



Health Policy Brief: Obesity Prevention

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LATINO FATHERS COULD PLAY A LARGER ROLE IN PREVENTING OBESITY IN CHILDREN

ACTION STEPS

Developing WIC Resources for Latino Fathers

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It is estimated that 42% of the over 9.7 million participants in The Special Supplemental Food Assistance Program for Women, Infants, and children (WIC) are Latino¹. WIC successfully improves low-income Latino children's health status by both promoting breastfeeding during the first six months of a child's life and supporting consumption of healthful supplementary foods. Increased involvement of fathers in the WIC program's outreach has the potential to increase the beneficial impact that the program has on young children and their families. The majority (66%) of Latino children live in two-parent families² and a significant number live in single-father households³. It follows that Latino fathers, as well as mothers, play a role in child-feeding⁴ and, similar to mothers, they may face many structural and environmental obstacles to promoting healthful behaviors among their children⁵. WIC is welcoming of diverse families, but could be more explicit about including fathers

in order help low-income Latino men feel more welcome in what may often be viewed as an agency designed for women and children. Therefore, taking steps and developing procedures to encourage full access to WIC services by Latino fathers may encourage their participation and, by so doing, support WIC goals for the nutrition of children and their families.



Action Steps

WIC should consider action to better engage Latino fathers, and to develop materials that more explicitly integrate the role of Latino fathers.

Specifically, WIC should:

- Develop marketing and outreach materials and approaches that clearly illustrate WIC's inclusive work with diverse families and that emphasize the important role of all fathers, including single fathers, in children's nutrition and health. Current strategies may inadvertently over-emphasize the mother's role and influence within the household without adequately addressing the father's important role.
- Develop resources that explicitly address the needs of diverse Latino fathers, including single fathers and fathers in same-sex couples. Educational materials could be made explicit about the key role of Latino fathers in promoting healthy eating, including preventing obesity, as well as how WIC will support their culturally-based parenting practices.
- Improve scheduling and outreach that accommodates the needs of employed Latino fathers with varied work schedules. Low-income Latino fathers often have more than one job and may not be available during WIC's regular business hours.

References

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