

FamilyMeans: Assessing the youth and family needs of households with children in Landfall, Minnesota

**Prepared by
Roxana Rodriguez
Research Assistant, University of Minnesota
Conducted on behalf of FamilyMeans
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Neighborhood Planning for Community Revitalization

330 Hubert H. Humphrey Center

301 - 19th Avenue South

Minneapolis, MN 55455

phone: 612/625-1020

e-mail: ksn@umn.edu

website: <http://www.npcr.org>



Hispanic Advocacy and Community Empowerment through Research

July 2007

FamilyMeans

Assessing the youth and family needs of households with children in Landfall, Minnesota

Prepared by:

Roxana Rodriguez, Alyssa Banks and Rafael Ortiz

Submitted to FamilyMeans

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

FamilyMeans applied for a Community personnel grant through the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA) to conduct an evaluation of their after school programs in Landfall. Hispanic Advocacy and Community Empowerment through Research (HACER) was contracted to conduct the assessment because of their long history and mission in providing advocacy and empowerment efforts through research to the Latino community in Minnesota. HACER conducted 10 interviews with Latino parents that have children enrolled in the FamilyMeans program, and 13 surveys to non Latino families that also have children enrolled in the program. The report summarizes the following: participant's impressions of the Investigation Station program, the Teen Center program, potential preschool classes for children, and acculturation issues for the Latino participants. The report also includes programmatic recommendations for FamilyMeans.

Demographic Breakdown

The following provides a short breakdown of the demographic make-up of the participants who completed surveys or were interviewed:

- Seventy-five (75) percent of interviewees were women and twenty-five(25) percent were men;
- Interviewees prefer to speak more Spanish at home (60 percent) than English;
- For half of Latino interviewees the highest level of education completed is elementary school;
- Eighty-five (85) percent of non Latinos participating in the surveys were women and fifteen (15) were men.
- For more that half (54) of non Latino participants the highest level of education completed is high school
- Both groups of participants together have a total of fifty children between the ages of 0 to 18 years old.

Summary of Findings

The Investigation Station

Latino parents expressed having little knowledge about what exactly their children do in this program. The information they do know about the program is shared with them from their children's feedback. An important indicator from parent's evaluation of the program is their children's attitude toward the program. Both Latino and non Latino parents reported the benefits of their children participating in the program such as; FamilyMeans offers a place where their children are safe while parents are at work, their children learn new skills, and they are able to socialize with other children and adults. Additionally, Latino parents suggested that they would like the program to provide some extra help with homework tasks.

The Teen center

Similar to the Investigation Station program, interviewed parents did not know much about the Teen Center program. Interviewed parents expressed that the Teen Center has benefited their children in different ways, such as improving their social skills and preventing their involvement in negative activities. In addition, surveyed parents also perceived that the activities offered at the Teen Center are positive for their children. Parents suggested additional activities that could be included in the Teen Center, in particular: driving classes for teens, a work force program for teenagers, more opportunities to participate in sports, and educational topics.

Community Issues

Interviewed participants expressed their perspectives in regard to activities that have been organized in Landfall, as well as community services that they would like to receive more information about; the following is a summary of their opinions:

- Most Latinos have participated in activities organized for the community. In addition to these events, Latino participants suggested several other activities that could be organized for the community such as: Independence Day, Mother's day, and nutrition classes.
- Latino participants would like to receive information about legal advice, health, leisure activities and household utilities, such as companies with low electricity rates.
- On average most non-Latinos did not need to receive more information about community services.
- Latinos have difficulty obtaining information about community activities and their children's participation in the programs, due to their limited English proficiency.
- Non Latinos primarily receive information about community activities through the community newsletter.
- Language has been a primary barrier for most Latinos participants when trying to communicate with FamilyMeans staff.

Potential Classes for Preschoolers in Landfall

Both Latino and non Latino parents participating in the project agreed that preschool classes in Landfall would be beneficial for them. None of the preschool aged children from the participating families were currently enrolled in early childhood programs outside of Landfall.

Recommendations

The findings suggest the following recommendations for the FamilyMeans programs:

The Investigation Station

- FamilyMeans should provide information to Latino parents about the goals and activities of the programs in both English and Spanish.
- FamilyMeans should offer bilingual services for Latino parents when communicating important issues to them.
- FamilyMeans should offer additional support to children who would like to complete school homework.

The Teen Center

- FamilyMeans should provide additional information to Latino parents' about the Teen Center program.
- FamilyMeans should include more topics of interest to teens such as: gangs' prevention, homework help, and college preparation, among others.

Community Issues

- FamilyMeans should ensure that Latino families that have limited English proficiency have access to information about community services and activities in Spanish and English.
- FamilyMeans should provide information about legal, medical and leisure services for Latinos.
- FamilyMeans should create more opportunities for community residents to volunteer.

Potential Classes for Preschoolers in Landfall

- FamilyMeans should explore opportunities for creating a preschool program for children.

INTRODUCTION

FamilyMeans is a private, nonprofit counseling and human service agency that provides after-school programs for children between 5 and 18 years old in Landfall, Minnesota. Due to the city's changing demographics, FamilyMeans contracted HACER to conduct a study to assess how Landfall residents perceive the agency's services, with an emphasis on the views of Latino parents.

Landfall is a manufactured home city located in Washington County, next to the Ramsey County line and the I-94 corridor. The city park provides affordable housing to about 700 residents living in approximately 300 mobile homes. Following a general trend in the region, the Latino population in the city has steadily grown over the last decade. By the turn of the decade, individuals of Hispanic origin constituted nearly 9% of Landfall's population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000), making Latinos the largest minority group in the city. More significantly, in the 2006-07 school year, 28% of the students registered in grades K through 12 were Latinos.

As part of the study in Landfall, HACER interviewed 10 Latino families and, FamilyMeans, administered 13 surveys to non-Latino families to assess FamilyMeans current programs. Each family in the study had at least one child enrolled in one of FamilyMeans two after-school programs:

- 1) The Investigation Station for children ages 6 to 12 years old.
- 2) The Teen Center for children ages 13 to 18 years old.

Additionally, HACER conducted a general evaluation of the organization's community services and programming, and explored Latino residents' acculturation issues. The main objectives of the evaluation were to:

- 1) Identify community services about which Latino families would be interested in having additional information.
- 2) Identify Latino residents' opinions in regard to past activities and events organized by FamilyMeans.
- 3) Assess the impact of language barriers on the relationship between FamilyMeans program staff and Latino families.

- 4) Assess the community's interest in creating preschool programs for Landfall residents.
- 5) Evaluate general programming and services provided by FamilyMeans to Latino and non-Latino families.

The results of this evaluation will assist in the design of FamilyMeans programs and activities to better fit the needs of the changing Landfall community.

This study was made possible through a Communiiversity Grant awarded to FamilyMeans by the University of Minnesota's Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA). These grants are given to community-based organizations working with underrepresented or underserved groups. The grants cover the cost of a quarter-time graduate research assistant (195 hours total) to assist with applied research, program development, program evaluation, or other short-term projects. The graduate research assistant in this project worked under the direction of HACER.

HACER is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, community-based research organization that originated in 1988 to address the lack of information about Latinos and Latino issues in Minnesota's public discourse. Its purpose is to *support advocacy efforts that impact Latinos through sound and timely research*. HACER engages in collaborative efforts with community members and advocates to inform policy around immigration, education, public health, housing, criminal justice and crime prevention, social welfare, employment and income disparities, public safety, community development, migrant work, and demographic change. It also facilitates cooperation among agencies that serve the Latino community, and evaluates government and nonprofit programs that target Latinos in the state.

This report includes the study's methodology, a summary of findings, recommendations, and appendices with the interview and survey instruments.

METHODOLOGY

The aim of this study is to evaluate the programs offered by FamilyMeans to Latino and non-Latino families in Landfall. For this purpose, HACER and FamilyMeans developed an interview protocol and a survey instrument.

Interview Protocol

HACER conducted face to face interviews to assess the needs, levels of satisfaction and suggestions of Latino families that have children enrolled in one of FamilyMeans' after-school programs. The questions focused on parents' perspectives on their children's participation in either the Investigation Station (ages 6 to 12) or the Teen Center (ages 13 to 18), on preschool programming, on social services and on acculturation needs.

Before conducting the interviews, FamilyMeans and HACER sent a letter to the parent or primary caretaker of every child from a Latino household participating in a FamilyMeans after-school program. The letter explained the purpose of the study and informed the community that an HACER research assistant may be visiting their home in the near future to conduct an interview (see **Appendix A**).

Using a list provided by FamilyMeans, HACER contacted Latino households to schedule an interview with a parent or primary caretaker at home or in Landfall's City Hall. Prior to the interview, HACER's research assistant read a consent form, which explained the purpose of the study, risks and benefits of participating in the interview, the voluntary nature of the study and how the information collected would be safeguarded for privacy (see **Appendix B**). All participants signed the consent form and received a copy. Each interview took from 15 to 40 minutes. The research assistant conducted a total of 10 interviews, each of which was recorded, transcribed and analyzed at HACER (see **Appendix C** for the interview protocol).

Survey Instrument

HACER developed a survey questionnaire (see **Appendix D**) for non-Latino households with children enrolled in either the Investigation Station or the Teen Center. The survey was designed to evaluate the perceptions of parents and caretakers of children in either the Investigation Station program or the Teen Center. Particularly, it sought to assess whether or not parents/caretakers thought that these programs are beneficial for their children. Additionally, the survey asked parents/caretakers: (1) whether they thought

that preschool programs would be a beneficial resource in Landfall; (2) how they would like to receive information and communication about Landfall activities; and, (3) what additional activities they would like to see organized for the community.

FamilyMeans mailed a total of 28 questionnaires to non-Latino households with a child in an after-school program in of March 2007. FamilyMeans received 13 responses over a two-month period for a 46% response rate.

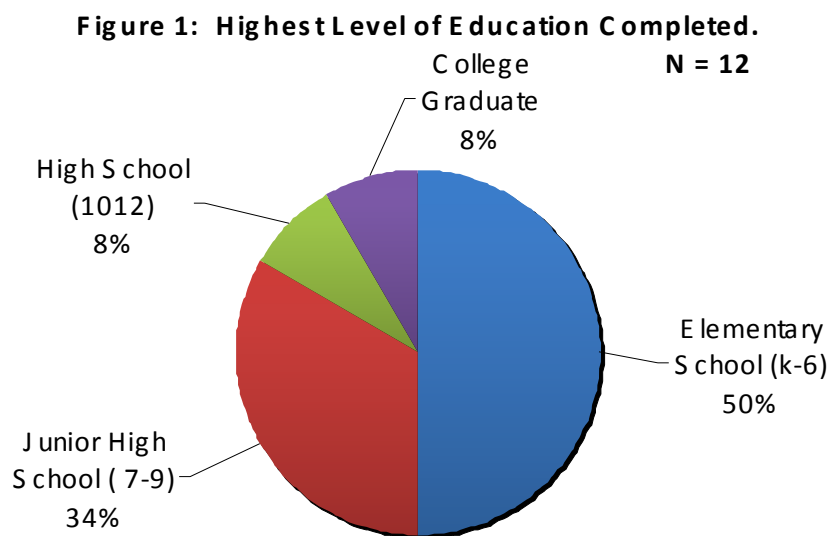
Interviewees Demographic Information

HACER interviewed 12 parents or primary caretakers in a total of 10 households. All participants in the interview process were born in Mexico. Seventy five (75) percent of interviewees were female and twenty five (25) percent were male.

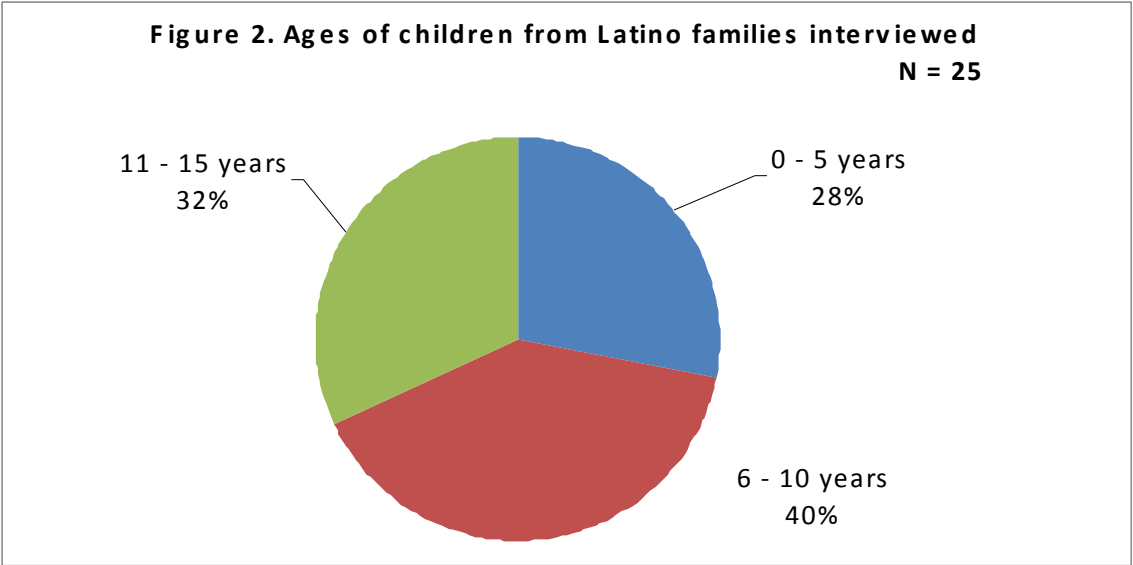
Two-thirds (66%) of respondents reported having lived in the United States between six to fifteen years. However, only 25% of the participants reported having lived in Landfall more than five years.

When participants were asked which language they prefer to speak at home, the majority of participants responded that they prefer to speak “Only Spanish” (60 percent), and the remaining 40 percent indicated they prefer speak “Spanish more than English”.

When looking at the highest level of education completed by the respondents, over half (51%) of participants only had completed elementary school, and only eight (8) percent were college graduates (see **Figure 1**).

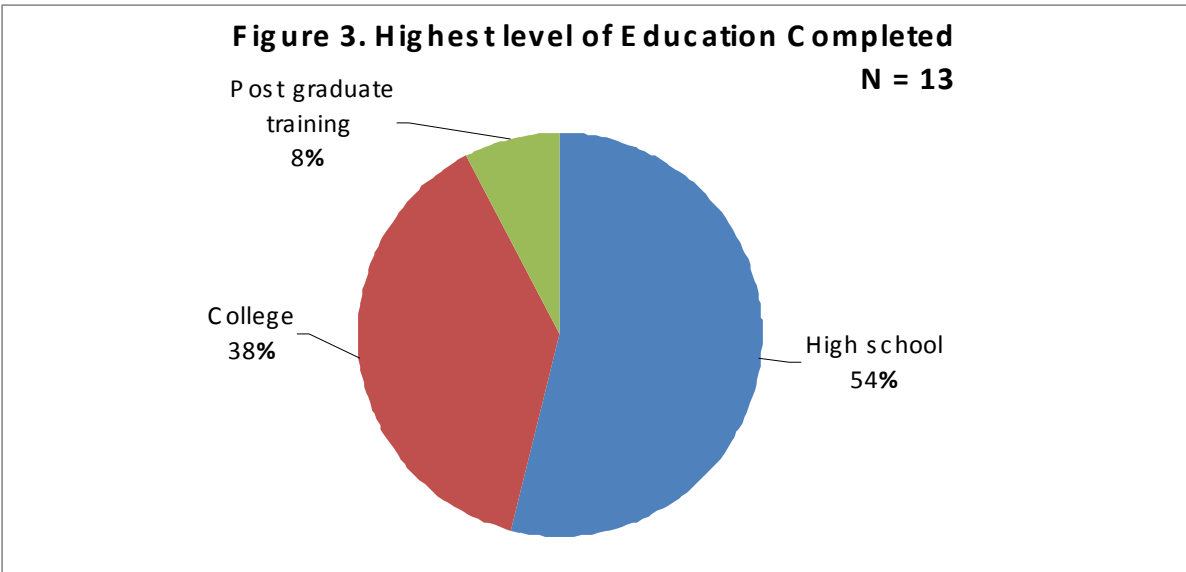


The age of the children living in the 10 households interviewed ranged from less than one year to fifteen years old. **Figure 2** shows the percentage of children in different age groups.

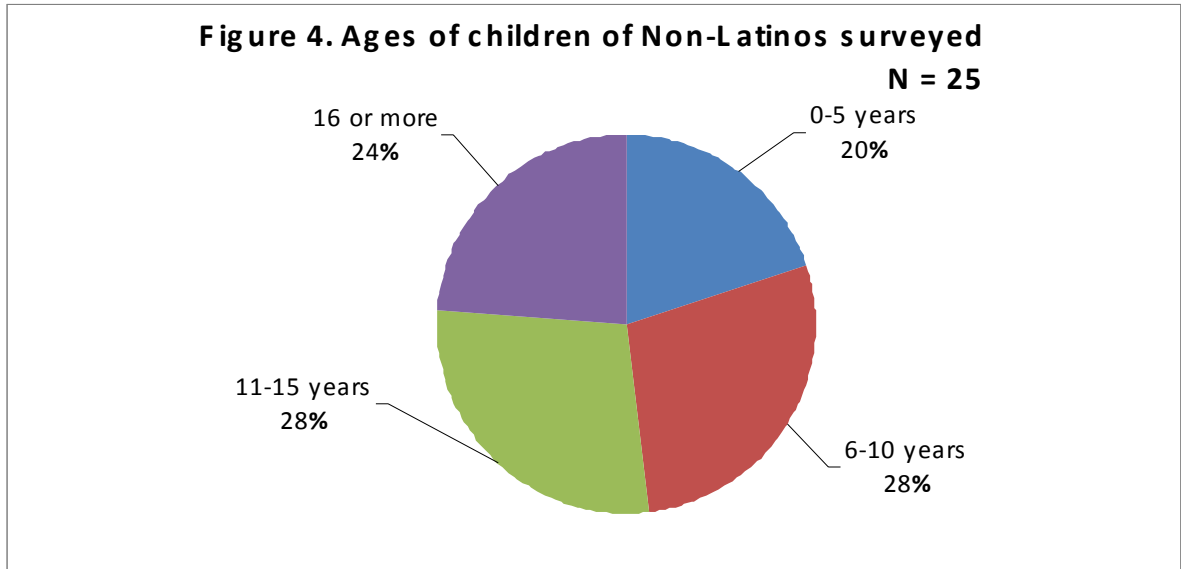


Survey Demographic Information

Of the thirteen individuals that completed the questionnaire, 85 percent were female, and the remaining 15 percent were male. Additionally, 85 percent of participants in the survey have lived in Landfall 10 years or less, while 15 percent have lived in the city more than 10 years. The respondents' highest level of education completed is shown in **Figure 3**. Almost half of respondents (46 percent) completed a college degree or a post graduate training, while 54 percent only had a high school diploma.



The age of the children from the 13 families that responded to the surveyed ranged from less than one year to eighteen years old, of which 48 percent were ten years old or younger (see **Figure 4**).



Discussion of Demographic Trends

It is important to look at the demographic characteristics of both populations participating in the study in order to understand the differences in needs and perceptions of the programs. Parents' education levels and English language proficiency skills are among the most notable differences.

For example, while non Latino residents have more college education, (46 percent) the majority of Latino residents have completed only up to an elementary school education (50 percent). This difference in schooling may influence the support parents are able to provide to their school children.

Latino parents' limited English proficiency may also impact the support they are able to provide to their children in academic tasks, although the majority of Latino residents have been living in the country for a long period of time.

FINDINGS

Participants in the interview and in the questionnaire expressed their opinions regarding the work that FamilyMeans does with children, teenagers, and the community as a whole. This section summarizes the information obtained in four different topics which are: potential classes for preschool children, the Investigation Station, the Teen Center, and community activities in Landfall.

I. Potential Classes for Preschool Children in Landfall

Participants in the interviews and surveys were asked (1) whether their preschool children currently attend preschool classes outside of Landfall; (2) whether they would like to have preschool classes in the community; and, (3) whether they would prefer to stay with their children or drop them off

Only nine of the twenty three families' in the study have children younger than 6 years old. For this reason, the information of Latino and non-Latino parents is combined in this section. When both Latino and non-Latino parents were asked if they would like to have preschool classes for their children in Landfall, all of them agreed that this service would be beneficial for them. Currently, none of the children from the families that participated in either the interview or the questionnaire are enrolled in any preschool program outside of Landfall.

When the Latino and non-Latino parents were asked which type of preschool would benefit them, four of the nine parents preferred to take classes with their children. For example, a mother shared her experience in the Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE) program. She took her preschool daughter to this program for three years, and while her child had classes with teachers, she went to a different room to take ESL or child-rearing techniques classes. She mentioned that if preschool classes are offered in Landfall, the program could be similar to the ECFE. However, the other five parents prefer to drop off and pick up their children instead of taking classes with them.

II. The Investigation Station

The following section summarizes the findings of questions related to the Investigation Station. The questions focus on what parents know about the program, the benefits of

having their children participate in the programming and ways in which the program can be improved.

The information obtained from the surveys was limited in some areas due to parents not answering some questions.

A. What do families know about the Investigation Station?

In general, interviewees expressed little knowledge as to what exactly their children do in this program. The information parents received about the program mostly or solely come from their own children. For example one of the parents expressed:

“What the kids say they do is manual work, use the computer. They take them to play in the gym and in the summer they go to the lake”

Although Latino parents noted they are not well informed about the activities that children do in the Investigation Station, they were able to list several activities. For example, parents mentioned objects or foods that they have seen their children bring home, such as; cupcakes and animals made of soap. Most Latino parents know their children use the computer and navigate through the internet. Latino parents also said their children do other activities such as woodwork, art projects and cooking.

Several other activities were identified but they were mentioned only once during all the 10 interviews. They include cultural activities, play in the snow, table games, gym, karate, homework, play the piano, and summer activities such as bike rides, picnics, swimming, festival, and fishing.

B. What are the benefits of participating in the Investigation Station?

Even though parents expressed little knowledge about the programs, they were able to state their satisfaction with the program. An important indicator for Latino parents is their children’s attitude toward the programs. Several Latino parents said that the children love to go to the program which is an important reason for being happy with the program.

Other Latino parents indicated more explicit benefits for them. For example, some parents expressed that it is important for them to know that their children are supervised throughout the afternoon while they are working. Additionally, parents were pleased because children can not leave the program until the end of the day which ensures their safety. Another advantage for some Latino parents is that, while their children are in the

Investigation Station, they can have some extra time to relax after work and do housekeeping chores.

Moreover, Latino parents also expressed several direct benefits children gained by participating in the program. Children are active throughout the day and do not have the option of watching TV during the afternoon. Additionally, parents said that the Investigation Station keeps their children busy with fun activities. Thus, children develop their talents and socialize with other children and adults. Parents also mentioned that if children do not know English, the Investigation Station is a good environment to practice. Finally, children from different cultural backgrounds are able to share and learn about some of their traditions in the program. For example, in the program, children can share with other children cultural activities, such as “Las posadas”.

Some other Latino parents shared narratives about their children’s improvement in academics as a result of the support received from the Investigation Station program. This is what one mother said in this regard:

“My daughter has problems with mathematics and reading and here [the Investigation Station Program] they have teachers that help her Tuesdays and Thursdays. I was worried about her because in the school the teacher told me that she needed more help and know she is improving. I helped her in my house, but it is not the same, now the teacher said that she is doing better in the school”.

Survey results

When surveyed parents were asked to share the most important benefits of the program, the vast majority (43 percent) felt the activities are beneficial for their children. Another significant percentage (38 percent) appreciate that the program is available without cost. Furthermore, some other surveyed parents (9 percent) expressed that the Investigation Station has helped them by taking care of their children while at work. Finally, 10 percent of surveyed parents gave different answers from the ones offered in the survey, they expressed the most important benefits of participating in the program are that staff in the program are caring and trustworthy and also that children have the opportunity to interact with other kids.

Surveyed parents considered that the Investigation Station has been beneficial for their children, improving their behavior and academic performance at school, making friends in the community, and connecting with caring adults.

The specific activities that Non Latino parents believed are most beneficial for their children while participating in the Investigation Station are: art (14%), summer field trips (15%), girls scouts,(17%) music (9%), computer (12%), sports (15%) reading (12%) and woodwork (6%).

Both Latino and Non Latino parents in the study considered beneficial that their children are in a safe environment while parents are at work. Thus, both groups expressed that their children have improved their academic performance and their socialization skills by participating in the program.

C. What needs to be improved in the Investigation Station?

In general there are a few things Latino parents want to improve or include in the Investigation Station program. In contrast, the suggestions obtained through the surveys were limited in this regard, since most Non Latino respondents did not answer this question.

Latino participants in the interview would like more help for their children with school homework. According to Latino parents report, not all children received tutoring, only those with achievement deficits at school. Nevertheless, Latino parents that do not have children with academic challenges would also like their children to have access to help with their homework. Latino parents expressed that the U.S. school system is very different from their academic experience in the Mexico school system, and sometimes can pose great challenges for them to help children with their school work. For example one mother expressed the following in regard to school homework and the school grading system;

“I do not know what they have for homework or their grades. I talked to the teacher and asked her what she [her daughter] has for homework and the teacher said that in the book she will mark the date, but sometimes she does not have anything marked. In Mexico the highest [grade score] is 10, but here is [graded] with the alphabet and I do not understand it. In Mexico I know what the minimum [grade required to pass] is, and I have to make her improve, but here, I do not know, things are different”.

Other Latino parents suggested including more exercise activities and dance classes (e.g. ballet) in the routine of the Investigation Station. Physical activities are of special importance during winter time because children do not have as many opportunities to be active. A final suggestion from an interviewed parent is to talk to children about prevention in the use of drugs, involvement in gangs, and sexuality. These topics should be handled according the age of the children. This is the mother opinion:

“I think they are growing to adolescents and are leaving their childhood behind. I think they need to talk about do not drink, do not smoke and look with what girl they talk and know her family. I think is important for children 0 to 12 years old. Sometimes they do not understand the difference between a friend and a girlfriend... It is important to talk to their level, that will help a lot”

From the non-Latino responses obtained through the survey, some parents provided additional suggestions for activities that could be added to the current program, including sewing, teaching Spanish as a second language, swimming lessons, gymnastics, music lessons to children and summer camps.

Both Latino and Non Latino parents suggested including more physical activities for children, such as dance classes, swimming, among others.

III. The Teen Center.

The following section summarizes findings related to the Teen Center. Questions were asked concerning parents’ opinions about the Teen center program; the benefits of their teen’s participation in the programs as well as ways in which the program could be improved.

A. What do parents know about the Teen Center program?

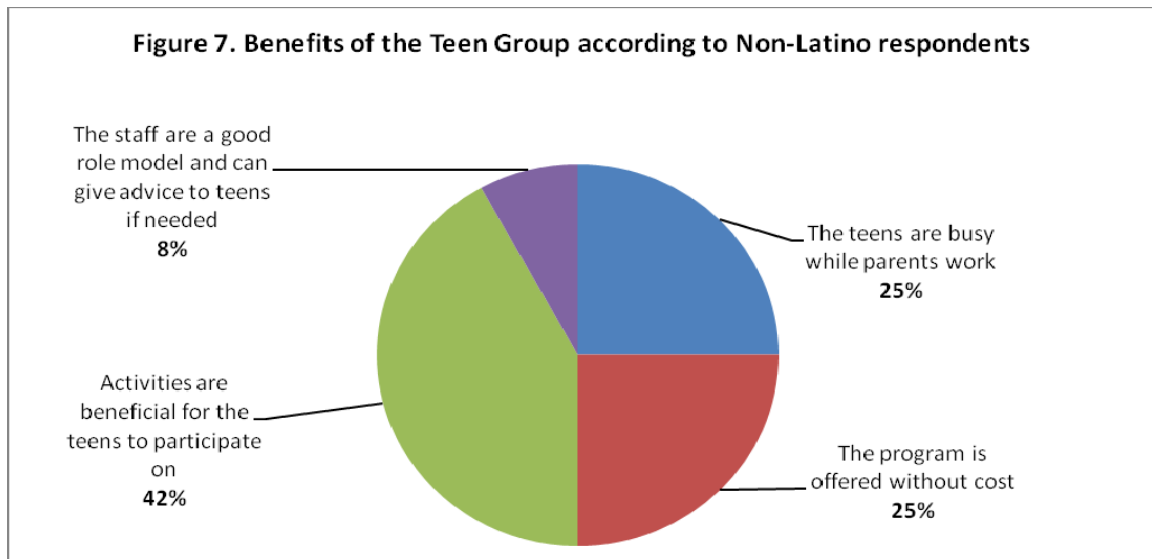
Similar to the Investigation Station program, Latino parents indicated not knowing enough about the Teen Center. Four of the ten Latino parents' interviewed have teenagers; however the information collected is limited either because the teenagers do not participate in the program or the participating teenagers have not shared their experiences with their parents. In addition, two parents mentioned they believe their teenagers are not aware that this program is offered. Thus, another parent expressed that adolescent years are difficult, and the communication process at this age is not easy between parents and teenagers.

Furthermore, six of the thirteen Non Latino parents that responded to the survey have teenagers. Five parents indicated that they know about the program and one parent did not answer the question of whether he knew about the Teen Center. When parents were asked if their teens participated in the program, two parents expressed that their teens do not participate in the program because they prefer to stay at home and because they are unfamiliar with the activities that are offered. One parent commented that her son is participating in the program. The other two respondents chose the non-applicable category when given several options, and finally one parent did not answer to the question.

B. What are the benefits of participating in the Teen center program?

Latino parents commented that teenagers benefit from participating in the program. For example, by joining the group, teens have less opportunity to spend time in the streets, which could prevent their involvement in negative activities. Additionally, Latino parents shared that activities increase teens motivation, especially activities such as bike rides and other sports. Also, Latino parents reported that getting access to computers is one of the activities that teens most appreciate. Besides the previous advantages, some Latino parents believe teen's participation in the program has impacted their social skills and has improved their behavior and discipline at home.

Furthermore, as shown in **Figure 7**, the non-Latino parents pointed out some additional benefits of the Teen center such as: the teens are busy while parents work (25%), the program is offered without cost (25%), activities are beneficial for the teens to participate in (42%), and the staff are good role models and can give advice to teens if needed (8%).



As discussed in the previous section, both Latino and non Latino parents appear to have little information of the activities and/or whether their teens participate or not in the program, however both group of parents are able to provide insights about different ways in which the Teen Center has benefited their teenagers.

C. What needs to be improved in the Teen center program?

In general, both Latino and non Latino participants offered several suggestions in regard to potential activities the Teen center could include. For example, driving classes for teenagers was mentioned. Driving classes tend to be expensive so a parent would like to receive financial support. Another suggestion is to create a work force program for teenagers who want to earn money. Also create more opportunities for teenagers to participate in sports, such as organizing soccer teams and games during the summer. A mother is interested in creating spaces in the teen center to discuss educational topics of interest for this age such as, drugs, sex, misuse of internet access, teen pregnancy, and gangs. For example, this is her opinion:

“I think they need to talk about no smoking, drinking and talk about sexuality. There are parents that are not so open with their children, even though it is our responsibility, but I feel embarrassed to talk to them about these things”.

Latino parents expressed that this is a difficult age group for which they are pleased to have programs for their teens' to participate.

IV. Community Activities in Landfall

The following section summarizes information obtained in the interviews associated with activities that FamilyMeans had organized for the Landfall community, such as holiday celebrations. In addition, there are some acculturation issues and information about community services that Latino and non Latino families would like to be informed about.

A. What are the opinions in regard to the activities that have been organized by FamilyMeans?

The Latino families interviewed were able to identify a series of activities that have been organized by FamilyMeans in the past. Some of the participants were more familiar with specific activities than others. Nevertheless, all of them were capable of identifying at least one activity. Among the activities cited were: ESL classes and multiple celebrations such as “5 de Mayo”, “El día de los muertos” (November 12th), “Las Posadas”, Christmas, Thanksgiving, Easter, Halloween, and 4th of July. Most Latino participants talked about the activities that involved Mexican traditions. Here is what one participant expressed about this issue.

“We went to three activities, but the ones I like best were the 5 de Mayo and El día de muertos. We liked them more because they are part of our traditions. We are Mexicans and it is good that our children learn things from our culture, in that way they will not forget our culture and our roots”.

Most opinions were very positive about the efforts of FamilyMeans in organizing activities for the community. However, a couple residents differed from that opinion. For example, one mother claimed that her child was mistreated in the last Christmas party because the child wanted to exchange a toy. Another Latino parent said that children are used as a primary form of informing parents about activities, however, this method is not

reliable, because children do not consistently report to parents the messages given to them. Therefore, this resident felt that not enough Latino people participate in the events. According to this participant, few people attended the celebration of dia de muertos.

B. What other activities can be organized by FamilyMeans?

Several suggestions were made of potential activities that could be organized for the community. Latinos suggested the following activities: aerobic and nutrition classes, computer classes for adults, picnics for the community in the summer time, and celebration of other Hispanic holidays, such as independence day (September 16), Children's day, and Mother's day (May 10). In addition, Latinos commented that although "La Posada" was organized last Christmas, they would like to organize it more appropriately and include more of their traditions in this festivity. To accomplish this goal, they would like FamilyMeans to facilitate more connection with other Latinos in the community. For example, one resident mentioned:

"FamilyMeans could send a letter to see who is interested in participating and then we can organize it [...] and each one can say, I do this and or I can put that. Somebody can find music from Mexico, and we can all do a Posada well organized".

The non-Latino residents that participated in the questionnaire also offered some important suggestions to improve the current services. They considered important to create a volunteer program for community activities where residents can help in the organization of activities for the community. Residents can also help organize adults' classes or programs, such as weight watchers, animal shelter where homeless animals receive care, and a neighborhood watch program to do surveillance on resident's houses, cars and their children.

Both Latino and non Latino participants commented that they would be interested in helping to organize community activities. In addition, both groups of residents mentioned that adult classes would be beneficial for them.

C. What information about community services do residents want to receive?

Latinos who participated in the interviews commented several community services that they would like to receive more information about. Some topics related to legal issues that affect them, while others referred to information about household utility services, and leisure activities.

Latinos mentioned that they would like to receive information about taxes and immigrant's rights. Taxes are a topic of difficulty for them, some Latinos expressed to fear of doing taxes in the past. Some other Latinos mentioned that they do not know what forms to fill out and where to go for help

“There are lots of people that do not do taxes because we are afraid of doing them, we do not know what to write as ID number and if we have dependents. There are some voluntary people that help us, and some of us do it but not everybody”.

In addition, Latinos residents mentioned that they have difficulty applying for jobs, for which they would like information about the correct way to fill out job applications. One participant commented that sometimes Latinos have difficulty finding jobs, therefore they look for the services of companies that help them searching. Nevertheless, these companies keep a percentage of the placed employee's salary as a pay off for the service. The percentage can be as high as 50% of the hourly rate. This person suggested that if she knew how to accurately fill-out a job application form, she would have a better chance of getting a job by herself. Moreover, another interviewee expressed her frustration about not being knowledgeable about labor rights issues, even after working for several years in a company:

“More than anything we need information. We have lived here for a long time and I get frustrated because we worked so much and so long and we do not have benefits in our work. If I work for 10 years in the same place that I work today, when I leave I will not receive any benefits for the 10 years that I have worked there (e.g., retirement compensation). I will like information about labor rights that I can apply to”.

Health issues are also important to consider. A significant percentage of Latino participants in the interviews mentioned that neither they nor their children have health insurance. Due to the lack of insurance, Latinos recognize that in case of emergency most likely they would have to pay a large amount of money to receive health services. Some other participants expressed that they would like to know the name and location of the closest hospital to Landfall, because they only are aware of one hospital.

More specifically, the following were among the main topics that participants expressed interest in regard to health issues;

- Clinics for low income families
- Vaccines for children
- Health insurance
- Classes for adults such as nutrition and aerobics
- Closest hospital in case of an emergency

Participants will also like to obtain information of household utilities and leisure activities, including:

- Emergency numbers (firefighters, police, and closest hospital).
- Bus schedules and routes.
- Utility companies that have lower prices (for electricity, heat, phone).
- Recreation and activities outside of Landfall (sport teams for children).
- Information for teenagers that would like to continue their education after high school (colleges, scholarships, education programs).

Some Latino participants noted to lack information on one or several of the topics cited above. Couple of participants mentioned that they have had problems in the past with bus schedules and routes. Some others talked about being new in the Twin Cities for which they would like to obtain information on recreational activities in the Metro Area. Furthermore, a couple others wanted information on educational opportunities for their

children and teenagers outside of Landfall. Finally, some residents expressed their discontent with having to pay high prices for their utilities.

Non-Latino participants were also asked to rate the community services for which they would like to receive additional information. The majority of respondents suggested that they do not need information on the following topics, while some respondents expressed that they might need information on community services. **Table 1** presents a summary of responses from participants on the surveys.

Table 1: Information from non-Latino respondents regarding potential services.

	Do not need	Might need	Definitely need	Do not know/ Not applicable
Child rearing-support	80%	10%	---	10%
Financial or budget counseling	56%	33%	---	11%
Education classes	22%	67%	11%	---
Help with medical problems	67%	33%	---	---
Finding jobs/ job training	50%	40%	10%	---
Preparation for higher education	50%	40%	10%	---

As the table shows, about 78 percent of respondents might or definitely need information on education classes for adults, when combining these two categories (might need or definitely need), 50 percent of non Latino participants would like to receive information about preparation for higher education. On the other hand, most respondents did not express a need for information on child rearing support, financial counseling and medical conditions.

Both Latinos and non Latinos participants in the study differed in their priorities regarding information about services. Latinos expressed interest in legal, medical and

leisure information. Non Latinos on the other hand do not need or might need information on most of the options presented.

D. How people have obtained information and would like to obtain information about FamilyMeans activities?

Nine of the ten Latino participants from the interviews expressed that they would like to receive information about FamilyMeans activities in Spanish. As mentioned in the demographic section, the majority of Latinos (60%) prefer “to speak only Spanish” at home, and the remaining 40% expressed that they prefer “to speak more Spanish than English” at home. The English proficiency levels of most Latino participants are limited and some of them commented that this limitation has been a constraint in their lives in a number of ways. For example, a Latino participant talked about the trailer that burned down this year in Landfall and how she did not know what was happening, because the information was available only in English. Another participant expressed that she holds a teaching degree in Mexico and several years of experience in teaching, however, language barriers among other issues have detained her from finding a teaching position in Minnesota.

English limitations have also prevented Latinos being more involved in the programs that FamilyMeans offers for children, youth and families. Latinos commented that the newsletter that is sent out to households is only in English, which makes it difficult for them to understand the content of the paper and be able to participate in activities.

For example, a resident expressed the following concern about the newsletter;

“They send a newsletter every month, but if we do not know English we can’t read it. If there is something important will be good if they could translate it to Spanish. I know there are events that we can participate, but we do not know”

Non Latino parents were also asked to share how they usually obtain information about activities and programs in Landfall. Over one third (36%) shared that they receive information through the community newsletter, another 36% indicated that their children

are the source of information, 21% said that neighbors tell them about activities, 7% said that city employees are their source of information.

Latino and non Latino residents differ in the form they obtained community information. For example, Latinos expressed difficulty understanding the newsletter, while non Latinos considered it their first form to obtain information about community issues and events.

E. How is the relationship between Latinos and FamilyMeans staff? Is language a barrier in their relationship?

When Latino participants were asked to talk about their relationship with FamilyMeans, 90% of them expressed having a good relationship with FamilyMeans staff. The remaining 10% mentioned not having any kind of relationship with the FamilyMeans staff at Landfall. Almost all Latino participants expressed having little contact with FamilyMeans staff that work with their children due to language barriers; however some indicated that their children serve as translators when they need to talk to adults in the programs. Nevertheless, Latino parents appreciate the kindness and patience the staff shows when they are trying to communicate with them. One parent expressed her experience communicating with the FamilyMeans staff.

“My relationship with them is weak because I do not speak English. I feel embarrass coming here. I will come here if I speak English. People here are kind, but I feel sad for me”.

Latino participants throughout the interview talked about their satisfaction with the programs and how their children are happy participating in the activities. Although, parents’ limited English proficiency has restricted the information they can access about children’s activities and programming. Overall, parents support to the programs strongly relies on their children's feedback to them.

F. Suggestions for FamilyMeans

Most Latino participants did not have specific suggestions for FamilyMeans. In general they are very pleased with the programs as they are. A common suggestion was to provide more programs for children and adults together. However, a couple Latino participants in the study provided some specific insights on areas which the program could be improved:

- Provide more help with homework due to the limitation parents have in understanding school requirements and the educational systems itself.
- If possible, have bilingual (English-Spanish) staff to help families coordinate events, and translate materials (e.g., newsletter, flyers).
- Coordinate more summer activities for the whole family, such as picnics.

Most of surveyed parents did not give suggestions for FamilyMeans. Only one mother wrote a comment indicating that the services provided by FamilyMeans are wonderful and that she appreciates the program. She refers to it as safe and good place to raise her child.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

This section outlines recommendations for FamilyMeans on how to better serve families with children living in Landfall, Minnesota. Recommendations are based on the data gathered both, through the interviews and the survey. Recommendations are grouped in three main categories: (a) Investigation Station, (b) Teen center, and (c) Community services.

A. The Investigation Station program

Bilingual communication strategies

- Provide information to Latino parents about the goals and activities of this program in Spanish as well as in English.
- The primary feedback Latino parents are receiving of the program is through their children. Even though children's opinions are valuable, the information provided could suffer several limitations. First, it is important to recognize that children may not be the best judge of what activities and/or situations are appropriate for them. Second, when information is mediated by a third agent, it runs the risk of misinterpretation. Thus, if children remain the most important source of communication, parents will continue to have information gaps, especially in terms of how this program is actually benefiting their children and their family.

Homework Assistance

Due to Latino parents limited English proficiency, some of them have difficulty helping their children in homework and school projects. Some Latino parents talked about the wonderful help children are receiving through the tutoring program. One recommendation they provided to the program is to help children a little more with their homework.

B. The Teen Center program.

- Latino parents also lack information on the activities that are organized in the Teen center program. More outreach to parents in this regard is highly recommended.
- A mother recommended including educational programs on prevention of drug use, teen pregnancy, and other risks related to early sexual relationships, gangs, pornography on the internet. These suggestions may be relevant for this age group.

C. Community activities and services

- Both Latino and non Latino parents are interested in enrolling their children in preschool classes if offered in Landfall. None of the children younger than 6 years old are enrolled in programs outside of Landfall. Early intervention has been highly recommended in the education literature to prevent school failure, especially for children who are at risk. For this reason, it is recommended to further analyze the possibility of opening this service in Landfall.
- Several community services are of interest to Latino families. Of particular importance are: (a) medical information (b) jobs application/training information, and (c) emergency contact information. These are considered important for the consequences that lacking this information could have in the life of these families.
- Latino families have limited English proficiency for which is recommended to provide information about community services and activities in Spanish in addition to English. Participants mentioned they look at the community newsletter, therefore, it is recommended that when there are important announcements to be made, a section of the newsletter could be included with such messages in Spanish. A partnership with other organizations that work with Latinos may be a form to find people willing to help with translations.

- Non-Latino families suggested having more adult activities, such as a volunteer program to improve the security of the community. This recommendation can be very useful to integrate the community itself.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: INITIAL NOTE



Can We Talk to You About Our Work?

Greetings,

FamilyMeans, the organization that provides programs for school-age children and teens in Landfall, would like to talk to you about our work. It is important for us to know if our work benefits your children and your family and what we can do to make our programs better.

Even if you do not have children in our programs, we would like to know if there are any other social services your household may need—such as preschool programs, or services for adults or whole families.

We will be beginning this project very soon. We have hired HACER, a Hispanic advocacy organization at the University of Minnesota, to gather this information. In the next couple of weeks you will be receiving a call from Roxana Rodriguez to request a time to come to your home and talk to you. Roxana is from Costa Rica. She will spend 20-30 minutes interviewing you. All of your answers will be kept anonymous.

Thank you in advance for your time, the information we gather will help us to better serve you.

Tom Yuska, Susan Lundin, Walker Lee Ashley
FamilyMeans staff in Landfall

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS CONSENT FORM

LANDFALL FAMILYMEANS PROJECT

Consent form for interview

INTRODUCTION: Landfall FamilyMeans program and HACER invite you to participate in a short interview as a part of a research project to evaluate and improve the services of their children and teen after school program. HACER staff (Roxana Rodriguez-Araya) would like to interview about you and your family’s experience with the program. Read this form completely before you agree to participate in the interview. If you have questions, please ask her before you sign the form.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this project is to assess Landfall families’ knowledge and experience participating in the FamilyMeans programs, more specifically this project seeks to evaluate and improve the current after school programs for children and teens.

PROCEDURES: If you agree to be interviewed, you will fill out a form. This form will ask you to tell us some characteristics about yourself. We will not ask for your name. The information you share on this form will only be used to describe individuals with whom we have spoken in this study. After filling out the form, you will take part in a short interview. With your permission, the conversation may be audio taped. You can choose not to be recorded. The interview will last approximately a half-hour.

RISKS AND BENEFITS TO BEING IN THE STUDY: There are risks to participation in this study. For example, we will ask you to talk about your personal experiences. We will ask about your thoughts and experiences of your family’s relationship with the FamilyMeans programs. This information will be shared with FamilyMeans, but we will not share any information that may identify you. There are no direct benefits to participation in this study. However, the results of this study are intended to improve the services and programs that FamilyMeans offers to Landfall residents

COMPENSATION: GIFT BAG AND GAS CARD

CONFIDENTIALITY: The paperwork and recordings from this study will be kept private. They will be kept in a locked cabinet in our office for one year and will be destroyed or erased thereafter. Only researchers working on this project will have access to this information.

VOLUNTARY NATURE OF THE STUDY: You do not have to participate. If you participate in the interview you can choose to not respond to a question if you do not feel comfortable. You can end the interview at any time. Your decision to end the interview will not affect your current or future relations with HACER or FamilyMeans.

CONTACTS AND QUESTIONS: If you have more questions about this study please contact Rafael Ortiz, HACER’s executive director, he speaks Spanish and English and can answer your questions. You may call him at 612.624.3326. *You will receive a copy of this form.*

AGREEMENT TO PARTICIPATE:

I have read and understand the above information. I have asked my questions and have received answers to these questions. I agree to participate.

Signature of Participant _____ Date _____
Signature of Facilitator _____ Date _____

FamilyMeans Interview Demographic Sheet

FamilyMeans is collecting the following information to learn more about the people we serve in Landfall. The information that you provide will help us to improve the services we offer you and your family. Your information will remain anonymous.

1. Gender

- Male
- Female

2. Country of birth? _____

3. If you were born outside of the U.S., how long have you lived in this country?

4. How long have you lived in Landfall?

_____ years _____ months

5. Do you identify yourself as Latino? _____

6. In which language do you prefer to speak?

- Only in Spanish
- Spanish more than English
- Spanish and English equally
- English more than Spanish
- Only English
- Other _____

7. What is your highest level of education completed?

- None
- Elementary School (K-6)
- Junior High School (7-9)
- High School
- GED (associated degree/vocational/technical)
- College/University
- Post graduate training

8. Does your current work schedule make it difficult for your children to participate in the programs?

- Yes
- No

9. What would be the best time for FamilyMeans to organize activities or programs? (Mark all that apply)

- Mornings before school
- Weekday afternoons

Weeknights

Weekends

Holidays

Other _____

10. What are the ages of the children between 0-18 years old that live in your household? Please use the following table to write the information

Ages

11. Are you the parent/guardian for the children?

Yes

No

Other _____

12. If you have children younger than 6 years old, are they going to a preschool program outside of Landfall?

Yes

No

Not applicable

13. What is the name of the program? _____

14. If there were classes offered for preschool children 0-6 in Landfall, would you send your children?

Yes

No

Do not have preschool children

15. If preschool classes were offered in Landfall, which of the following options do you think would be most beneficial to you?

Type of class

Drop off and pick up your children

Take classes with your children

Time of day

Mornings

Afternoons

Evenings

Weekends

FamilyMeans Interview

The first set of questions is related to the work FamilyMeans does with children and teens in Landfall. This information will help us to evaluate the services FamilyMeans provides to young people. The final set of questions will help us determine if there are any other community services that might be beneficial to your family. We appreciate the time you will take to participate in this interview.

The following questions are related to the Investigation Station—the after-school and summer program for children between 6-12 years old.

1. What do you know about the programs for children that FamilyMeans organizes?
2. Do your children attend the Investigation Station? If not, why not?
3. Can you explain how the Investigation Station has helped your children?
4. What activities at the Investigation Station do you consider beneficial for your children?
5. What Investigation Station activities do you consider NOT beneficial for them?
6. Are there activities at the Investigation Station you think should be improved or added?
7. How has the Investigation Station program been helpful to your family?

The following questions are related to the Teen Program for youth between 13 -18 years old

1. What do you know about the FamilyMeans Teen Program?
2. Do you have teenagers that attend the Teen Center? If not, why not?
3. Can you explain how the program has benefited your teens?
4. What activities at the Teen Center do you think are beneficial for them?
5. What Teen Center activities do you think are NOT beneficial for them?
6. What activities at the Teen Center do you think should be improved or added?
7. How has the Teen Center been helpful to your family?

The following questions are related to the activities FamilyMeans has organized and could help organize for Latino families

1. What activities has FamilyMeans organized in the last year for the community in Landfall? Did you participate in these activities? Which one do you like most? Which one did you not like?
2. What other activities would you want to see organized for the Latino community?
3. Would you like FamilyMeans to provide information about community services? Which topics would you like the best?
4. How would you like to receive information about the activities or programs that are going on in the community?
5. What is your relationship with the FamilyMeans program staff?
6. Is language a barrier when you or your kids wish to speak to FamilyMeans staff?
7. Other comments or suggestions?

APPENDIX D: QUESTIONNAIRE GUIDE

(THE QUESTIONNAIRE WAS SENT TO FAMILIES IN A BOOKLET FORMAT)

Dear Parents and Guardians:

FamilyMeans is always striving to provide the best programs we can for your children. It is important for us to know how parents view our work.

As your children have been part of our programs, we would like to please complete the following survey below. Your collaboration will help us serve you and your children better in the future. For your convenience when sending the survey back to us, we have also attached a pre-paid postage envelope.

Thank you!
Tom Yuska
Susan Lundin, and Walker Lee Ashley
The FamilyMeans Landfall Team.

Instructions

Please fill out this survey to the best of your ability. The information you provide will help us improve the quality of the program.

The information you provide will remain anonymous. Please do not write your name anywhere in the survey.

The following questions ask to share some general characteristics about yourself; this information will be used to generalize the people who were surveyed for this project.

FamilyMeans Landfall Youth Programs Parental Survey *Investigation Station and Teen Center*

Parents/Guardians:

Greetings. This survey is being given to you because your children are in our programs. FamilyMeans is always striving to provide the best programs we can for your children. It is important for us to know how parents view our work. Would you please take a few minutes and complete the following survey and mail it back to us in the attached envelope? Thank you!

Tom Yuska, Susan Lundin, and Walker Lee Ashley

Please do not write your name on this survey.
--

Demographic Information: The following questions ask you to share some general characteristics about yourself, this information will be used to generalize the people who were surveyed for this project. Your answers are confidential and any information you share will not be used to identify you.

1. Gender

- Male
- Female

2. Age _____

3. If outside of the U.S., how long have you lived in the U.S.?

4. How long have you lived in landfall (months, years)
_____ years _____ months

5. What is your highest level of education?

- None
- Elementary School (K-6)
- Junior High School (7-9)
- High School/ GED
- College/University
- Post graduate training

6. Does your current work schedule make it difficult for your children to participate in the after school programs that FamilyMeans offers?

- Yes
- No

7. What would be the best time for FamilyMeans to organize activities or programs? (Mark all that apply)

- Mornings before school
- Weekday afternoons
- Weeknights
- Weekends
- Holidays

Other _____

8. What are the ages of the youth between 0-18 years old that live in your household? Please use the following table to write the information

Ages

Section I: The following questions are related to the work FamilyMeans does in Landfall with CHILDREN ages 5-12. If you have children ages 5-12 please fill out this section, otherwise go on to section II.

1. Did you know that FamilyMeans offers the Investigation Station—an after school and summer activity program for children (6-12) located in City Hall?

- Yes
- No

2. Please check the reason(s) your child has not participated in the Investigation Station.(Check all that apply)

- Prefers to be at home
- My child has other school/ home/work responsibilities
- In other child care
- Not interested in activities
- Does not like the staff at the program
- Does not like the other kids at the program
- This question is not applicable

Other _____

3. How has the Investigation Station program benefited your child in each of the following areas? (A table was use for this question).

Social skills, behavior at school, behavior at home, performance at school, interest in learning, development of a talent or skill, connection with caring adults, create friendships, and other.

4. How beneficial have the following Investigation Station activities been for your children? (A table was used for this question)

Art activities, music, woodworking, reading activities, computers, outdoor sports & gym time, summer field trips, girls scouts, and others.

5. What other activities would you like the Investigation Station to offer?

6. Why is the Investigation Station important to your family? (Check all that apply)

- Place for my children to go while I am working
- Program is available without cost
- The activities are beneficial for my children

Other reasons _____

Section II: The following questions are related to the work FamilyMeans does in Landfall with teenagers ages 13-18. If you have teenagers, please fill out this section, otherwise go on to section III.

1. Did you know that FamilyMeans has a Teen Center program for 13-18 year-olds?

- Yes
- No

2. Please check the reason(s) your teen has or has not participated in the Teen Program (check all that apply)

- Prefers to be at home
 - My child has other school/home/work responsibilities
 - I do not know what activities are offered
 - Activities are not attractive to my teen
 - I am unfamiliar with Teen Center staff
 - My teen is unfamiliar with Teen Center staff
 - I am uncomfortable with youth who attend the program
 - My teen is uncomfortable with youth who attend the program
 - This question is not applicable
- Other _____

3. How has the Teen Center benefited your child in each of the following areas? (A table was use for this question).

Social skills, behavior at school, behavior at home, performance at school, interest in learning, development of a talent or skill, create friendships, participation in community service projects, connection with caring adults, and other.

4. What other activities would you like the Teen Center to offer?

5. Why is the Teen Center important to your family? (*Check all that apply*)

- Place for my teen to go while I am working
- Program is available without cost
- The activities are beneficial for my teen

Other reasons: _____

Section III: The following questions are about possible programs for preschool children. If you have preschoolers (younger than 6 years old), please fill out this section, if not please go on to section IV.

1. If you have children younger than 6 years old, are they going to a preschool program outside of Landfall?

- Yes
- No
- Not applicable (*You do not need to answer any more questions in section III*)

2. What is the name of the program? _____

3. If there were classes for preschool children ages 0-6 in Landfall, would you send your children?

- Yes
- No

4. If preschool classes were offered in Landfall, which of the following options do you think would be most beneficial to you?

- Drop off and pick up your children
- Take classes with your children

Section IV: The following questions are related to activities that FamilyMeans could organize for Landfall families as well as questions related to your relationship with the program staff.

1. How do you find out what is going on in the community?

- Neighbors
- Landfall Newsletter
- City employees
- School
- Kids
- Other: _____

2. What activities and or services would you and your family need?

Child-rearing support, financial or budget counseling, education classes, help with medical problems, finding job/ job training, preparation for higher education: technical, junior or four-year college.

3. What other types of activities/programs would you like to see organized for the community?

Section V: Additional comments or suggestions please use this space to write any additional comments or suggestions
