



LA RED LATINA DE EDUCACIÓN TEMPRANA

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Dear Representative Pinto,

Thank you for taking the time to listen our group after the No Small Matter documentary showing on November 7th. Knowing your support for quality early childhood education, we asked that as chair of the Early Childhood Finance and Policy Division Committee you consider drawing attention to an unintended consequence of Minnesota's early education system that is contributing to the shortage of quality early childhood environments in our state. The first few years of a child's life are critical to healthy brain development and the State has given much attention and money to support improvement in the formal system of licensed early care and education. However, this neglects the many children who are in the informal care system of Family, Friend and Neighbor (FFN) childcare providers.

These providers are often caring for our most vulnerable children: those with special needs, low incomes, racial diversity, and immigrant and refugee status. These are also the children we are most concerned about being ready for school and experiencing health inequity.

Currently there is no systematic support for FFN care providers, and without these systemic supports, we will never increase access to quality early childhood resources in our most vulnerable communities. FFN providers need recognition, training and state resources to adequately match the role they play in raising Minnesota's next generation.

The Latino Network for Early Childhood Education (La Red Latina de Educación Temprana or "La Red") in the Richfield/Bloomington area is an effective community-driven model of FFN support that has the potential to be replicated across the state of Minnesota. It has increased the quality of care for local Latino children and changed the lives of the FFN providers. Participation in the network changed their understanding of their role from "just babysitting" to understanding that the work they do is vitally important to the children's future and the future of their entire community. We have enclosed a fact sheet that explains the model, how it got started and the support FFN providers need to continue this important work. [La Red's story](#) is available on the web as part of the [Building Health Equity: Health Happens in Community](#) series of videos and at this link https://youtu.be/zvo_6buneEo which describes the partnership with public health.

We believe the Family, Friends and Neighbor Provider Grant Program funds can help equalize access to quality care and early learning for care providers across the Minnesota.

Joan Bulfer M.S., R.D., LN
Bloomington Public Health
1900 West Old Shakopee Rd.
Bloomington, MN 55431

Ruth Evangelista
Director, La Red Latina de Education Temprana
6500 Nicollet Av S, Richfield, MN 55423
ruthangelista@hotmail.com | 952-452-2430



Family Friends and Neighbor (FFN) Child Care Providers: An Untapped Minnesota Asset

PROBLEM

Public support for Friend, Family and Neighbor (FFN) childcare has decreased as public policies have increasingly focused on licensed child care quality ratings and access to preschool early learning opportunities. By overlooking FFN providers, our early childhood system continues to perpetuate systemic inequalities in education, health and future success for children in FFN care, many of whom are children of color and/or from immigrant communities.

SOLUTION

Community-driven Solutions Exist

Since 2013, La Red Latina de Educación Temprana (The Latino Childcare Provider Network) has worked to eliminate the systemic barriers FFN childcare providers face by providing quality culturally and linguistically appropriate trainings, educational opportunities and leadership development to their members. Trainings are adjusted to support providers in navigating and following the Early Childhood Education (ECE) system and regulations without losing their culture and teachings.

FFN childcare providers who come to La Red (The Network) say they have learned to be more confident in the work they do, and it has provided them with resources, strategies and structure to better support children in their care.

FFN providers need support and resources to thrive:

1. Recognition and support of community-led FFN initiatives.
2. Access to culturally relevant early childhood trainings and resources in providers' native language.
3. Recognition that trained and experienced FFN care is quality child care.
4. Understanding that FFN care is community-based and as such impacts the entire family and community.
5. Recognize that trained FFNs provide a safe and enriched environment for children to be kindergarten-ready.

History of LaRed

La Red began as a collaboration between the Latino community and Bloomington Public Health through the Statewide Health Improvement Partnership and the UCare Foundation. Additional support from BlueCross Blue Shield Center for Prevention has allowed La Red to continue refining the model and provide ongoing training to the Latino community.



"La Red is a great model because it was created by the community."
– Ruth, Founder and Leader, La Red

"All of us together, we bring ideas, organize, and provide a healthier life for our children."
– Faviola, Co-Founder and Leader of La Red

"Providing support to this community to create their own solutions to the problem of accessible quality childcare has resulted in a strong, effective network of highly qualified FFN childcare providers."
– Joan, Co-founder and Bloomington Public, Health staff

"Supporting Family, Friend and Neighbor care is essential in creating a healthy future for our state. All children should have access to high quality and culturally appropriate early care."
– Janelle Waldo, VP Community Health & Health Equity, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota

BACKGROUND

Who Uses FFN Care Providers?

In Minnesota, nearly 40% of children age 2 and younger, 25% of children age 3 to 5, and 20 percent of children age 6 to 12 are estimated to be in FFN care as their only or primary child care arrangement. This amounts to about 240,000 children.

Friend, Family and Neighbor (FFN) Care, Wilder Research (2016).

FFN care is preferred by:

- Parents across all income, racial and cultural groups with infants, young children, and children with special needs
- Immigrant and refugee families
- Indigenous families and families of color
- Low-income households
- Families working non-traditional days or hours.

In 2018:

190

Members attended La Red trainings. Members include parents, grandparents, siblings, friends, neighbors and center-based providers

12

Culturally and linguistically relevant trainings

40

Members of La Red attend training on average

300+

Minnesota children are cared for by La Red providers



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