



## Welcome from the Chairperson

Madeline Garcia-Gonzalez

I am honored to Chair the Hispanic Advisory Committee (HAC), a group of Latino leaders dedicated to assuring that Latino families and children receive quality services both in the public and private sector of child welfare. With their support and yours, I intend to follow in the steps of all of my distinguished predecessors.

Each year we are faced with many challenges. As Chair, I will be put in situations that will have me ask that very important question: "What can I do to develop my own professional life or improve myself in a way that may enhance the lives of other Latinos that I serve?" This question will keep me centered and focused on the task at hand - working for the Latino community.

It is exciting to be part of this very energetic group of Latinos. However, this group cannot do the work of advising the Director without your input. Please reach out to me or any other

HAC members via e-mail or telephone to discuss concerns you may have about our Latino families and children. Also, let us know about any personal concerns you may have as a Latino worker. More importantly, join us during planned activities for Bilingual/Spanish speaking DCFS employees this year. These gatherings offer tremendous opportunities for all of us to come together and network.

Thank you for your confidence, and I look forward to moving ahead with our endeavors. I can be reached at 312/814-8616 or e-mail [MGonzalez@idcfs.state.il.us](mailto:MGonzalez@idcfs.state.il.us).

Madeline Gonzalez-Garcia  
Hispanic Advisory Committee Chairperson



### The Hispanic Advisory Committee is:

**Front Row:** Victor Flores, Maria Ayala, Dante Plata(former member) Miriam Mojica, and Madeline Gonzalez-Garcia

**Middle Row:** Dora Maya, Dahlia Roman, Asela Paredes, Carmen Alvarez, Syliva Fonseca, and Luis Carrion

**Back Row:** Joseph Becerra, Enrique Howell, Luis Barrios, and Jose Candelas

**Members not pictured:** Julia Camacho, Claudia Ceballos, Angela M. Fadrugas, Juana Haywood, Issac Lopez, Kenneth Martin-Ocasio, and Hector Vasquez

### Inside this issue:

Page 2

Sibling Rights  
Resolution Passes

Celebrating Diversity

Page 3

Division of Field  
Operations

Dante's Farewell

Page 4

An Evening in Pilsen  
Meeting with the  
Director

Page 5

A Special Recognition  
HAC Members

Page 6

Latino Consortium  
Roundtable

Bilingual Resource  
Directory

Page 7

Peña Professional  
Degree Program

Upcoming Events

# Sibling Rights Resolution Passes

By Michael Byrd

In 2000, a youth in care was faced with a difficult issue surrounding her sibling. She learned that if her 7-year-old sister was adopted she would no longer be able to maintain contact, have visits, or even place a phone call to her. She was heartbroken over the sudden realization that she might never see her sister again and the impact it would have on her sister. This youth brought her concerns to the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services Statewide Youth Advisory Board (SYAB). The SYAB members also had concerns about visitation, contact and placement with siblings, and decided to take this on as one of their major priorities.

The SYAB, assisted by Loyola University School of Law, University of Illinois, the Children and Family Research Center, Chicago Area Project and DCFS helped create a Sibling Rights Resolution that urges state lawmakers to establish provisions that allow former foster children the right to maintain ties with their siblings after they are adopted. Illinois State Senator Mattie Hunter sponsored the resolution.

In early June, a resolution passed in both houses of the Illinois state legislature that creates a Joint Task Force. The Sibling Rights Resolution task force will establish policies and programs on post-adoption contact, determine a suitable forum for hearing individual disputes, and make recommendations to Governor Rod R. Blagojevich and the General Assembly.

The task force is a 20-member team



*Statewide Youth Advisory Board members announce the Sibling Rights Resolution at a press conference at the State Capitol on June 25, 2004*

comprised of legislators, current and former foster children and representatives from advisory groups that focus on foster care, adoption, and youth services. The task force will create a final report for the governor within a year.

SYAB members represented Illinois youth in care at the State Senate Executive Committee session on February 25-26. The youth hosted a press conference on February 25 at the State Capitol with DCFS Director Bryan Samuels to announce the resolution. They shared their personal experiences with sibling rights issues and discussed how the new resolution will benefit foster and adopted children throughout Illinois. Director Samuels stated that, “in most cases, maintaining sibling contact is essential to the growth and development of these children.”

The SYAB continues to be involved in sibling rights and is learning more about how sibling ties affect youth in care. Statistical information showing the effects of sibling bonds, such as an increased self-esteem and sense of belonging, has also been developed.

# Celebrating Diversity

By Jeanette Camarillo

Like all kids, foster children need to feel special and important. Celebrating diversity by affirming cultural, racial and linguistic identity is a way for kids to value their sense of self. In an effort to build on this vision I would like to share the combined efforts made by a family, a residential placement, and DCFS to make a dream come true for a young Latina in foster care who was turning 15 years old and dreamed of celebrating her “Quinceañera.”

Traditionally, a female of Latin American descent celebrates her 15th birthday, considered a rite of passage from childhood to being presented to society as a young adult, in a very special manner. It is typically celebrated with a mass, during which a rosary, flowers and other articles are blessed and used as symbols of grace, and a celebration involving a dinner of traditional Latin American dishes. The celebrant looks and feels like a princess, wearing a formal gown and dancing a special waltz with her father, or father figure.

Preparation for this event began in early spring and was planned in partnership with the residential facility and the family. The single father and his children were actively involved in preparing the menu of tamales, rice and salsa. The residential facility provided the location, photography, and prepared the details for the mass, and DCFS provided the formal gown. During the mass, the young lady’s brothers placed a beautiful tiara on her head and her father presented her with a rosary. Many of her friends took part in the celebration, and most importantly, a little girl’s dream of being a princess for a day came true.

# Division of Field Operations

By Jose Candelas

The Division of Field Operations (DFO) provides statewide administration of direct services to children and families, including critical permanency services, to children who are wards of the state. The division is



Arthur Bishop



Jose Candelas

responsible for the safety, permanency and well-being of children who have been placed in the care of the Department. It also handles adoptions and foster care services.

In addition, the division performs administrative functions, including

business and contracts, performance services, operations and personnel.

The DFO is located at 310 S. Michigan, 10<sup>th</sup> Floor. Arthur Bishop is the Deputy Director who manages the office with two associate deputy directors, Jose Candelas for Cook County and Larry Chasey for the downstate regions.

The DFO oversees programs ranging from Child Welfare Services to Foster Parent Reimbursement and Placement Stabilization Programs. Some of these programs also include Resource Development and the Regional Clinical Management Unit.

The Division of Field Operations currently is working on new init-

atives, which will benefit Foster Children and their families. Some of these include:

## **Educational Enhancement Development Project:**

Some of the services offered through this initiative include linking DCFS children with educational services and the LANS network, with the goal of helping youth in care reach educational level required by the Board of Education. The Director's long-term vision is to promote higher academic standards to youth in care.

## **Partnership with Family Focus:**

The program's aim is to provide support to foster families, which also includes services to bilingual children in foster care. The program will cover the Aurora area, Evanston, and the North Lawndale and Englewood communities.

## **Integrated Assessment:**

The program will include a bilingual component for assessing bilingual families.

## **Arden Shore:**

DCFS' newest program which will provide a language appropriate and cultural sensitivity enhancement plan for Latino children in residential placement. Services will include Bilingual Therapy Services and Bilingual Case Management Services. At the time of this writing, the contractual negotiations were pending. More information about this program will be forthcoming in the next issue of Noticias.

For more information, contact Jose Candelas at 312/793-5637.

# Dante's Farewell

By Dahlia Roman



Michael Byrd says goodbye to Dante Plata

Friday, March 19, 2004 was one of the most difficult times for Dante Plata as he said goodbye to friends and co-workers. Dante had been

with the Department for over seven years, nearly half of which were spent as the administrative assistant for the Cook Central Regional Administrator and the last years assisting the Office of Latino Services (OLS).

Dante described his job as not always easy, but he survived the many obstacles, trials and changes in OLS. Dante also served as the Hispanic Advisory Committee's official photographer. He was happy to lend a helping hand and was thankful for all the opportunities given to him.

Dante wanted all to know how thankful he was for your prayers and words of encouragement during difficult times. He also indicated that he has learned a lot during his time with DCFS and he would be leaving with many fond memories. He looks forward to new experiences and time for himself. He had encouraging words for us all:

*"I encourage you to press forward with your responsibility – to continue to advocate for our children, whether they be white, black or brown. You are needed very much! Thank you for the patience, understanding and encouragement you gave me."*

Dante, we wish you well in your future endeavors. We thank you for all the support you provided to the HAC. You will be missed!

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## “Una Noche De Tertulia en Pilsen”

By Sylvia Fonseca

On April 19, 2004, Alderman Danny Solis, in conjunction with the DCFS Office of Latino Services (OLS), sponsored a reception for the community to meet Director Bryan Samuels at the Mexican Fine Arts Museum in Pilsen. Of the 125 people who attended, 21 were representatives of agencies from the Pilsen area, including El Hogar Del Niño, Latino Youth Services, Latino Consortium, Mujeres Latinas en Accion, El Valor and Pilsen-Little Village Community Mental Health Center. Director Samuels was accompanied by members of his management team.

Director Samuels spoke of “not making change for change’s sake, but representing change that will make a difference.” He stated, “while Latinos

represent almost all the population growth in Illinois, growth in cases within the Department has increased by only one percent. Credit goes to the community and a culture that supports keeping the numbers down. It is important to recognize that each child matters.”

Director Samuels invited participants to personally meet him and the other deputies and ask any questions they might have. After the Director’s speech, participants mingled with DCFS staff, enjoyed refreshments, food, music and a tour of the museum.

At HAC’s April monthly meeting, the Chief of OLS, Petra Porrás, informed HAC members that the Office of Latino Services along with the Office



*Petra Porrás, Chief of Latino Services; Cesareo Moreno, Director of Visual Arts for the Mexican Fine Arts Museum; Daniel Fitzgerald, Special Assistant to the Director; Bryan Samuels, DCFS Director; and Alderman Danny Solis enjoy “An Evening in Pilsen”*

of External Affairs is planning more community meet and greet events in other Latino neighborhoods.

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## Meeting with the Director

By Maria Ayala

On March 3, 2004, Director Bryan Samuels graciously provided the DCFS Hispanic Advisory Executive Committee an opportunity to meet with him and discuss issues and concerns that pertain to the services Latino children and families within the child welfare system receive. The various HAC subcommittees, which are pivotal to addressing specific child welfare issues, also shared updates and current activities.

HAC highlighted three primary topics affecting the delivery of services to our community. First, the Spanish version of the SACWIS service plan provided to bilingual clients presents inconsistencies in the format in comparison to the English version. As

a result of these differences, front line staff report spending an enormous amount of time in preparing and reviewing the plan with the client. Second is the challenge of recruiting qualified bilingual individuals to the Department and their subsequent retention once hired. Lastly is the continuing need for bilingual services for families and the children who reside in residential facilities. HAC made a commitment to work in conjunction with identified staff to attempt to resolve these concerns.

The Director reaffirmed his commitment to take into consideration these issues, and agreed to continue to meet quarterly with the HAC to facilitate this open dialogue. The Hispanic



*Members of the HAC met with Director Samuels to discuss issues important to the Latino families DCFS serves*

Advisory Committee looks forward to continued collaboration with Director Samuels and his deputies to ensure that equitable, quality services and resources are provided to our Latino families and children.

# A Special Recognition

By Denise Lourdes Alvarez



*Rosa Afanador*

Let me introduce to you our very own Hispanic pride and joy, Mrs. Rosa Afanador, who works as an In-Home Based Counselor. Rosa has been providing services, mostly to the Hispanic community, for approximately 13 years at Forward PC, located in the Logan Square/Humboldt Park area on Chicago's Northwest side. She also provides services in some of Chicago's Southside neighborhoods and in other outlying areas of the city. Rosa provides in-home counseling to individual children and their families, many who have difficulty finding Spanish language services. Many families are high-risk cases located in crime and gang infested areas.

Rosa lists the following issues as part of her services to the clients (including foster parents in need of support): abuse and neglect, domestic violence, parenting education, child-parent relationships, and others that arise during her counseling sessions. She also provides client referrals to other services within the community. Rosa works very long hours, sometimes seven days a week, despite her regular

weekday schedule. She is a very dedicated person whose greatest reward in life is to serve and help her community – the families and especially the children. Her main concern is and has always been children's safety.

Rosa has demonstrated a high sense of commitment to the Latino community. She has 33 years of experience in the area of social work. She started working at Onward House in 1970 and thereafter provided counseling services at the YMCA and Association House. Rosa started working at Forward PC in 1991, where she continues to provide quality services to our Hispanic community and clients. She has gone above and beyond her call of duty on behalf of the children and families. Her high spirit and altruism to her Latino community should be an inspiration and an incentive to everyone in the child welfare system. Many of her colleagues consider Rosa a friend and a very inspiring and exceptional human being who gives a hand to her fellow men in need without expecting anything in return.

Rosa exemplifies an "Angel of Hope, Courage, Strength and Mercy." Rosa is a person who has made a difference in the lives of the people she has unselfishly served over the years. With her 33 years of hard work, sacrifice, commitment, high moral values and integrity, she represents our very best.

Due to her exceptional achievements and dedication to our Hispanic community, DCFS colleagues who have worked with Rosa over the years gave her a well-deserved recognition award.

## Hispanic Advisory Committee Members

### Executive Committee

Madeline González-García,  
Chairwoman

Miriam Mojica, Chair-Elect  
Sylvia Fonseca, Secretary

### Members At-Large

Maria Ayala

Luis Barrios

Joseph Becerra

Julia Camacho

Luis Carrión

Claudia Ceballo

Angela M. Fadrugas

Victor M. Flores

Juana Haywood

Enrique Howell

Isaac López

Kenneth Martín-Ocasio

Dora Maya

Asela Paredes

Dahlia Román

Héctor Vázquez

Sergio Vásquez

### ExOfficio Members

Carmen Alvarez

José Candelas

D. Jean Ortega Piron

Petra Porras

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## Latino Consortium Roundtable

By Luis Barrios

On the morning of March 4, 2004, the Latino Consortium sponsored a roundtable discussion regarding the unique linguistic, cultural and transnational issues present in child welfare practice with Latino families. In attendance were child welfare professionals, advocates and friends who came together to take a closer look at the data, conclusions and recommendations found in the 2003 Hispanic Family Profile. The Profile is a companion document to the annual DCFS Hispanic Family Conference and is geared to foster a safe and healthy environment for Illinois Latino children and their families in child welfare. The discussion took place at the old chapel located on the third floor of the main office of Association House of Chicago. The room was filled to capacity.

The roundtable gave the participants the opportunity to take pause from their busy schedules to ponder together the basis of our daily work.

The participation of so many friends and colleagues added energy and reinvigorated the collective desire to continue making a positive contribution toward the development of services to the Latino, and in particular, the Spanish-speaking community.

The objectives of the discussion were met thanks in part to the valuable contribution of Maria Vidal de Haymes, PhD, professor at the Loyola University School of Social Work and Layla P. Suleiman, PhD, assistant professor at DePaul University. Maria had a major role in editing the Hispanic Family Profile and Layla provided her expertise with the data analysis. They provided a short summary of the Profile and facilitated the roundtable.

The dialogue was centered among three major areas of concern: data, practice issues and policy. Besides recording discussion points on flip charts, the roundtable was audio taped

for transcription into a summary that will serve as the basis for an article in the Illinois Child Welfare Journal and a conference presentation to the Midwest Chapter of CWLA.

The discussion and the input of participants reflected the need to improve services based on the following areas: understanding general Latino population demographics and settlement patterns in Illinois; understanding the characteristics of the Latino child welfare population; continuing the development of innovative Latino child welfare initiatives in Illinois; enhancing programming for older Latino wards; eliminating barriers to licensure of undocumented Latino home of relatives; and understanding distinctive service issues with foreign nationals and undocumented immigrants.

For more information about the roundtable discussion, contact the Latino Consortium at 773/772-8971.

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## The Latino Consortium Bilingual Services Resource Directory

By Luis Barrios

The Latino Consortium completed its Bilingual Services Resource Directory in May and it is now available in electronic (pdf) format or on a CD-ROM. The directory was shared with the Latino Consortium member agencies and DCFS regions in Cook County.

There are a number of objectives the Consortium wanted to accomplish in redesigning this handbook. First, to

list human service organizations that have bilingual services as part of their programming for the Spanish-speaking population in Cook County; second, to ensure the information is factual and practical for readers and users; and third, to offer comprehensive lists of traditional and non-traditional service providers that are providing bilingual services to families and their children in Cook County.

The directory is divided into 16 service areas, ranging from alternative education to commonly used hotline numbers. Several new sections, including hospices, bereavement, and the DCFS Service of Care providers list for Cook County were also added.

The feedback from users of the Directory has been positive. To request a copy, contact Luis Barrios at [lbarrios@latinoconsortium.org](mailto:lbarrios@latinoconsortium.org).

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# The Peña Professional Degree Program

By Paulette Baqi

The Peña Professional Degree Program was established to provide educational assistance to current full-time staff who are enrolled in a Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) accredited or "in candidacy" graduate program. Benefits include tuition support, paid time off for required classes that occur during the workday and field placements that have been pre-approved by the Program Manager and the employee's supervisor. The program is targeted for staff who demonstrate both commitment to child welfare and leadership in the agency. Selection is based on a review of a candidate's application and its concurrence with the eligibility criteria.

Staff who are eligible for the Upward Mobility Program (UMP) need to enroll with UMP as their primary program. The Peña program provides

supplemental help beyond those benefits provided by UMP such as tuition for additional courses or private school rates and time off with pay.

The Peña Professional Degree Program is a tuition assistance program and is not to be considered as a scholarship. It does not pay for admission fees, graduation fees, books, mileage expenses, parking, overnight hotel expenses, per diem and child care expenses. Participants also must agree to a four year post-graduate work commitment at DCFS or otherwise must reimburse the state for the cost of this program.

A Peña Professional Degree application period will be announced on the D-Net towards the end of spring for those applying to attend school during the next DCFS fiscal year. Copies of

the application can be downloaded from the D-Net. Applications received after the announced deadline or which do not meet the eligibility criteria will be rejected and returned to the applicant.

It is the hope of the Department that regardless of the budget cuts for this next fiscal year, this program will continue to be available to workers seeking to obtain a master's degree in social work. This program has continued to be a great benefit to many of the Department's workers.

For further information please feel free to contact Paulette Baqi, ACSW, the Peña Professional Degree Program Manager at 312/328-2885 and/or via e-mail on Outlook. Ms. Baqi works for the DCFS Training Division.

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## Upcoming Events

### Latino Social Workers Organization Conference June 25, 2004

The Latino Social Workers Organization (LSWO) Conference will be held at St. Augustine College in Chicago from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Workshops will cover issues of teenage pregnancy, depression, cultural competency, child abuse and neglect, community intervention, storytelling, after-school programs, drama therapy and Latina Lesbianism (LBQ). For more information, call 312/491-8248 or e-mail Adrian Delgado at [Isso@aol.com](mailto:Isso@aol.com) or Susie Gomez at [sgomez@luc.edu](mailto:sgomez@luc.edu).

### Bradley Place Summer Safety Fest August 13, 2004

The Annual Bradley Summer Safety Fest and Coloring Contest will be held at the DCFS Office located at 2500 W. Bradley Place from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. This event is open to children and families involved with DCFS, licensed foster parents, unlicensed relative caregivers, community families and regional staff. Activities will include free fingerprinting, immunizations, blood pressure checks and safety presentations by law enforcement and fire department officials. Contact Dora Delgado at 773/866-5500 or Julia Camacho at 312/492-3700 for more information.

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**This newsletter is brought to you by the Hispanic Advisory Committee and the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services.**

Submit articles for consideration to:

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