They like what's Mexican but not THE Mexican. –Key informant*

In other words, it is one thing to “embrace” Mexican culture and a different thing to “engage” in a

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dialogue across cultural and socio-economic boundaries that may transform local systems, including education.

### **Parents and Student Experiences with the Corvallis School District**

Parents are satisfied with many programs that the Corvallis School District offers for their children, especially the Dual Language Immersion program. Parents believe being bilingual is an essential part of their children's education.

*I think is a good idea to have both languages because children are learning an academic Spanish and not a bad one. I no longer have young children, but I wanted to continue...the ones that learn more languages have more skills. –Latino father*

Similar to Latino parents, key informants highlighted the expansion of bilingual education as a sign of progress and commitment by the school district. Dual Immersion programs *validate language, culture; and make schools more accessible, comfortable.* –Key informant

They can see the increase in academic achievement and parental involvement among Latino families since the implementation of the Dual Immersion Programs in Lincoln and Garfield schools.

Although parents expressed satisfaction with many of the programs and believe the services and resources within the Corvallis School District have improved, there are still areas that need additional attention to improve the experiences of Latino students and parents. Likewise, key informants expressed their concern for the limited bilingual/bicultural infrastructure outside of these two schools. The students participating in the focus groups were happy with their schools, but they believe that students, parents, and schools needed to come together to address challenges and improve the educational experiences of Latino families.

Parents shared various experiences where the Corvallis Schools District did not meet their needs. Parents identified four key areas that they believe need additional attention from school administrators and teachers: 1) Teacher/Parent Communication, 2) Bilingual/Bicultural Staff, 3) Unequal Treatment of Latino Students and Parents, and 4) Quality of Food and Transportation.

#### **1. Teacher/Parent Communication and Engagement**

*My son had problems with math...the teachers didn't tell me anything until it was about time to go on vacation. We went to the conferences, but they didn't tell us anything until two weeks after. We even left our phone number, but they never called us. –Latina mother*

Although parents acknowledge that teachers have many students and it is also the parents' responsibility to be involved, there is still a lack of communication from teachers. Parents perceive a lack of communication and information when placing children in programs for English Language Learners. Often parents were asked to sign forms without an explanation of the advantages or disadvantages of a specific program.

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*They just ask you to sign forms without explaining the advantages or disadvantages. Sometimes they get uncomfortable when we ask about our children. They see that you are Latino and they look at you like saying why are you asking questions? –Latina mother*

Overwhelmingly, parents believe that the lack of communication between parents, teachers, and administrators is an important issue that needs to be addressed to improve the experiences of Latino families in all of the schools within the Corvallis School District. While some may attribute the challenges in teacher/parent communication to be related to the lack of bilingual staff, parental engagement seems to be an issue even at the two dual immersion schools. One key informant emphasized that the presence of the dual language program was not enough and more intentional efforts must be made to engage parents.

*We forget the importance of talking to people...we don't do it because it is time consuming. - Key informant.*

For Latino parents, having teachers, counselors, and administrators available to talk to can make a difference in the level of parental engagement. Opening spaces for Latino parents to engage with the educational system, by themselves and with non-Latino parents, are important steps. Otherwise, schools run the risk of dismissing a considerable segment of families *whose voices may get lost amongst the demands of a large educated parent population, and sending the message that you (Latinos) are not that important.* -Key informant

### **2. Bilingual/ Bicultural Staff**

The connection between Latino family engagement and bilingual/bicultural staff (including teachers and counselors) and support was made clear as even the adolescents that participated in focus group articulated this point. Students felt that many times their parents did not get involved in school because of the lack of bilingual information. Their parents do not have enough information on grading systems, scholarships, college, and careers.

*No bilingual help and/or translation; it made it hard for my parents to participate. I started to do badly in school and my parents started to get involved again. They have a parents meeting once every month. - High school student*

The student alludes here to the Spanish PTO meetings, which have been instrumental in greater Latino parent involvement. Overall, students were happy with their schools, but they believe that to improve the educational experiences of Latino families; students, parents, and schools need to come together. Parents should get more involved, and schools should improve support and resources available in Spanish for parents (e.g. bilingual counselors, teachers, and administrators).

*At schools like...they told me if you want help with your children in Spanish, move to another school.-Latina mother*

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Generally, parents were content with the bilingual/bicultural services available in schools like Garfield and Lincoln, but also think it is important to expand these services to other schools in the district, as well as to areas such as counseling and special education. If children are not enrolled at these schools, parents do not have access to bilingual/bicultural staff. The lack of access to bilingual/bicultural staff makes it more difficult for parents to get involved in their children's schools.

*I would like to talk about special education. I have a child in that program and nobody speaks Spanish. When he was at Garfield, the teacher tried to explain things to me but sometimes I didn't understand her. I always have to wait until they send me a letter and I find someone to translate. My husband is the only one who attends the meetings. I stay home because I don't understand. -Latina mother*

### 3. Unequal Treatment of Latino Students and Parents

One of the main concerns conveyed by Latino parents is the discrimination and unequal treatment experienced by both students and parents. For example, when discussing the discipline methods at schools one mother said, *the consequences are worse depending on your ethnicity and race. We are labeled.* Student focus groups also identify issues with discrimination, as this student's perspective demonstrates.

*They could change some (one) of the bus drivers. He's a racist. I don't like him. He only picks on the Mexican kids. I don't see him pick on American kids. He only gives citations to Mexican kids.-Middle school student*

In addition, many participants shared examples of Latino parents being treated differently when interacting with school administrators. This mother articulates the dynamics that further distance Latino families and can lead to their voices remaining unheard and their needs unmet.

*What we need is more attention for the Latino families. I have seen that Caucasian parents get whatever they need, and teachers are on their side and pay attention to their needs. When a Latino parents goes all they say is come back tomorrow I don't have time right now, they put us aside...We need more attention for the Latino families.-Latina mother*

### 4. Quality of Food and Transportation

Lastly, parents also expressed an important concern over the access to transportation and quality of food at the schools. Many parents worry that their children do not have access to school buses, which creates difficulties getting to school especially during times of bad weather. They also have concerns with the safety of the school buses as some of their children have experienced violence and discrimination when utilizing the school bus. In addition, parents have received complaints from their children regarding the school food being burned, hard, moldy, or expired.

*Another thing that I don't like is the bus. There is no supervision. Once, my older child got beat up in the bus. I went to the school and complained. They told me they were going to talk to the other child's parents, but they never did anything. -Latina mother*

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### Basic Needs Interfering with Academic Achievement

All of the participant groups referenced major issues interfering with the academic achievement of children relating to poverty, immigration status, and discrimination. Key informants pointed out the influence of household poverty on their children's educational outcomes:

*Economic needs generate instability, family crises and conflicts among these families, particularly those with a trajectory of poverty, even from their country of origin. -Key informant*

Key informants also articulated how they might be specifically cognizant of economic realities of low-income families when considering programs aimed at fostering engagement.

*Even when programs are 'free', families still need to figure out transportation, food, work schedules, and other basic necessities...we are not supporting the rest of the family. -Key informant*

However, the Latino youth interviewed generally did not feel that understand how these economic realities impact their everyday lives and ability to focus academically.

*Helping family, more responsibilities at home. It is not just going home and doing homework-High school student*

The combination of immigration status and poverty translate to a constant state of instability.

*Things can change at a moment's notice.-Key informant*

The current immigration laws prevent parents from obtaining driver licenses and adequate housing, and in turn increases fears of deportation. The inability to obtain driver licenses prevents parents from driving their children to school and after-school activities or forces them to drive without a driver license and insurance. Many times fear of deportation and discrimination also prevent individuals from complaining to proper authorities if their housing is not adequate.

*I worry that I will get deported and my children will be alone. The majority of the people are worried and it affects our children. It starts to create distrust and fear in them. In my case, it really affected my children when my husband was detained by immigration. -Latina mother*

Immigration status not only affects parents, but it also affects students. One mother said *Do not deport us. I'm preoccupied that my children are left alone; I have to be alert and be thinking of somebody who can take care of them. Another mentioned how my husband's detention and deportation really affected my children, my daughter in particular.* The immigration status of students and their parents greatly limits their future educational opportunities and motivation to do well in school. The stress created by issues related to immigration status has a significant effect on the academic achievement of Latino students (Gandara and Contreras 2009; Chavez, Lopez et al. 2012).

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### Existing Resources

*I would like to see more workshops on parenting; on how parents can support their children.-  
Latina mother*

Parents acknowledge that there are existing resources that have improved their parenting skills and enhanced their school involvement. Parents participated in workshops that were sponsored by Casa Latinos Unidos de Benton County (CLUBC), the Benton County Health Department, and 4-H, as well as workshops at Garfield and Lincoln. At the same time parents believe that more workshops and information are needed, especially once students are in middle and high school. Parents need additional information on scholarships, college, and careers in order to continue supporting their children's educational experiences.

Key informants mentioned that Latino parents' involvement has increased at Parent Teacher Organizations at Lincoln and Garfield where there has been more bilingual/bicultural support. However, such support/participation spaces are very limited to non-existent in middle school or high school. Various organizations, such as CLUBC, 4-H, Corvallis Environmental Center, Benton County, Osborn Aquatic Center, Boys and Girls Club, and free/reduced lunch are important resources for Latino families.

### Current Needs

Key informants agree that more work is needed to *prepare parents as advocates of their children's educational experience, without regard to their immigration or socio-economic status.*

Such work will happen only when the school system *invests in knowing these families, their hopes and challenges.* Moreover, key informants consider that strengthening parental involvement needs to be matched by a sustained effort to increase bilingual/bicultural capacity across the school system. One way to strengthen the interactions between Latino families, local schools, and the broader community was suggested by parents who expressed the need for a Welcome Center or Centro de Bienvenida in Corvallis, similar to the one in Albany. This center would serve as the primary liaison between parents and the school system. Creating a central place and contact for Latino families would help to disseminate information on community resources and further organize and unite advocacy efforts. For example, key informants identified the lack of mental health support for children and youth within the school system and the broader Corvallis community as a current need. This type of center could create a space for advocacy regarding these critical issues thereby contributing to the elimination of the achievement gap.

Both Latino parents and key informants identified accessible and affordable early childhood education as a current need given the limited options for low-income preschool-age children have in Corvallis.

*One of the biggest challenges is to prepare our children before they start kindergarten...Head Start has a very small enrollment, private preschool is too expensive.-Key Informant*

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Parents also expressed the need for affordable prekindergarten programs, as well as after school programs for their children. One Latino parent said: *Just give me an a price that is more affordable. I don't care if you charge a little bit, but let my kids participate.*

Lastly, one of the most urgent priorities of Latino parents and also mentioned by key informants, is the ability to obtain driver licenses. For these parents, relatively simple tasks (e.g. going to work, taking children to school, driving to the grocery store) can become stressful and even life-changing situations.

### 4. Conclusions and Recommendations

*Education is about inspiring...kids get in trouble when they don't dream; they think I'm going to work in the fields like my dad so what's the point of finishing high school? I can't go to college. – Key informant*

*What's needed? Pay a little more attention to Latino families. I have seen that with the other parents for whatever issue the teacher takes their side, takes care of them. When a Latino comes they say 'come tomorrow because I don't have time today'. We feel like they are pushing us to the side...then we don't come back. – Latino mother*

*I have two children in the schools...I've had good experiences. Preschool was English-only. My son was the only Latino and I was getting worried. He started elementary school in the Dual Immersion program. It was wonderful. My daughter is also doing very well. She knows both languages now. They have excellent teachers. The school even won a prize this year!– Latino father*

Educational attainment is a major source of inequality for Latinos at the local, state, and national levels. Casa Latinos Unidos de Benton County (CLUBC) in consultation with the Corvallis School District conducted a formative evaluation of educational expectations, experiences, and future directions among Latino parents, students, and educators in Corvallis. The evaluation found that:

- Latino students and parents experience discrimination at school or work, at stores or restaurants, in public settings, or when getting medical care.
- Fear of deportation is markedly present for Latinos in the community, primarily among parents (89%). Although the majority of Latino students are U.S. citizens (80%), almost half (46%) were also afraid of deportation.
- Parents and key informants agree that preserving bilingualism is essential for Latino students. However, there is limited bilingual/bicultural infrastructure beyond Lincoln and Garfield schools.
- Parents expressed the need for a Welcome center or Centro de Bienvenida in Corvallis,

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## Casa Latinos Unidos

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similar to the one in Albany. This center would serve as the primary liaison between parents and the school system.

- Both parents and key informants expressed concern about the limited and costly options for preschool education. Despite strong evidence on the importance of early childhood education as a predictor of future success (Campbell, Ramey et al. 2002; Heckman 2006; Campbell, Wasik et al. 2008; Pungello, Kainz et al. 2010), Latino parents in particular, and low-income parents more generally, have very few options in our community to prepare their young children for academic life.
- On the other end of k-12 education, Latino children also face various challenges to pursue higher education, such as lack of timely preparation, affordability, and immigration status. In a study in the Northwest, an undocumented student spoke about her improved career prospects as a consequence of the new law in Washington State:

I've always known I wanted to be a nurse. My brother couldn't go to college, so he is working in construction now instead...I can go because I learned how to apply and get financial aid. And now that in-state tuition is available we can afford it. My brother wants to go back some day. (Northwest Federation of Community Organizations 2006)

The vast majority of second-generation youth are increasing their education and improving their occupational opportunities. They learn the country's language and culture, but factors such as parental human and social capital, family type, and mode of incorporation play an important role in integrating either to the middle class or the "marginalized, and largely racialized, population at the bottom of the society" (Portes and Fernandez-Kelly 2008). Successful immigrant stories remind us that creating opportunities for immigrant students to achieve success will provide a broader social benefit (Quinones-Hinojosa 2007; Carrillo 2009; Dunn 2009).

In light of these findings, the assessment team recommends:

1. The School District and the broader Corvallis community must send a clear message and establish programs to eliminate discrimination of Latino families.
2. Local authorities should make clear to their Latino neighbors that enforcing immigration law is not part of their agenda.
3. The local community should support measures to create a safe environment among all residents. The message should be that Latino families are welcomed in our community, and their contributions valued, regardless of their socioeconomic or immigration status. The community should also support statewide efforts to reinstate driver's licenses for undocumented Oregonians (Oregon Latino Agenda for Action 2010).
4. A Welcome Center or Centro de Bienvenida can be a good step towards: 1) addressing a range of school and other social concerns; 2) providing referrals and services to students

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and families in need; and 3) supporting low-income families.

5. The school district and the community at large need to expand and make more affordable access to early childhood education to prepare children for school. The literature shows that for many Latino children, the “achievement gap” begins before a child begins school; hence, pre-school programs are crucial to enhancing their ability to succeed in school (Reardon & Galindo, 2009; Magnuson, Meyers et al., 2004).
6. Systems need to be created so schools and parents can support and encourage Latino children to finish their high school education and pursue higher education. This can be done through workshops for parents, dissemination of appropriate information, and improved career counseling.
7. Schools must expand bilingual/bicultural infrastructure across the school system by hiring bilingual/bicultural teachers, counselors, administrators and staff. Latino parental engagement, such as that reported at Lincoln and Garfield schools, should be supported at the middle and high school levels in our community.
8. The district needs to ensure that Latino and other minority parents/community leaders have opportunities to participate in the budgeting process and other decision making venues.

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### Notes

1. A recent, Oregon-produced documentary called "Papers the Movie: Stories of Undocumented Youth" ([www.papersthemovie.com](http://www.papersthemovie.com)) describes the challenges undocumented youth face when they turn eighteen, particularly their inability to pursue higher education.
2. There have been four attempts in Oregon to pass legislation on this issue. In 2009, House Bill 2939 had a House Education Committee public hearing and was "in committee upon adjournment" on June 29, 2009.
3. Data presented are the average of three years of SWS data (2007, 2008, 2009). For instance, we could say that on average, 12.5% of Latino 6th graders missed school due to feeling unsafe. For more information on the Student Wellness survey, visit: <http://www.oregon.gov/oha/amh/pages/student-wellness/index.aspx>

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## Casa Latinos Unidos

### Appendix 1: Community Forum / Focus Group

Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_, and we are assessing educational expectations, experiences, and future directions among Latino parents and students in Corvallis. I'd like to ask you for your help by answering a few questions regarding your experiences with local schools, and your expectations and recommendations for improving the educational experience of Latino children and youth in our area.

Your participation in this forum should take about **45 minutes**.

Your opinions will be strictly confidential. We will not record your name. Also, your participation is completely voluntary. You are free to not answer any questions you may find objectionable, and may withdraw from this discussion at any time, just by letting me know you would not like to continue any further.

Are there any questions that I can answer before we begin?

Let's start with a general question:

1. Do you consider Corvallis a good place to live? Please explain

Now let's talk about your experiences with local schools:

2. In general, what has been your experience with Corvallis schools?
  - A. What do you like the best? What do you like the least?
3. Are there basic family, child, and youth unmet needs, which may affect Latino student's educational attainment? Probe: housing, transportation, safety, parents' employment, immigration status, etc. For middle & high school students/parents: teen pregnancy?

Now let's talk about expectations and recommendations:

4. What would it take for parents to be more involved in schools? (e.g. school PTO, interpreters, bilingual/bicultural staff)
5. How could schools better support Latino students? Parents?
6. How could schools better support Latino families to address unmet needs that affect their children's educational attainment?
  - a. Are there other organizations that could support Latino families with these issues?

Are there any other comments or questions?

Thank you for your participation.

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# Casa Latinos Unidos

## Appendix 2: Key-informant Interview

Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_, and we are assessing educational expectations, experiences, and future directions among Latino parents and students in Corvallis. I'd like to ask you for your help by answering a few questions regarding your perceptions regarding Latinos' experiences with local schools, and your recommendations for improving educational outcomes for Latino children and youth in our area.

Your participation in this interview should take about **30 minutes**.

Your opinions will be strictly confidential. We will not record your name. Also, your participation is completely voluntary. You are free to not answer any questions you may find objectionable, and may withdraw from this discussion at any time, just by letting me know you would not like to continue any further.

Are there any questions that I can answer before we begin?

Let's start with a general question:

7. Do you consider Corvallis a good place to live for Latino families? Please explain

Now let's talk about your experiences with local schools:

8. In general, what is your perspective regarding the educational experience for Latino families in Corvallis schools?

a. What are the strengths? What are the weaknesses? Probe: areas for improvement?

9. Are there basic family, child, and youth unmet needs, which may affect Latino student's educational attainment? Probe: housing, transportation, safety, and parents' employment. For middle & high school students/parents: teen pregnancy?

Now let's talk about expectations and recommendations:

10. What would it take for parents to be more involved in schools? (e.g. school PTO, interpreters, bilingual/bicultural staff)

11. How could schools better support Latino students? Parents?

12. How could schools better support Latino families to address unmet needs that affect their children's educational attainment?

a. Are there other organizations that could support Latino families with these issues?

Do you have any other comments or questions?

Thank you for your participation.

### Appendix 3: Student Focus Group

Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_, and we are assessing educational expectations, experiences, and future directions among Latino parents and students in Corvallis. I'd like to ask you for your help by answering a few questions regarding your experiences with local schools, and your expectations and recommendations for improving the educational experience of Latino children and youth in our area.

Your participation in this forum should take about **45 minutes**.

Your opinions will be strictly confidential. We will not record your name. Also, your participation is completely voluntary. You are free to not answer any questions you may find objectionable, and may withdraw from this discussion at any time, just by letting me know you would not like to continue any further.

Are there any questions that I can answer before we begin?

Let's start with a general question:

13. Do you consider Corvallis a good place to live? Please explain

Now let's talk about your experiences with local schools:

14. In general, what has been your experience with Corvallis schools?
  - a. What do you like the best? What do you like the least?

15. Are there basic family, child, and youth unmet needs, which may affect Latino student's educational attainment? Probe: housing, transportation, safety, parents' employment, immigration status, etc. For middle & high school students/parents: teen pregnancy?

Now let's talk about expectations and recommendations:

16. What would it take for your parents to be more involved in schools? (e.g. school PTO, interpreters, bilingual/bicultural staff) Why don't they get involved?
17. What is your experience in school? Changes? How could school be more supportive? How could schools better support Latino students? Parents?
18. How could schools better support Latino families to address unmet needs that affect their children's educational attainment?
  - a. Are there other organizations that could support Latino families with these issues?

Are there any other comments or questions?

Thank you for your participation.

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## Appendix 4: Socio-Demographic Survey

In the following questions, unless it says otherwise, please circle one of the numbers that best represents your answer. Please remember that this questionnaire is confidential. In other words, none of this information will be used to identify you personally.

1. ¿In which country were you born?

\_\_\_\_\_

2. How many years have you lived in the United States? \_\_\_\_\_

speak?

- a) Only Spanish
- b) Spanish better than English
- c) Both Equally
- d) English better than Spanish
- e) Only English

6. What language(s) do you usually speak at home?

- a) Only Spanish
- b) Spanish better than English
- c) Both Equally
- d) English better than Spanish
- e) Only English

3. What is your sex? \_\_ Female \_\_ Male

4. What is your age (in years)? \_\_\_\_\_

5. In general, what language(s) do you read and

7. In which language(s) do you usually think?

- a) Only Spanish
- b) Spanish better than English
- c) Both Equally
- d) English better than Spanish
- e) Only English

8. What language(s) do you usually speak with your friends?

- a) Only Spanish
- b) More Spanish than English
- c) Both Equally
- d) More English than Spanish
- e) Only English

This next section is going to ask about how you and others like you are treated, and how you typically respond

9. If you feel you have been treated unfairly, do you usually

- a. Accept is as a fact of life
- b. Try to do something about it

10. If you have been treated unfairly, do you usually:

- a. Talk to other people about it
- b. Keep it to yourself

11. To what extent have you (or someone in your immediate family) experienced fear of the consequences of deportation?

- a. Not at all
- b. A little
- c. Some
- d. A lot

12. Have you experienced discrimination, been prevented from doing something, or been hassled or made to feel inferior in any of the following situations because of your race, ethnicity, or color?

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	Yes	No	If YES, how many times did this happen? (write the corresponding number) <b>1</b> =Once <b>2</b> =Two or three times <b>3</b> =Four or more times
a. At school?			
b. Getting hired or getting a job?			
c. At work?			
d. Getting housing?			
e. Getting medical care?			
f. Getting service in a store?			
g. Getting credit, bank loans, or a mortgage?			
h. On the street or in a public setting?			
i. From the police or in the courts?			

### FOR PARENTS ONLY:

13. During your childhood you lived:

- a) Only in Latin America (México, Central America, etc.)
- b) Primarily in Latin America.
- c) In Latin America and the United States equally
- d) Primarily in the United States
- e) Only in the United States

14. What was your family's total income last year (in 2011)?

- a) Less than \$7,500
- b) \$7,500 - \$12,499
- c) \$12,500 - \$17,499
- d) \$17,500 - \$24,999
- e) \$25,000 or more

19. In the last 2 years [LAST 24 MONTHS], have you or anyone in your household received benefits or used the services of any of the following social programs? [CHECK ALL THAT APPLY]:

- a) (TANF) Temporary assistance for needy families
- b) Food stamps (SNAP)
- c) Free or reduced priced school meals
- d) Disability insurance
- e) Unemployment insurance
- f) Social Security
- g) Low income housing
- h) Medicaid/ Oregon Health Plan
- i) WIC
- j) General assistance/welfare
- k) Legal Services?
- l) Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- m) Don't know
- n) None

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20. Do you own or are you buying any of the following items in the U.S.? [CHECK ALL THAT APPLY]:

- a) A plot of land
- b) A house
- c) A mobile home
- d) A car/truck
- e) A business
- f) Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- g) None

21. [ONLY FOR THOSE BORN OUTSIDE THE U.S.A.] ...And in your home country, do you own or are you buying any of the following items? [CHECK ALL THAT APPLY]:

- a) A plot of land
- b) A house
- c) A mobile home
- d) A car/truck
- e) A business
- f) Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- g) None

22. In what type of living quarters do you live now (housing structure at this location)? [MARK ONLY ONE]

- a) Single-family home (detached)
- b) Apartment or duplex
- c) Mobile home
- d) Dormitory or barracks
- e) Without shelter, "homeless" (includes sleeping in a car)
- f) Other: \_\_\_\_\_

23. How many people live there? \_\_\_\_\_

24. Are you?

- a) Married or living with a partner
- b) Single
- c) Other: \_\_\_\_\_

That is all. Thank you for filling out this questionnaire

# Casa Latinos Unidos de Benton County

*Promoting Family Well-being*



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