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During the past three months the following major activities have been initiated by the A.C.O.R.N. Center for Families’ Work First Pilot Project:

- The Center sponsored a Hispanic Heritage Month Fiesta on October 11, 2000 for all families in the community. Parents participated in the event’s planning and activities which improved their leadership skills and moved the families toward becoming part of the community. Approximately 280 people attended the event, including Hispanic, African-American, and Caucasian families – truly bringing the community together.

- The Hispanic Family Support Coordinators continued to develop the project’s resource and referral component by working closely with the local school system, Carteret County Health Department and Carteret County DSS. The Hispanic Family Support Coordinators met with family members at the ACORN Center, at other agencies, and at the homes of the Hispanic families. New community resources accessed by the families included Coastal Community Action and area housing authorities.

- English as a Second Language Classes have recruited new participants and have further tailored the classes to meet the needs of Carteret County’s Hispanic Families. Classes were offered one night a week and one afternoon a week to accommodate the different shifts at the local factory where the majority of the people work. Participants are empowered to overcome language barriers by learning the basic skills needed to access resources for their families, such as basic banking, advocating for their child’s education, and employment terminology.

- Outreach was provided to families to continue their children’s success during the school year. Staff worked with Head Start, Even Start, and the
elementary and middle schools to ensure that the families were understanding any correspondence. Hispanic Family Support Coordinators assisted with registering new children for school.

- Work continued in the community to start neighborhood watch programs that create safer neighborhoods and lead to a better understanding between the police and the Hispanic families.

Of the 130 Hispanic families we have identified in Carteret County, ACORN’s Hispanic Family Support Coordinators are currently working with 33 families that qualify for services under the defined guidelines (these families equal 114 individuals).

The outcomes observed for the individuals served during the last three months include:

- For the 133 individual contacts made assisting Hispanic families overcome language barriers, the correct community resources were utilized and independent, educated decisions were made. This component is ensure the Hispanic families are receiving the services they require and are eligible for. Hispanic Family Support Coordinators have tremendously increased the Hispanic Families access to community resources by educating the families on which resources could assist them, translating and communicating between the families and the local agencies, and assisting with applications and forms. Community resources benefit from correct referrals for their services and provide services Hispanic families need. Overcoming language barriers is helping Hispanic families become part of the community and others are seeing them as equals.

- For the 79 children who were involved with child development programs or received access to them, their progress is evident not only to the professionals working with them, but also to their parents. The parents understand that engaging their children in these programs will lead to the future success of their children. Staff is working individually with several of these families to strengthen their parenting skills and help them overcome the language barriers involved with advocating for child’s needs.

- For the 12 individual contacts made to assist Hispanic families in creating safe neighborhoods by eliminating criminal activity or other dangers to child and family safety and well being, the families received information and skills to better care for their families in emergencies, such as hurricanes, and improve their communities by organizing crime watch groups.
For the 6 individual contacts needing assistance with finding housing and moving from poverty to self-sufficiency, staff is working with the families to identify their immediate needs and long term goals. In many cases, addressing their immediate needs leads to placement in a transitional housing situation while a long term solution is worked out.

The program is yet to identify any non-custodial Hispanic parents who qualify for services through the guidelines of this funding, but staff is prepared to help them when identified and is able to refer non-custodial parents who do not qualify for services to the correct community resources.

These outcomes are inline with the overall goal of the program, which is to strengthen the local community through the empowerment of Hispanic families in Carteret County. Hispanic families are developing skills to build upon their strengths and address their own employment and language barriers. Through community collaboration, Hispanic families are gaining the opportunities and resources required to stop intergenerational poverty in their families and thus reach their full potential.

Just as the Hispanic families are striving to improve themselves, this pilot program is working towards a strong future. There are weekly reviews with staff to discuss the outreach and services we are providing in the community and how we can improve performance and reach more people. Issues facing Carteret County’s Hispanic families include housing and financial management. The staff is currently working with the limited resources in Carteret County to address these needs to resolve immediate crises and develop long term solutions.

To evaluate and track this program each qualified family has a Community Partnership Folder which includes notes on contacts with families, referrals to other agencies, Family Development Plans, and needed paperwork. The Hispanic Family Support Coordinators are required to track and code their work on Weekly Contact Log Sheets which are easily used to tabulate our efforts in the community.

During the last three months, 26% of the ACORN Center for Families Work First funds had been expended as of December 31, 2000.