UNCG Becomes A Site for the New National Research Center on Hispanic Children and Families

Child care is an important issue for any family. But for those from a Hispanic background, little research about the impact of child care has existed. Until now.

A team of national experts in Hispanic issues, including several UNCG researchers, is part of the newly created National Research Center on Hispanic Children and Families. Funded through a five-year $5.2 million federal grant, the center will focus on three priority areas: poverty reduction and self-sufficiency, healthy marriage and responsible fatherhood, and early care and education.

At UNCG, Dr. Julia Mendez of the Department of Psychology and Dr. Danielle Crosby of the Department of Human Development and Family Studies will direct all research related to early care and education. Mendez also is a member of the steering committee for the overall center activities.

“Our initial projects will examine the factors that impact parental decision-making related to usage of child care,” Mendez said. “But the overall project is taking a broad perspective. By assembling a network of experts, this center will be able to advance science in multiple areas impacting the lives of Hispanic families with young children.”

Mendez cited previous research on Hispanic families which has shown that parents must balance work responsibilities with the challenge of finding high quality child care for their children. Also, when children are attending child care, either with family members or in other home or center-based care settings, there is less information about the impact of child care on the development of children from Hispanic backgrounds.

In the first year, Dr. Heather Helms, also of the Department of Human Development and Family Studies, will join the team in a research study of Mexican-American couples residing in North Carolina and their child care decision-making, preferences and beliefs about early care and education.

Future research will address other important topics related to Hispanic families including family engagement in education, use of services to address poverty-related stressors, and school readiness of Latino children.

“This research ties nicely into UNCG’s commitment to conducting community-engaged research and scholarship,” Mendez said.

The national center also will offer a Summer Fellowship Program to allow graduate students to work on center-sponsored research projects. At UNCG, several graduate students are working in partnership with Mendez, Crosby and Helms to develop a variety of research briefs and materials for disseminating information to Hispanic families.

“This strong mentorship model is designed to attract the next generation of community-engaged scholars to the field of Hispanic family research,” Mendez said.

To follow updates from the center, or to learn more about how to get involved, visit

http://psy.uncg.edu/research/national-research-center-on-hispanic-children-families/