

The Hispanic/Latino Initiative of ACES

Background

The Hispanic/Latino population is increasing dramatically in Alabama. Though no one knows exactly how large this population is, even casual observation suggests that the Hispanic/Latino presence has grown significantly during the 1990s. In 1995, only 0.6 percent of the student enrollment in Alabama public schools was Hispanic. However, this figure had increased to 0.9 percent by the 1997-98 school year and to 1.1 percent currently. Hispanic/Latino student enrollment is only one of the many indicators of the growth that is taking place in this emerging population. Hispanic workers are on the increase in various industries around the state as well. This population is expected to continue increasing significantly in the coming years.

With this shift in the population come many potential benefits but also many challenges. Besides the many social and health needs of Hispanics in the United States, there are also language-related needs. According to the 1990 census, more than 17 million Americans reported that they spoke Spanish at home. Nearly one-third of those aged 18-64 who spoke Spanish said that they “did not speak English well” or “not at all.” Recent requests from Extension agents for publications in Spanish have been overwhelming. These facts suggest that there is a growing need in Alabama for information in Spanish for thousands of persons of Hispanic origin.

The surge in the Hispanic/Latino population along with the increasing requests from agents have prompted the Alabama Cooperative Extension System to organize an effort to determine how to best meet the needs of this increasingly large segment of the state’s citizenry.

Mission

The mission of the Hispanic/Latino Initiative of the Alabama Cooperative Extension System is to provide Extension education to Spanish-speaking people throughout Alabama.

Objectives

A Enhance ACES awareness and understanding of the Hispanic/Latino presence in Alabama by bringing attention to the needs and strengths of this population.

B Share ACES efforts over the past several months to respond to rapidly shifting demographic trends reflective of an increasing Hispanic/Latino population in Alabama.

C Develop in ACES personnel an understanding of and respect for diversity in language use and cross-cultural issues.

D Enable ACES personnel to share ongoing Hispanic/Latino programming successes and collaborative efforts.

E Assess the needs of the Hispanic/Latino population in Alabama.

F Ensure that the Hispanic/Latino population is included in the audience for all Extension programs and team projects (ETPs) relevant to their needs.

G Assist in developing a network of agencies, organizations, and volunteers that have resources to support the Hispanic/Latino Initiative to meet the needs of this population

H Assist Hispanic/Latino individuals, families, and communities by developing and providing culturally appropriate educational programs and materials.

Following are strategies, classified as “internal” and “external,” which will aid the Alabama Cooperative Extension System in meeting the needs of the emerging Hispanic/Latino population in the most appropriate manner. Initial emphasis will be placed on strategies that can be accomplished in the next 6 months. These are coded as 1. Strategies that can be accomplished within the next 18 months are coded as 2. Strategies that are expected to take another 3 to 4 years are coded as 3. The letters refer to the objectives addressed by each strategy.

Internal Focus Strategies

1 A, F Work with ACES administration to ensure continuing and future commitment to support the Hispanic/Latino Initiative (HLI).

1 A, B Ask that HLI chairs be invited to speak to ACES administration about the efforts of this group.

1 A, B Meet with State Program Leaders, District Extension Coordinators, and others in program leadership roles to encourage and facilitate the inclusion of programs for the Hispanic/Latino population throughout the System.

1 E Continue to gather the most current demographic data pertaining to Hispanic/Latino populations.

1 A, B, D, E, F, H Look at programs currently in place (e.g., NEP, Breast Cancer Education, 4-H, Farm-A-Syst), to see what adaptations are needed to meet the needs of the Hispanic/Latino community.

1 A, E, G Encourage agents to organize HLI Program Action Committees (PACs) to assist in identifying needs and resources at the county level. Identify PAC members to be on the HLI Steering Committee.

1 A, B, D, G Determine current Hispanic/Latino activities in counties and identify capabilities (e.g., survey agents; use impact statements gathered by DECs).

1 A, C Through training and programs, promote understanding within Extension of the culture, needs, and strengths of the Hispanic/Latino population.

1 F, H Provide news articles agents can use with volunteers.

1 F, G, H Review Texas A&M Spanish publications that ACES has had translated into English. Send these publications to all counties.

2 F, G, H Identify additional Spanish/English materials, and provide them to the counties.

2 C, E, F, G, H Hire bilingual agents, program assistants, agent assistants.

2/3 A, C, D, E, F, G, H Request the hiring of two bilingual specialists, one in Community Resource Development to provide overall leadership to Extension efforts to reach the Hispanic/Latino population, the other in Communications to provide educational materials appropriate to this population.

2/3 C, D, E, F, G, H Identify resources and obtain funding to help implement HLI strategies.

3 F, G, H Prepare Spanish/English written, visual, and multimedia materials in all program areas.

3 C, F, H Encourage and support Spanish language training for all in the System who wish to take advantage of such training.

External Focus Strategies

1 F, G Identify volunteers to help with county HLI strategies.

1 G Develop networks with groups already established in the Hispanic/Latino community.

1 G Search out other states and communities to find models for reaching the Hispanic/Latino population.

2 G Identify Hispanic/Latino and employer leaders among our clientele, and make them aware of this initiative.

2 A, E, F, G Conduct community surveys and focus groups concerning the needs of the Hispanic/Latino population, resources available, potential organizations for collaboration, volunteers, etc.

2 C, G Promote community understanding of the culture and needs of the Hispanic/Latino population.

2 E, F, G, H Survey targeted industries.

2 A, E, G Work with local agencies to find out what services they are already providing and, if necessary, to make them aware of the needs of the local Hispanic/Latino population. Then develop lists/directories in each county office of services in the counties that provide support to Hispanic/Latino families. Have the lists/directories available in both English and Spanish.

3 F, G, H Offer work-site training programs, (e.g., agents may provide "lunch-to-learn" programs for employees).

3 F, G, H Work with local media to provide information in Spanish.

2/3 E, F Incorporate ongoing evaluation of HLI efforts, successes, and challenges and periodic reviews of the needs of the Hispanic/Latino population.