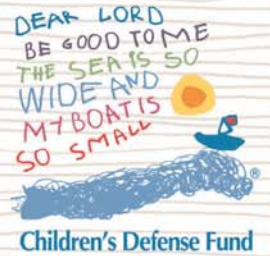


# Children's Defense Fund Cradle to Prison Pipeline® Campaign Latino Fact Sheet



September 4, 2008

The Children's Defense Fund's Cradle to Prison Pipeline® Campaign is a national call to action to stop the funneling of tens of thousands of youth, predominantly minorities, down paths that often lead to arrest, conviction, incarceration and in some cases, even death. Latino children are among the most vulnerable in this crisis. Many of these children do not have access to the quality health, education and support services they need to survive, fulfill their potential, and attain successful passage to adulthood. It's time for America to become America. The *Cradle to Prison Pipeline* crisis can be reduced to one simple fact: The United States of America is not a level playing field for all children and our nation does not value and protect all children's lives equally.

We must step forward now to dismantle the Pipeline. For every minute we waste, we lose another child.

## FACTS ABOUT LATINO CHILDREN IN AMERICA

- **A Latino boy born in 2001 has a 1 in 6 chance of going to prison in his lifetime; a Latina girl a 1 in 45 chance.**
- **One in 3 Latino babies is born into poverty, and more than 1 in 4 Latino children is poor—4.5 million children in total.** Poverty is the largest driving force behind the Pipeline.
- **One in 4 Latino children are without health insurance and more than one-half of all babies born uninsured are Latino.** Latino children are three times as likely as White children to be uninsured and have a lower rate of private health coverage than Black or White children. This makes them less likely to have a regular source of care and more likely to have unmet medical needs.
- **Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) raids are disrupting communities across the country and separating thousands of parents from their children.** As a result of this separation, children in these families are at increased risk of psychological distress and economic hardship.
- **Latino children are less likely to attend early childhood development (ECD) programs than their Black or White peers.** Black and Latino children are more likely to start kindergarten less prepared than their White peers. High quality ECD programs are needed to level the playing field and ensure every child entering school is ready to learn.
- **Latino children continue to be adversely affected by disparate educational opportunities in America's schools.** Eighty-three percent of Latino 4<sup>th</sup> graders cannot read at grade level; 85 percent of Latino 8<sup>th</sup> graders cannot perform math at grade level; and each day of the school year, 661 Latino teens drop out of high school. Only 61 percent of Latino students graduate from high school in four years with a regular diploma.
- **Latino high school students are more likely to feel "sad or hopeless"** and to consider, make a plan, or attempt suicide than their Black or White peers. These indicators of depression, coupled by a lack of access to comprehensive mental health services, increase their risk of missing school, behaving violently and using drugs.
- **Drugs, tobacco and alcohol lead our children down the wrong path.** One in 4 Latino high school students has engaged in binge drinking, and compared to their peers, Latino high school students are more likely to be cocaine users. Rather than treatment, youth are often incarcerated and punished for drug use.

## **STEP UP AND TAKE ACTION NOW TO ENSURE A LEVEL PLAYING FIELD FOR ALL LATINO CHILDREN... A CRITICAL STEP TOWARDS DISMANTLING THE PIPELINE!**

Every step we take towards improving the lives of children improves the lives of us all. We must stop the marginalization of Latino children and fight for policies that ensure that all children are able to thrive and reach a safe and productive adulthood.

**We must demand that our elected officials do what is right for all children NOW, starting with these critical steps:**

- Expand the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and the Child Tax Credit (CTC) to supplement the income of working families with children.
- Increase the minimum wage to a livable amount and increase employment opportunities by expanding job training programs targeted at low-income youth and adults.
- Ensure every child and pregnant woman has access to affordable, seamless, comprehensive health and mental health coverage and services by supporting the All Healthy Children Act (S. 1564/ H.R. 1688) and Legal Immigrant Children's Health Improvement Act (S. 845/ H.R. 1689).
- Provide oversight of immigration enforcement activities to ensure that children are protected during worksite enforcement and other operations.
- Provide access to high-quality, affordable child care and early childhood development programs for every child.
- Make college affordable for every student, regardless of their immigration status, by supporting the DREAM Act (S. 2205/ H.R. 1275).
- Expand prevention and specialized treatment services for children and their parents who are affected by alcohol and substance abuse.
- Reduce detention and incarceration by increasing investment in prevention and early intervention strategies.

**In addition, here are some examples of what each of us can do in our community to help keep children out of the Pipeline:**

- **Tutor students and adults** to help both children and their parents achieve their educational goals and have a better chance to earn livable wages. Obtaining a high school diploma is among the most important strategies to prevent poverty in adulthood.
- **Mentor a child** to provide the additional support and guidance needed for the child to achieve his/her dreams. Consistent support and strong relationships with caring adults play an important role in children's future success.
- **Launch an enrollment campaign to educate the families in your community** about their eligibility for government-funded social services and ensure that they are linked to the appropriate service provider. Eligible Latino children are often not linked to services they need; connecting them to these services will help ensure they have healthy childhoods.
- **Develop an action plan** to create or support a program that provides a positive environment for children to learn and grow, for example, a sports team or creative arts activity. Children engaged in positive activities are less likely to look to drugs and the streets for amusement, solutions to their problems and acceptance from their peers.
- **Encourage your local house of worship or community center to become a safe haven for children** affected by immigration raids—a place where children can be protected and connected to key social services. Safe havens across the country connect children to the much needed health and social services that they deserve.

*When possible, consider partnering with community and faith-based organizations, churches, associations and clubs you are affiliated with to plan and implement these actions.*

**For more information on the *Cradle to Prison Pipeline Campaign*, please visit [www.childrensdefense.org](http://www.childrensdefense.org) or contact **Natacha Blain, Lead Strategic Advisor**, at [nblain@childrensdefense.org](mailto:nblain@childrensdefense.org) or (202) 622-3544.**