

# **Community Assistantship Program**

## **Strengthening the Latino Community in Todd County**

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# **Strengthening the Latino Community in Todd County**

Conducted on behalf of  
Todd County Community Hispanic Liaison Program

Prepared by  
Eduardo Millet, Graduate Research Assistant,  
University of Minnesota  
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CAP Report 024

**CURA RESOURCE COLLECTION**

**Center for Urban and Regional Affairs  
University of Minnesota  
330 Humphrey Center**

January, 2001

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Community Assistantship Program

330 Hubert H. Humphrey Center

301 - 19th Avenue South

Minneapolis, MN 55455

phone: 612-251-7304 or 651-293-0782

e-mail: joannOOl@tc.umn.edu

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Eduardo Millet

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## **Introduction**

As a result of its rapid growth the Latino community in Todd County has had to deal with many difficulties including language barrier, misunderstanding of its culture and discrimination. In an effort to understand better the language barrier Latinos in this region have been facing The Todd County Community Hispanic Liaison (TCCHL), through the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA) Community Assistantship Program, initiated a study to identify strategies that will strengthen the Latino youth and its families.

The information collected on this report is based on informal interviews with the Latino community and aimed to:

- Identify what is necessary for the Latino community to better communicate.
- To research the existing educational programs of the community that could be used to help the Latino community overcome its language barrier.

The survey showed that Todd County Latinos consider that due to work load and schedules they have not been able to improve their English as a Second Language's skills. By talking to local organizations I came to the conclusion that an internal-asset approach focused on Latino participation within their community could lead to their empowerment as community members and potentially improve their communication skills.

## Background

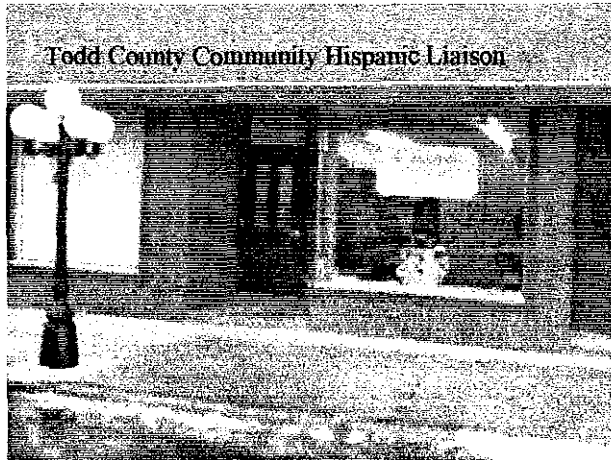
The demographic of Todd County has change drastically over the past five years. It is estimated that around 3 percent of the total population of Todd County is from Latino background. Most of these new comers arrive here directly or

Long Prairie Packing, Inc.



indirectly as a result of the employment opportunities offered by businesses like the Long Prairie, CO., in which approximately 60 percent of the personnel are new comers.

The rapid changes in the demographic of this region have generated new needs, services and challenges to the community. The TCCHL program began in July 1999 and it was developed through the cooperative action of local government and businesses under the umbrella of the County as a mechanism to promote unity and cultural awareness.



The program provides services to Hispanics and organizations interacting with Hispanics. The center provides a wide range of services from translations, to interpreting at Court, to

different activities that promote cultural awareness among all members of the community. Also, new businesses serving the Latino community like “La Michoanaca” remark the importance of new comers in the region.



## **Methodology**

Between October 27 and December 15, 2000, the research assistant (RA) conducted face-to-face interviews with twenty Latinos, over the age of 18, and with children attending school in Todd County. Participants were recruited mainly from public places at the community and through personal visits to their homes. Subjects did not receive any payment for their participation.

The questionnaires used were standardized. However, the RA was free to deviate from the formality of the questionnaire and thus bring into the interview a certain degree of flexibility. Since the primary purpose of this survey was explorative, the research approach was more interpretative than quantitative.

Each interview began with an introduction and explanation of how the interview would proceed (Appendix A). The questionnaire included a total of thirty-five questions



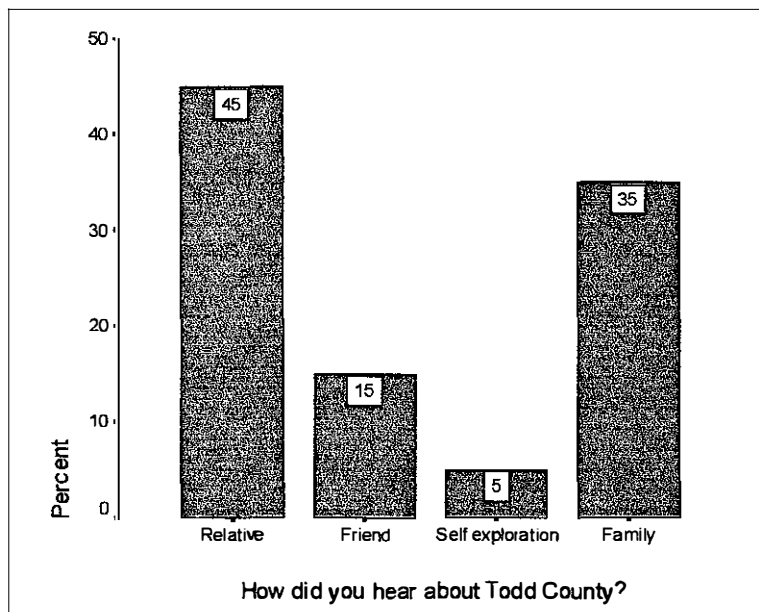
(Appendix B), and a demographic survey (Appendix C). Some were closed-ended questions followed by open-ended questions, others were only closed ended.

## Findings

This section presents a summary of the findings. For a complete listing of their frequency distribution see appendix D.

### *Demographics*

All participants were born in Mexico. On average, they heard about Todd County three years ago. Ninety five percent of them learned about Todd County from a relative, friend or extended family. 75 percent of the participants have relatives in the area. 90 percent of the time a family member settled first and then he/she brought the rest of the family to the region.



*“A friend- he brought his brothers here first”*

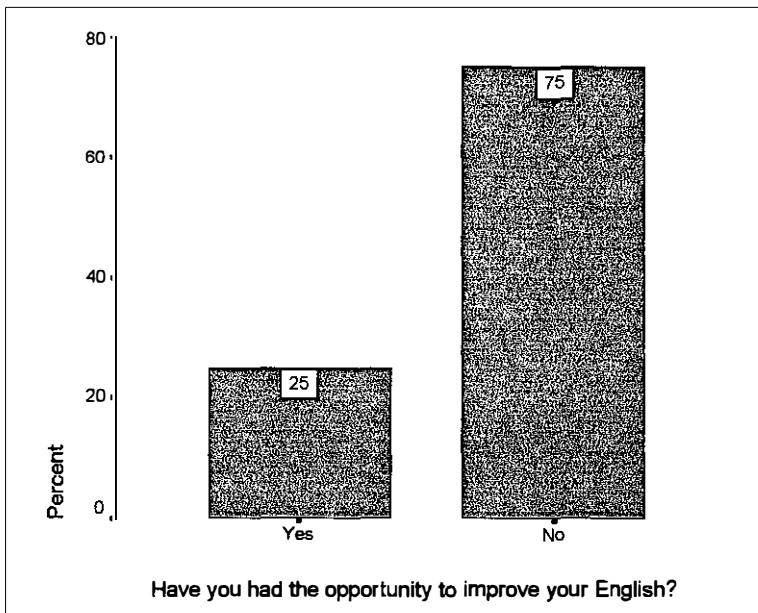
*“I learned that in Long Prairie my children will have a better future”*

*“I followed my children. I moved from California”*

*“A relative told me about the employment opportunities.”*

*English as a Second Language.*

35 percent of participants did not have the opportunity of studying English before arriving to the United States. 70 percent of them feel that their English proficiency is low and only 5 percent feel their ESL skills are advanced. 75 percent pointed out that it has been difficult to improve their level of English because they work too many hours per day. 60 percent of the participants know about the ESL classes available in the community.



***“I work 10 hours each day.”***

***“I don’t have a car to go to the classes”***

***“I take care of my children.”***

***“The classes are excellent”***

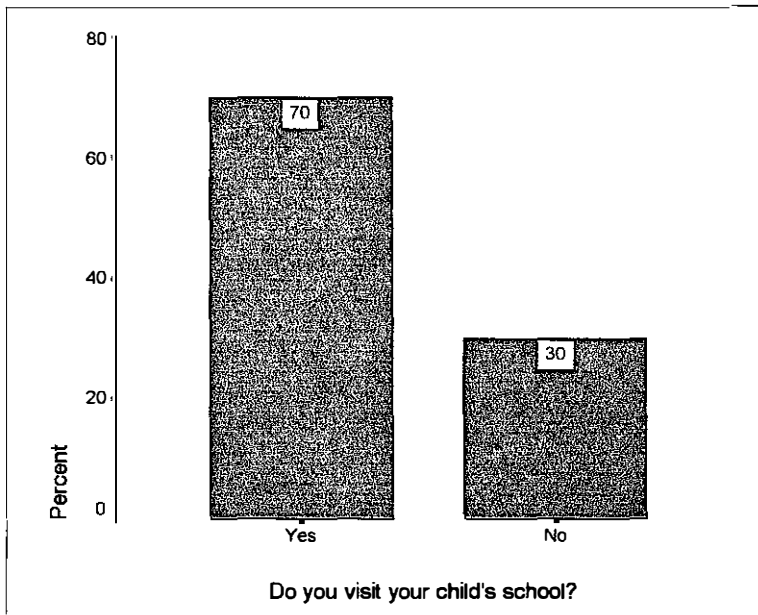
***“I like the classes, the teacher helps us to improve our English skills.”***

**From your immediate family, who has the best English skills?**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Father	2	10.0	11.1	11.1
	Mother	1	5.0	5.6	16.7
	Daughter	4	20.0	22.2	38.9
	Son	11	55.0	61.1	100.0
	Total	18	90.0	100.0	
Missing	N/A	2	10.0		
Total		20	100.0		

*Schools*

All the respondents expressed great concern about their children’s education. 95 percent of them believe their children are getting an adequate education in Todd County. 70 percent of the participants visit the school to get feedback from teachers, some of parents expressed their difficulty to communicate to teachers and administrators. Others mentioned that parents/teachers meeting take place at times that made them impossible to attend.



***“I tried to go to every conference.”***

***“I call the teacher to talk about the progress of my children”***

***“I work during the school conferences.”***

***“The conferences are difficult to understand.”***

**How much do you believe you children's teachers know about your culture?**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	High	1	5.0	5.6	5.6
	Medium	6	30.0	33.3	38.9
	Low	8	40.0	44.4	83.3
	None	3	15.0	16.7	100.0
	Total	18	90.0	100.0	
Missing	N/A	2	10.0		
<b>Total</b>		<b>20</b>	<b>100.0</b>		

## **Recommendations**

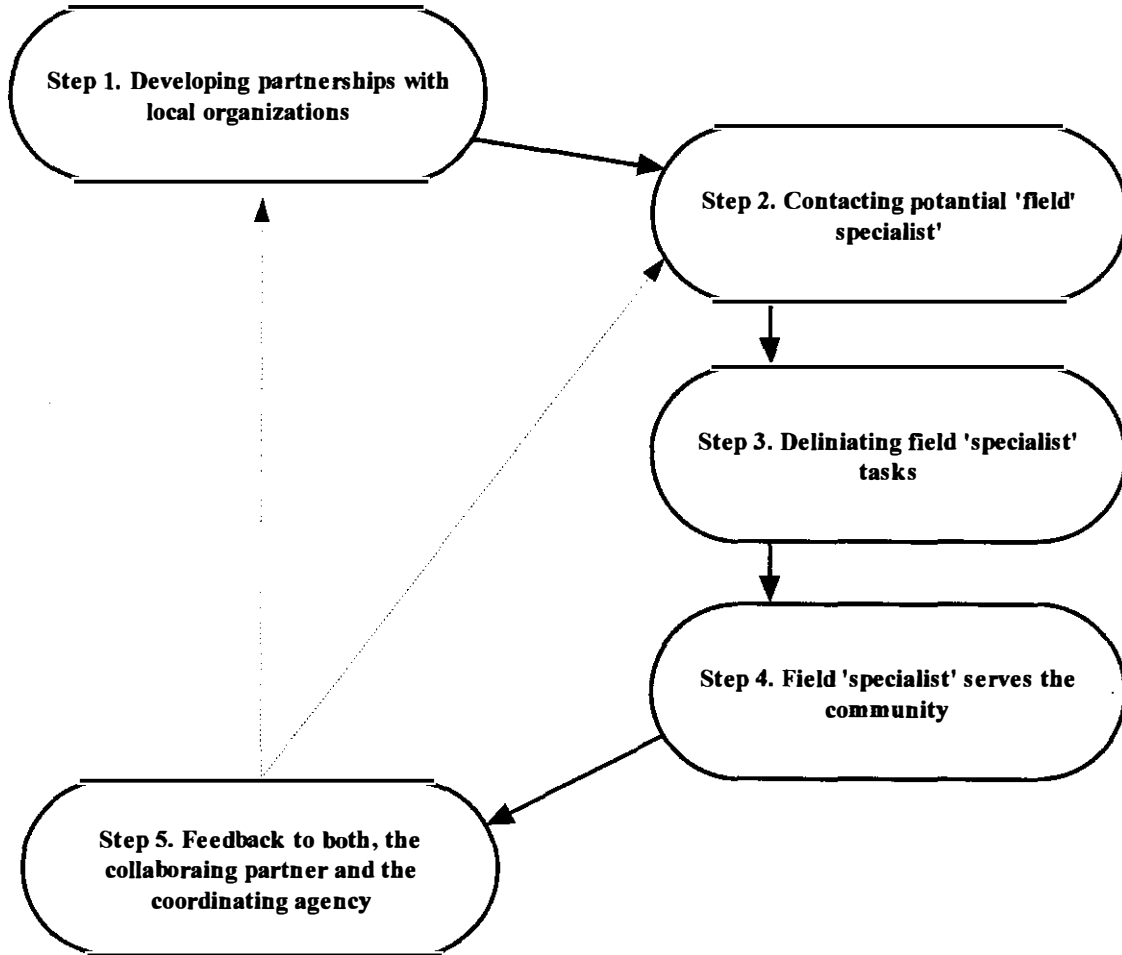
The participant's responses demonstrate the need of more communication from Todd County Latinos. From the assessment, I see that the level of understanding of English as in participants is low limiting the opportunities of overcoming the communications barriers. Another limitation is that most of the participants expressed that long hours of employment prevented them for assisting ESL classes. At the same time they expressed a great interest of increasing their participation and improving their communication skills.

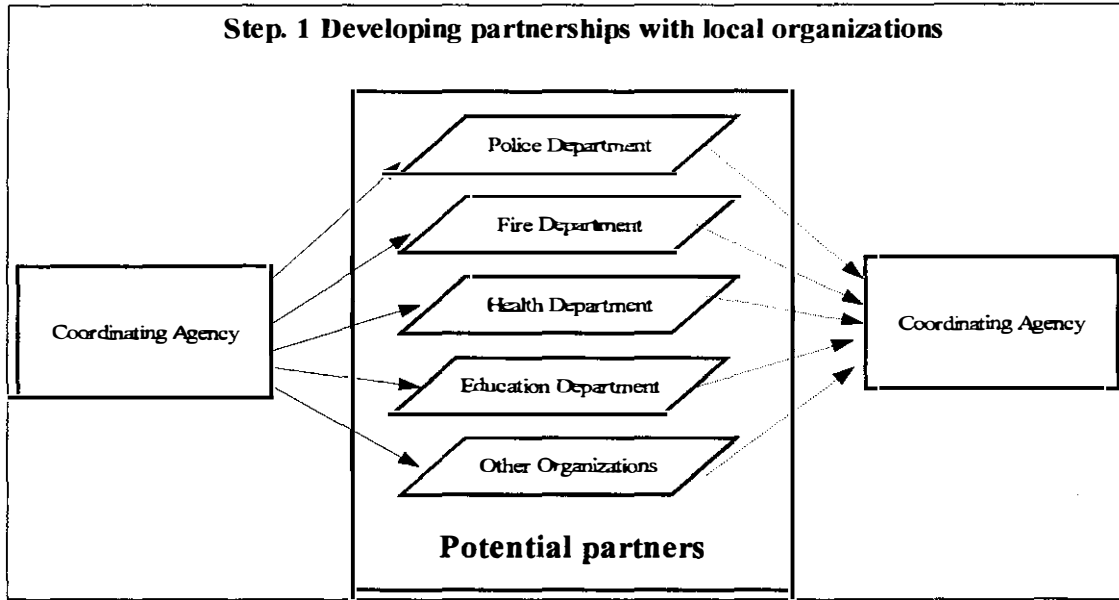
From observations during my visits to the TCCHL, I recognize that there are some repetitive tasks that could be performed by someone from within the Latino community. Tasks like filling out a driver license application or a IRS form could be done by a person or 'field specialist' increasing the efficiency of the agency and at the same time generating leadership in the Latino community. The TCCHL could hire a potential and train 'field specialist' in a repetitive task and reduce the amount of work of the TCCHL full time personnel. That new "free" time could be used to increase the time spent in planning, fundraising, etc. The 'field specialist' should receive training, support and economic compensation to increase the participation of Todd County Latinos.

It is important that the 'field specialist' position becomes a revolving position to give opportunities to several community members develop new skills and become potential community leaders. The focus of the program is to increase participation, empower and improve the communication skills of Latinos in Todd County.

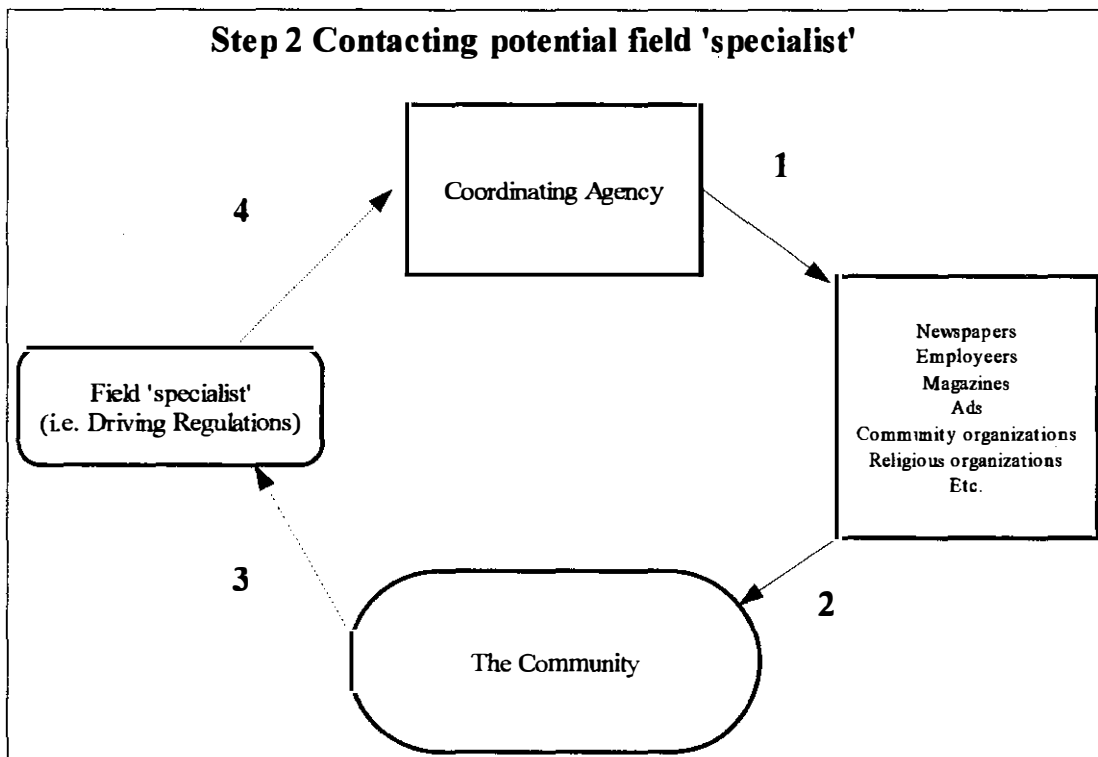
Based on the previous analysis I propose the following program:

**Community-Asset Approach**  
**(Part of a paper in progress)**  
© Eduardo Millet, 2001

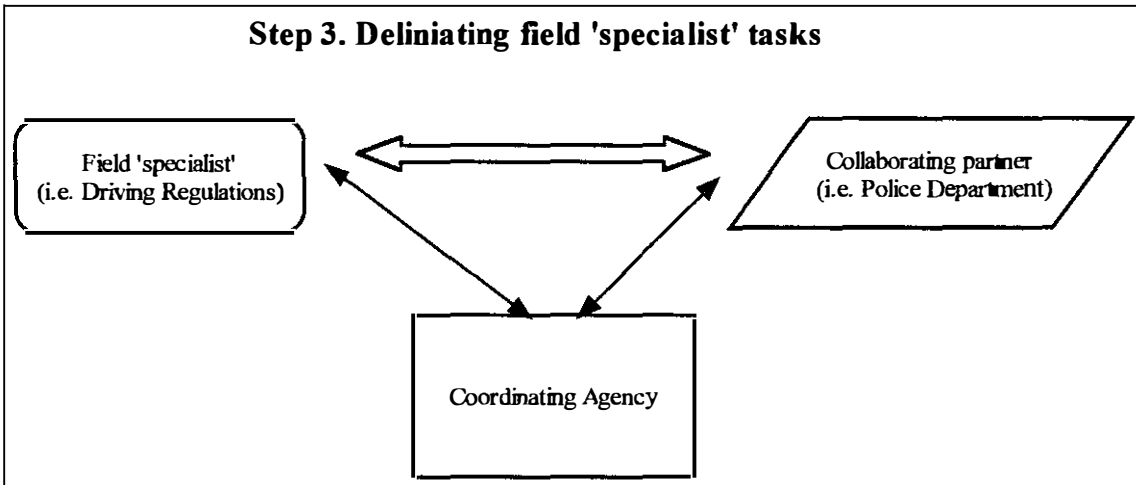




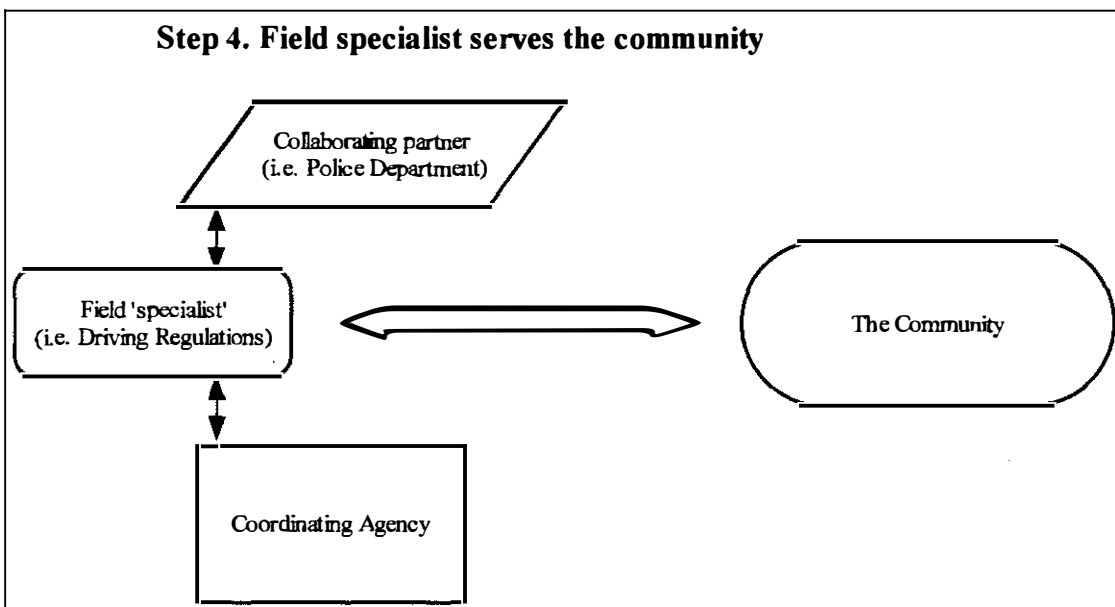
The coordinating agency would contact potential partners. These potential partners should have a strong interest and interaction with the target community. The dotted lines indicate that from the initial effort established by the coordinating agency, some of the potential partners might or might not be interested in participating in the program. For example, we could consider that the Police department wants to become a partner by providing driving regulation information to the Latino community. Hence the Police department will contact the coordinating agency to let it know about the department's interests and needs.



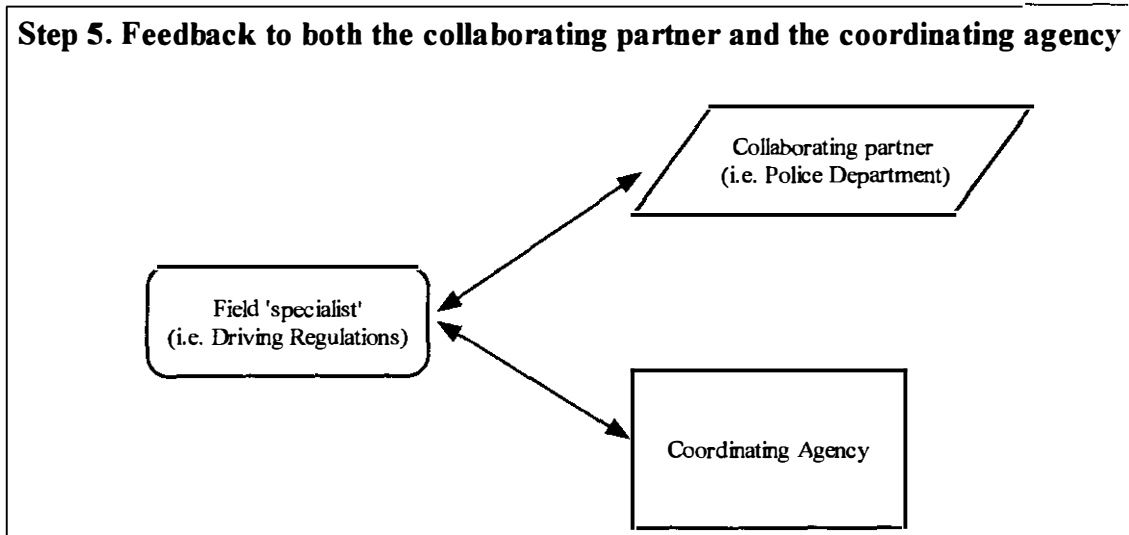
The agency will look for formal or informal ways of recruiting potential participants within the community. It could be done through different mass media and/or organizations. This promotion will stress the collaborating partner's interest, in this case, driving regulations. The idea is to reach out the community, and from it to draw potential participants that will contact the coordinating agency to notify it about their interests in the program. Finally, the coordinating agency will decide on who will become a field 'specialist'.



By integrating the ideas of the three actors involved, a specific plan and a list of tasks to be followed by the field 'specialist' will be developed. The idea is to identify how the field 'specialist' will serve the community. In our example it could be what kind of workshops need to be conducted on driver license procedures, car insurance requirements, etc.



The field 'specialist' will follow the plan already established for the program, in this case, the driving regulation project, and he/she will get support from both the coordinating agency and the collaborating partner along the process.



After the field 'specialist' total service period, he/she will provide feedback to both the coordinating agency and the collaborating partner. The idea is to define, redefine and enrich upcoming projects.

Other examples of how the Community-Asset Approach could be implemented for Latinos in Todd County are:

1. **Hispanic Welcome Wagon:** In this program the coordinating agency will hire a community member who will provide an informational package to new comers. The information to be included in it should be decided by all the actors participating. Some examples of the package's content could be schools' phone numbers, list of services provided in Spanish, educational resources available in the community, contact numbers in case of emergencies, etc.
2. **Survival Spanish:** This program will be offered to organizations with a strong interests and level of interaction with the Latino community. Survival Spanish will train interested community members on specific topics in Spanish. This training aim



at providing language skills in order to serve better the Latino community in Todd County. (The idea for this proposal was taken from the program “Survival Spanish” implemented by Minnesota West Community & Technical College).

# Appendix A

## CONSENT STATEMENT Todd County interviews on ESL

Hi, my name is Eduardo Millet. I am working with the University of Minnesota and the Todd County Hispanic Liaison Program in a study of English as a Second Language needs and opportunities in Todd County. The Information will be used to help the Todd County Community Hispanic Liaison Program better comprehend English as a Second Language needs and opportunities in Todd County's Latinos and to make future recommendations to Educational institutions on how to better serve the Latino Community.

Do you consider yourself to be: Mexican, Hispanic or Latino?

NO (Thank participant and Exit)  
YES (Continue)

Are you over 18?

NO (Thank participant and Exit)  
YES (Continue)

Do you have Children attending school in Todd County?

NO (Thank participant and Exit)  
YES (Continue)

You are invited to be in a research study of English as a Second Language educational Opportunities and needs in Todd County. You were selected as a possible participant because you are Mexican/Latino/Hispanic, over 18 and have children attending a school in Todd County. This study is being conducted by: Eduardo Millet and the Todd County Community Hispanic Liaison Program

If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you some questions about ESL educational needs and opportunities. The questionnaire will take around thirty minutes and we could stop at any time if you want.

The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report we might publish, we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject.

We do not know of any risk of your participation in this interview. There are no direct benefits to you; however, the information that you give us will help the Todd County Community Hispanic Liaison Program make recommendations on how to better serve Todd County Latino's.

Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the University of Minnesota or the Todd County Community Hispanic Liaison Program. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

The researcher conducting this study is Eduardo Millet. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact them him at (612) 362-7849.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher(s), contact Research Subjects' Advocate line, D528 Mayo, 420 Delaware Street S.E., Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455; telephone (612) 625-1650.

You may keep this paper which says that I explained these things to you (GIVE CONSENT FORM, DON'T GET SIGNATURE) Would you like to start?

## Appendix B- Questionnaire A

1. How and when did you hear about Todd County, Minnesota?

1a. How?

1b. When?

2. When you left your native land, country, what factors were the most influential in your decision to immigrate to the United States?

3. Do you have relatives, not living in the same house, in Todd County?

- Yes
- No

(IF YES) How many?

4. Did you study English before arriving to the United States?

- Yes
- No

(IF YES) How long?

5. What is your level of comfort with English?

- High
- Medium
- Low
- None

6. From your immediate family, who has the best English skills?

- Father
- Mother
- Daughter
- Son
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

AGE \_\_\_\_\_

7. During your stay in Todd County, have you had the opportunity to improve your English?

- Yes
- No

(IF YES) How factors helped you?

(IF NOT) What factors stopped you?

8. Do you know if there are English as a Second Language classes in the area?

- Yes
- No

(IF YES) Where?

9. Do you believe your children are getting an adequate education in Todd County?

- Yes
- No

What do you take into account when evaluating?

11. How much do you believe your children's teachers know about your culture?

- High
- Medium
- Low
- None

10. Do you visit your child's school?

- Yes
- No

(IF YES) How often

(IF NO) Why not?

12. What do you children do after class?

13. What is one thing that schools could do to better serve the Latino Community?

15. Are you currently working?

- Yes
- No

(IF YES) Describe your work and shift?

14. Did you work in you native country?

- Yes
- No

(IF YES) Describe your work

16. How did you find your job?

- Friend
- Relative
- Ad (newspaper, flyer, etc.)
- Recruited by your employer
- Word of mouth
- Self-inquire
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

17. What could improve your chances of getting a promotion in your work place?

**Indicate the one you believe is the most important**

- Learn a new task
- Be on time
- Be more productive
- Improve English Skills
- Have more years in the company
- More work-related training
- Better work-relationships
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

18. When you first arrived here, was there a person or organization that was particularly helpful to you?

- Yes
- No

(IF YES) How was this person or institution helpful?

19. In your opinion, what is the most positive thing that Latinos bring to Todd County?

20. Do you feel like you are part of the Todd County Community?

- Yes
- No

(IF YES) Why?

(IF NO) Why not?

21. In your opinion, what would make new members of the community in Todd County feel more welcomed?

22. Will you like to add something?

- Yes
- No

(IF YES) Explain?



## Appendix C- Questionnaire B

Household #	Participant	Male or Female	Age	Place of Birth	Years in		Work, School, house or other
					MN	USA	
	Family Member 1	<input type="radio"/> Female <input type="radio"/> Male		<input type="radio"/> USA <input type="radio"/> Mexico <input type="radio"/> Other _____			<input type="radio"/> Works full time <input type="radio"/> Works part time <input type="radio"/> Attend School <input type="radio"/> Works ONLY at home <input type="radio"/> Other _____
	Family Member 2	<input type="radio"/> Female <input type="radio"/> Male		<input type="radio"/> USA <input type="radio"/> Mexico <input type="radio"/> Other _____			<input type="radio"/> Works full time <input type="radio"/> Works part time <input type="radio"/> Attend School <input type="radio"/> Works ONLY at home <input type="radio"/> Other _____
	Family Member 3	<input type="radio"/> Female <input type="radio"/> Male		<input type="radio"/> USA <input type="radio"/> Mexico <input type="radio"/> Other _____			<input type="radio"/> Works full time <input type="radio"/> Works part time <input type="radio"/> Attend School <input type="radio"/> Works ONLY at home <input type="radio"/> Other _____
	Family Member 4	<input type="radio"/> Female <input type="radio"/> Male		<input type="radio"/> USA <input type="radio"/> Mexico <input type="radio"/> Other _____			<input type="radio"/> Works full time <input type="radio"/> Works part time <input type="radio"/> Attend School <input type="radio"/> Works ONLY at home <input type="radio"/> Other _____
	Family Member 5	<input type="radio"/> Female <input type="radio"/> Male		<input type="radio"/> USA <input type="radio"/> Mexico <input type="radio"/> Other _____			<input type="radio"/> Works full time <input type="radio"/> Works part time <input type="radio"/> Attend School <input type="radio"/> Works ONLY at home <input type="radio"/> Other _____
	Family Member 6	<input type="radio"/> Female <input type="radio"/> Male		<input type="radio"/> USA <input type="radio"/> Mexico <input type="radio"/> Other _____			<input type="radio"/> Works full time <input type="radio"/> Works part time <input type="radio"/> Attend School <input type="radio"/> Works ONLY at home <input type="radio"/> Other _____
	Family Member 7	<input type="radio"/> Female <input type="radio"/> Male		<input type="radio"/> USA <input type="radio"/> Mexico <input type="radio"/> Other _____			<input type="radio"/> Works full time <input type="radio"/> Works part time <input type="radio"/> Attend School <input type="radio"/> Works ONLY at home <input type="radio"/> Other _____
	Family Member 8	<input type="radio"/> Female <input type="radio"/> Male		<input type="radio"/> USA <input type="radio"/> Mexico <input type="radio"/> Other _____			<input type="radio"/> Works full time <input type="radio"/> Works part time <input type="radio"/> Attend School <input type="radio"/> Works ONLY at home <input type="radio"/> Other _____

# Appendix D

## Frequencies

### Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Number of members in the family?	20	3.00	7.00	4.3000	.8645
When did you hear about Todd County?	20	2.00	7.00	3.3000	1.1630
Valid N (listwise)	20				

### Number of members in the family?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	3.00	2	10.0	10.0	10.0
	4.00	12	60.0	60.0	70.0
	5.00	5	25.0	25.0	95.0
	7.00	1	5.0	5.0	100.0
	Total	20	100.0	100.0	

### How did you hear about Todd County?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Relative	9	45.0	45.0	45.0
	Friend	3	15.0	15.0	60.0
	Self exploration	1	5.0	5.0	65.0
	Family	7	35.0	35.0	100.0
	Total	20	100.0	100.0	

**When did you hear about Todd County?**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	2.00	3	15.0	15.0	15.0
	2.50	2	10.0	10.0	25.0
	3.00	9	45.0	45.0	70.0
	4.00	4	20.0	20.0	90.0
	5.00	1	5.0	5.0	95.0
	7.00	1	5.0	5.0	100.0
	Total	20	100.0	100.0	

**Do you have relatives in Todd County?**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	15	75.0	75.0	75.0
	No	5	25.0	25.0	100.0
	Total	20	100.0	100.0	

**Did you study English before arriving to the United States?**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Little	8	40.0	40.0	40.0
	Yes	5	25.0	25.0	65.0
	No	7	35.0	35.0	100.0
	Total	20	100.0	100.0	

**What is your level of comfort with English?**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	High	1	5.0	5.0	5.0
	Medium	4	20.0	20.0	25.0
	Low	14	70.0	70.0	95.0
	None	1	5.0	5.0	100.0
	Total	20	100.0	100.0	

**From your immediate family, who has the best English skills?**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Father	2	10.0	11.1	11.1
	Mother	1	5.0	5.6	16.7
	Daughter	4	20.0	22.2	38.9
	Son	11	55.0	61.1	100.0
	Total	18	90.0	100.0	
Missing	N/A	2	10.0		
Total		20	100.0		

**Have you had the opportunity to improve your English?**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	5	25.0	25.0	25.0
	No	15	75.0	75.0	100.0
Total		20	100.0	100.0	

**Do you know if there are ESL classes in the area?**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	12	60.0	60.0	60.0
	No	8	40.0	40.0	100.0
Total		20	100.0	100.0	

**Do you believe your children are getting an adequate education in Todd County?**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	19	95.0	95.0	95.0
	No	1	5.0	5.0	100.0
Total		20	100.0	100.0	

**Do you visit your child's school?**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	14	70.0	70.0	70.0
	No	6	30.0	30.0	100.0
Total		20	100.0	100.0	

**How much do you believe you children's teachers know about your culture?**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	High	1	5.0	5.6	5.6
	Medium	6	30.0	33.3	38.9
	Low	8	40.0	44.4	83.3
	None	3	15.0	16.7	100.0
	Total	18	90.0	100.0	
Missing	N/A	2	10.0		
Total		20	100.0		

**Did you work in your native country?**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	13	65.0	65.0	65.0
	No	7	35.0	35.0	100.0
Total		20	100.0	100.0	

**Are you currently working?**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	17	85.0	85.0	85.0
	No	3	15.0	15.0	100.0
	Total	20	100.0	100.0	

**How did you find your job?**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Freind	3	15.0	17.6	17.6
	Relative	6	30.0	35.3	52.9
	Ad	1	5.0	5.9	58.8
	Recruited	1	5.0	5.9	64.7
	Self-inquire	3	15.0	17.6	82.4
	Family	3	15.0	17.6	100.0
	Total	17	85.0	100.0	
Missing	N/A	3	15.0		
Total		20	100.0		

**What could improve your chances of getting a promotion in your work place?**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Learn a new task	5	25.0	29.4	29.4
	Improve English	7	35.0	41.2	70.6
	Be more productive	2	10.0	11.8	82.4
	More work-related training	2	10.0	11.8	94.1
	More Education	1	5.0	5.9	100.0
	Total	17	85.0	100.0	
Missing	N/A	3	15.0		
Total		20	100.0		

**Do you feel like you are part of the Todd County Community?**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	20	100.0	100.0	100.0

