



Reach Out and Read: *Leyendo Juntos*

Focusing on Latino Children and their Families

What is the Leyendo Juntos (Reading Together) Initiative?

- Designed to assist primary care providers in effectively encouraging Latino parents and extended family members to read with their children.
- Emphasizes respect for patients' cultures and primary language.
- Builds upon the best practices that medical providers at various levels of linguistic proficiency – e.g., native Spanish speakers, near-fluent speakers, and those who speak medically-appropriate Spanish – have used when emphasizing the importance of early literacy to Spanish-speaking families.
- Stresses the links between reading together and children's development and future school success.

Why is Leyendo Juntos important?

- Children of Spanish-speaking families are more than twice as likely to fail fourth-grade reading assessments than non-Latino white children.¹
- 58 percent of Latino fourth-graders read below the basic level.²
- Latino families have on average 20 fewer books in their homes than their English-speaking counterparts.³
- 46 percent of young Latino children (0-8 years) have mothers who did not graduate from high school.⁴
- 28 percent of Latino children in the U.S. live in poverty.⁵
- 22 percent of all children in the United States under the age of 5 are Latino, but they are 20 percent less likely than other groups to be enrolled in early childhood education programs.⁶
- However, Latinos have strong sense of culture as well as strong family and social connections which, when recognized and leveraged, can help overcome some of the disparities they face.

How can Reach Out and Read (ROR) encourage early literacy among Latino families?

- 86 percent of ROR Programs nationwide serve families for whom Spanish is their first language, meaning that more than one million Latino children and parents benefit from the literacy message and the books that are distributed.
- ROR develops and disseminates Spanish language materials for patients, families, providers, clinics, and communities.
- ROR medical providers are in a unique position to develop a trusting relationship with families early in a child's life.
- ROR medical providers can introduce and emphasize the importance of language, storytelling, and book-sharing to Latino families (in any language).

Through Leyendo Juntos, ROR medical providers can better serve Latino families:

- Providers will develop a better understanding of the health and educational disparities that Latino families encounter.
- Providers will learn strategies for effective anticipatory guidance. ROR providers have access to several tools:
 - Spanish Language Literacy Promotion Guide.
 - ROR's Leyendo Juntos website which provides access to educational materials, posters, recommended book lists, and weblinks to help parents and families promote early literacy.
- Physicians and nurses, through their work with ROR, have demonstrated that literacy promotion may improve primary care provider-family relationships in cross-cultural settings.

1 Sanders, L. et al, *Prescribing Books for Immigrant Children*, Arch Pediatric Adolesc. Med, Vol 154, p. 771 (2000).

2 Barrera, R.M., *Dispelling the Myth*, NCLR, p. 5 (2005).

3 Flores, G., Does Disadvantage Start at Home? Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Early Childhood Home Routines, Safety and Educational Practices/Resources, PowerPoint slide 15 (2000).

4 National Task Force on Early Childhood Education for Hispanics, Young Hispanic Children's Demographic Profile, www.ecehispanic.org, accessed April 9, 2007.

5 2000 Census, www.kidscount.org

6 National Council of La Raza, *Latino Early Literacy Development: Strategies for Lifelong Learning and Success*, edited by Lopez, A, p. 1-2 (2005).

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