WISCONSIN 5-COUNTY Latino Needs Assessment Project

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DODGE COUNTY SUMMARY

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The report from the entire 5-County Latino Needs Assessment Project can be found at: www.uwex.edu/ces/latino/

Dodge County Summary

Predominantly a rural county, the 2000 U.S. Census recorded 85,897 individuals living in Dodge County. Beaver Dam, the largest city, has 15,000 residents. Four smaller cities, including the county seat of Juneau, Mayville, Fox Lake and Horicon, eleven villages and 24 townships contribute to the 907 square miles (508,531 acres). Two additional cities on county borders, Waupun and Watertown, share populations with Fond du Lac and Jefferson Counties, respectively.

The Latino population increased 140% from 1990 to 2000. The greatest growth is concentrated in the northwest corner of Dodge County including Beaver Dam and Fox Lake. The Hispanic population in the city of Beaver Dam increased 281% during the past decade. Migrant farm workers have been coming to Dodge County for years and more families are "settling out" or staying the entire year. In 2000 Latinos represented 2.5 percent of the county's total population. Latino population is also increasing in the Watertown area.

Dodge County's agricultural heritage continues and is currently a leading producer of milk, cheese, corn, corn silage, soybeans, winter wheat, alfalfa, and peas and sweet corn for canning. Industries include the manufacture of wood products, shoes, metal products, lawn care equipment, magazines, stainless steel equipment and ice fishing equipment. Latinos seek employment throughout the county, especially in the farming, printing and food industries.

It is only within the last couple of years that service providers and policymakers became aware of the need to specifically target educational programs and services to meet the needs of the Latino population in Dodge County. The Beaver Dam Community Library has increased its Spanish collection of adult and children's books and resource materials. Moraine Park Technical College

offers English as a Second Language classes at the Beaver Dam campus. School districts are hiring bi-lingual teachers and support staff to provide services to Latino families. Agencies and organizations such as the Job Center, Dodge County Human Services, Central Wisconsin Community Action Coalition and area businesses are also hiring bi-lingual staff to serve the needs of this growing population. St. Michael's Catholic Church offers a weekly Spanish language mass in Beaver Dam.

The Dodge County Multi-Cultural Coalition was formed in the spring of 2001 to help the Latino population obtain access to programs and to help the non-Latino population learn about the uniqueness of the Latino culture. Subsequent programs included a Hispanic Cultural Awareness Seminar, a minority health mini-grant, Dodge English Language Learners (DELL), a Community Dialogue and other cultural events.

The Wisconsin 5-County Latino Needs Assessment Project included Dane, Dodge, Jefferson, Rock and Walworth Counties, adjacent counties in south central Wisconsin. Focus group interviews were chosen as the method to gather research information to ensure that participants' voices were heard. The research was completed in collaboration with the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater and the University of Wisconsin –Extension. The methods used were valid (it assessed what it was intended to assess), reliable (could be replicated at other times or in other ways with similar results), and generalize-able (a small sample of voices could reflect the whole communities' needs). The interviews were recorded, translated, transcribed and analyzed to capture the meaning and importance of people's perspectives. Thirty-seven of the one hundred and fifty-six total participants were from Dodge County.

Three focus groups were held in the spring of 2003 in Dodge County with two groups of Latinos and one group of community service providers.

What's Working Well?

Interview responses are thoughtful and reflective of each participant's experiences and struggles. In addition, the Latino participant groups took the extra effort and responsibility to speak for the entire Latino population.

> "I am happy to be here in Wisconsin."
> ~~Latino participant

Latino group participants recognize and appreciate a number of services and programs to help them economically. Government assistance programs such as medical assistance, WIC, public health and Head Start programs and private non-profit organizations were identified and working well. Specific job programs are helpful. The opportunities to learn English through the Dodge English Language Learners and Moraine Park Technical College as well as support for their children's educational needs are appreciated.

The community service provider groups identified additional services offered through their agencies, understood the specific requirements of each program and saw small steps toward equitable programs for all cultures.

Unacknowledged by Latinos, the community service providers also work on the process of developing relationships and services through coalition-building and networking. Collaborating to take advantage of limited resources and improve communication was seen as important to the community service providers. Some community service providers are also seeking to improve cultural understanding, along with obtaining equitable services.

Table 1. What Barriers Do Latinos Face?			
LATINOS FROM 5 COUNTY STUDY[1]	***LATINOS FROM DODGE COUNTY***	**COMMUNITY SERVICE PROVIDERS FROM 5-COUNTY LATINO STUDY[1]**	***COMMUNITY SERVICE PROVIDERS FROM DODGE COUNTY***
Language & Literacy Barriers	*Language & Literacy*	Documentation Barriers	*Discrimination & Cultural ignorance*
Documentation Barriers	*Discrimination & Cultural ignorance*	Discrimination/Racism/Ethnocentrism Cultural Ignorance/Oppression	*Work & Worker's rights*
Discrimination/Racism/Ethnocentrism Cultural Ignorance/Oppression	*Documentation*	Language & Literacy Barriers	*Documentation*
Work & Worker's Rights Barriers	*No information center*	Work & Worker's Rights Barriers	*Lack of Education*
Healthcare & Insurance Barriers	*Discrimination within Latino culture*	Educational Barriers	*Language*
Housing Barriers	*Healthcare*	Internal Barriers	*Housing discrimination*
Barriers Facing Children	*Housing*	Church-Related Barriers	*Lack of Bi-lingual resources*
Lack of Latino Community Center	*Barriers facing children*	Transportation Barriers	
Law Enforcement Barriers	*Fair law enforcement*	Housing Barriers	
		Information Barriers	
		Insufficient Food	
		Law Enforcement Barriers	
		Lack of Latino Community Center	

[1] Listed in order of frequency/consistency of response X 5 counties.

What are the barriers that Latinos face?

This question draws the largest number and richest responses from the three groups. The two Latino groups and the community service provider group emphasize the substantial barriers in daily living faced by Latinos in Dodge County. **(Table 1)** In the five-county study there is agreement on the three major barriers: Language and literacy, documentation and discrimination. In Dodge County the groups do not clearly identify those three priority issues.

> ".. . people stare as if one were from another planet. . . ."
> ~~Latino participant

Latino Participant Groups. Most barriers did not stand alone but were entwined with other difficulties, producing more complex issues.

●Language, literacy and education

Language and literacy is mentioned first and constitutes the most significant barrier for the Latinos. Some Latinos come to Dodge County lacking basic elementary education in their country of origin and that, by itself, is a problem. In addition, insufficient English education and experience in speaking the language is a barrier to many other services and opportunities in the county. Add to that the lack of interpreters, lack of convenient classes in English, personal lack of time and initiative to learn English, and the need to learn English in order to get a job or a better job all compound the problem. Attending classes for specific careers generally requires full command of both the written and spoken English language and if available, requires commutes out of Dodge County.

●Discrimination

Discrimination is not only reported as a general theme, but shows up in specific categories as barriers (e.g., work and worker's rights, healthcare, housing, children's welfare, law enforcement). Latinos feel they are taken advantage of since they lack

> "Curiously, the Americans like Mexican food; the Americans like our country. I mean . . . like Cancun . . . like Playa del Carmen, Puerto Vallarta. The only things that the Americans don't like are the Mexicans." ~~Latino participant

certain rights; are discriminated by employers and the communities, and receive unequal treatment in public places. They want to see fewer stereotypes, respect from white co-workers, equal rights and opportunities on the job, equal treatment in public places, and more resources for people who do not speak English. Most participants concur that Latinos are not treated with respect, trust, or equity in many aspects of their lives.

> "We, the Hispanic, we have the same discrimination between us." ~~Latino participant

Latinos speak frankly about the discrimination within the Latino culture. Due to "rivalry and envy" some participants are frustrated that Latinos are not reaching out to help other Latinos when they are fully aware of resources. They are disappointed that this jealousy leads to lack of unification and community support within the Latino community.

Latino group participants note not only discrimination, but also stereotyping and bilateral cultural ignorance as barriers they face. The Latinos do not know enough about the American culture and the Americans do not know enough about the Latino cultures. The white culture needs to view Latinos as individuals rather than "generalize that all Hispanics are the same." Some Latino participants express this as a personal responsibility realizing their own preference to stay in their own groups.

> "They give us the worst jobs because we are from the field."
> ~~Latino participant

•Work and worker's rights

Employment, although better in the United States than their country of origin, is another barrier for Latinos. Skilled workers and professionals find difficulty working in their areas of expertise since they are unable to validate professional credentials obtained in their country of origin. Frequently reported barriers include lack of available work and a lack of time to train for career development. In addition, many note that employers fail to honor worker's rights and discriminate against or exploit Latinos. Little information is shared about worker's rights. Most who report these difficulties also report that they know they are "being treated unfairly because [they] were undocumented." Basic life needs and services are beyond many Latinos' financial means due to low wages and lack of job security.

> "So, they start to create certain pressures, between them all, they change the schedule, your hours, I mean, they are only looking for ways of how to make pressure against the people." ~~Latino participant

●Healthcare and Housing

Healthcare is an issue of enormous proportions throughout the United States and particularly among groups of people whose job status does not afford them insurance. Latino participants in this study are no exception as they report difficulties of receiving services; "they send you in circles (red tape)".

Participants report housing barriers in terms of "racial discrimination in housing," "limits to the number of residents in the house," "the need for a better quality of housing," and "more affordable housing."

●No Information Center

Participants report as a barrier the absence of a centralized agency to provide support, break cultural barriers, and offer activities or inexpensive services. A "center" does not necessarily mean a building, but rather a point person or people who have accurate, recent, and consistent information about local and statewide services, practices, and policies.

> ". . . I think I would need an organization that I would feel protects me, orients me, helps me to reach my objective, because right now, if I want to reach it, I am alone. I can't achieve it." ~~Latino participant

●Other needs

> "So the most marvelous experience is that my children go to school free."
> ~~Latino participant

Consistent and fair enforcement of city and county laws without discrimination is desired. Latino children face multiple barriers including being treated unfairly by teachers, language barriers in schools, insufficient tutors, the absence of programs for Latino youth, and having unaffordable recreational activities. A barrier for one family may be perceived as a blessing for another. Several Latino participants were attracted to Dodge County because of the educational opportunities for their children.

Community Service Provider Groups. Community service providers agree that Latinos in Dodge County face a number of barriers previously identified by the Latino participants: discrimination/cultural ignorance, work and worker's rights, language and

literacy, education, health, and housing. Community service providers also identify lack of leadership by Latinos and documentation as additional barriers.

Documentation

Not specifically mentioned, but inferred by Latino participants and prominent on the list of the barriers identified by community service providers is the issue of documentation. Lack of documentation of citizenship or residency status is a barrier and responsible for a number of related concerns. Community service providers observe employment difficulties, doors closing to higher education and driver's licenses, unfair medical practices, difficult or impossible banking, and housing discrimination when Latinos do not have the legal documents needed for services. The community service providers are frustrated with the extensive requirements needed to satisfy the strict immigration laws, the social security requirements and the unfair treatment Latinos receive if they do not have the appropriate documentation.

> "They have a job, and they're not legal. They are afraid to complain about things because there are only two or three companies where they can really go and find work when they are not documented."
>
> ~~Community service provider

Summary. In Dodge County the Latino participants and the community service provider groups frequently and consistently report three barriers: documentation, discrimination, and language/literacy. These three spread to nearly all of the other barriers Latinos mentioned and a number of the programs and services the community service providers listed. Each of these barriers also prevents access to work and work-related rights, education, healthcare, and housing. Some parents face difficulties finding reliable, coordinated information about school services and programs appropriate for their children. Both community service provider and

Latino participant groups recognize cultural differences and internal barriers within the Latino population and culture as a significant barrier for the Latino communities.

> "I also think a lot of employers take advantage of the situation where they pay the people who don't speak English a lot less than they would pay them, because they know that they probably don't have documents."
>
> ~~Community service provider

> "Even though you can be a good doctor in Mexico, you cannot do anything here, you are nothing here. Because you don't know the language and you have to pass all the licenses."
>
> ~~Community service provider

Table 2. What Improvements Are Needed To Make Life Better?

LATINOS FROM 5 COUNTY STUDY[1]	***LATINOS FROM DODGE COUNTY***	**COMMUNITY SERVICE PROVIDERS FROM 5-COUNTY STUDY[1]**	***COMMUNITY SERVICE PROVIDERS FROM DODGE COUNTY***
Healthcare & Insurance	*Language skills & communication*	Language & Literacy Education	*Access to healthcare*
Educational Opportunities	*Information center*	Healthcare & Insurance	*Documentation changes*
Language & Literacy Programs	*Health care: improved & streamlined*	Cultural Appreciation	*Language and literacy*
Documentation	*Quality bi-lingual childcare*	Documentation	*Supportive environment*
Better Work Opportunities & Worker's Rights Information	*Lack of Educational resources*	Children's Programs	*Lack of Education*
Latino Community Centers	*Less housing discrimination*	Transportation	*Housing*
Childcare	*More children's programs*	Housing	*Leadership development*
Transportation	*Documentation services*	Community Organizing	
Children's Programs	*Work related support*	Latino Community Center	
Cultural Appreciation	*Change (improve) us*	Work	
Housing	*Discrimination*		
	Equitable law enforcement		
	Support each other		

[1] Listed in order of frequency/consistency of response X 5 counties.

WHAT WOULD MAKE YOUR LIFE, YOUR FAMILY'S LIFE, AND THE LIVES OF LATINOS BETTER?

This question addresses those programs, services, and policies that community service provider and Latino group participants identify as necessary to improve the quality of their lives. **(Table 2)**

Latino Participant Groups. Most suggestions for improvement directly follow the barriers Latinos face. Latino group participants identify broad positive improvements for themselves, their families and their communities. In order of frequency and consistency, improvements are needed to improve language skills and communication, to provide support through an information center, to improve and/or streamline healthcare, to develop quality bi-lingual childcare, to offer more educational resources, to reduce housing discrimination, to offer documentation services, and to provide work related supports.

> "I think from there (learning English) our lives will improve inside this society."
> ~~Latino participant

Although it seems simplistic, improvements in communication are essential. Participants request language and literacy resources (e.g., bilingual professionals in health fields and government offices, information in Spanish, a directory of services, more translators, a Hispanic newspaper,) and more opportunities to learn English (more frequent, free, and flexible).

An information center to access and share resources is frequently mentioned. A center would give Latinos bi-lingual support and at the same time they would feel comfortable speaking Spanish. Comprehensive services could include some of the following: health, housing, legal and social services; English instruction, education and training; job services, career development, help with problems, translation services, support for those working in rural areas and assistance with documentation and obtaining a driver's license. To be most effective and feasible Latino participants realize the dual role for community members to give support as well as receive support.

A major area needing improvements is health care (e.g., translators at doctor's offices, a clinic accessible to Latinos, bilingual personal physicians, psychological help, health professionals that understand the Hispanic culture and streamlined health services).

> "…how can you leave your child in a day care where you don't understand?"
> ~~Latino participant

Accessible and affordable childcare is essential. High quality centers, bi-lingual teachers, and subsidized or low cost centers are key elements. Latino participants want child care centers to include children of all cultures. Less discrimination, more children's programs and cultural sensitivity or awareness training are also mentioned as issues that, when addressed, will improve their lives.

Community Service Provider Groups. Community service provider responses are similar to those of the Latino group participants. Responses relate to healthcare, increased access to higher education and changes in immigration laws. The community service providers identify a need for the Latinos to access existing resources and a need to develop new resources. Increased cultural training for both communities will lead to overall improvements. Latino participants want to know more about traffic laws and legal issues, the education system for children, recycling and civic responsibilities, and existing health care resources. The non-Latinos of Dodge County need to recognize that Latino families stay together and understand the need for an elder to be a leader. Service community providers see education as the key to reshaping our separate ethnic communities into one friendlier, more positive multi-cultural community, willing to work together.

Summary. Both Latino and community service provider groups report similar areas for major improvements. As the most distinct difference between the two groups, the Latino participant groups place more emphasis on the need for coordinated community service. Community service providers place their frustrations with documentation issues. Latino group participants also see a need for improvements in childcare and work related issues. Community service providers understand their piece of the puzzle, but do not understand the entire picture of what Latinos need to improve their lives in Dodge County.

Table 3. What Were The Most Important Issues Discussed?

LATINOS FROM **5 COUNTY STUDY**[1]	***LATINOS FROM DODGE COUNTY***	**COMMUNITY SERVICE PROVIDERS FROM 5-COUNTY STUDY**	***COMMUNITY SERVICE PROVIDERS FROM DODGE COUNTY***
Healthcare and Insurance	*Information center*	Language & Literacy	*Access to healthcare*
Documentation	*Language/Literacy/English classes*	Healthcare and Insurance	*Information center*
Language & Literacy	*Healthcare*	Documentation	*Language and literacy*
Worker's Rights	*Issues related to documentation*	Latino Community Center	*Cultural Awareness*
Latino Community Center	*Childcare*	Cultural Sensitivity	*Documentation*
Work	*Employment opportunities*	Organizational Improvements	*Worker right's education*
Youth Programs	*Cultural education*	Youth Programs	*Access to spiritual care*
Transportation		Worker's Rights	*Civil rights and responsibilities*
Discrimination/Racism/Ethnocentrism Cultural Ignorance/ Oppression		Transportation	
Childcare		Spirituality	
		Housing	
		Work	

[1] Listed in order of frequency/consistency of response X 5 counties.

Consolidation responses

After the study question discussion, each group identifies what they believe to be the most important ideas generated during the interviews. Each group independently set their own priorities. There is considerable overlap between responses of the Latino participant groups and the community service provider groups. **(Table 3)**

Although the order is different, the Latino participant groups and the community service providers include the same top three issues: an information center, language and literacy, and healthcare. The desire to have basic needs met is critical to happiness and success in our daily lives. The need to effectively and accurately communicate is needed in all aspects of one's life. Communicating in both the English and Spanish-speaking world maintains a connection to their countries of origin but establishes the bridge to new resources. Additional bi-lingual staff in education, child care centers, and employment is essential. Cultural education can improve communication as community members learn about each other's strengths and needs.

Summary When compiling the final listing of most important issues, discrimination was missing from all three focus groups in Dodge County. Increasing the basic services including education, housing, child care, health, and employment are greater priorities. By working together, the Latinos and community service providers feel discrimination can be eliminated. Sharing the strengths of each culture can produce a stronger community, supportive of all families.

> "We want to unite so that they know us as much as we know them."
> ~~Latino participant