



# iENCUENTRO!

A HEALTHY YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROJECT CREATED  
BY AND FOR THE LATINO COMMUNITY

## iEncuentro! Program Snapshot

**Goal:** To reduce health and social disparities among Latino youth, the Encuentro program enhances healthy sexual decision-making among young Latino teens through culturally relevant teen-parent activities designed to increase pro-social supports and healthy behaviors.

**Partners:** A collaboration between members of the Latino Community and the U of M.

**Process:** Programming developed based on findings from formative research among parents, youth and Latino-youth-serving professionals.

**Details:** Encuentro is a 16-week program for 11-14 year old teens and their parents/caregivers.

### Programming topics

- Cultural identity and cultural pride
- Positive family connectedness and teen-parent communication
- Puberty and sexuality education
- Youth life skills

### 2013-14 Host Organizations

- Sabathani Community Center, Minneapolis
- Sojourner Truth Academy, Minneapolis
- Guadalupe Alternative Programs, St. Paul

*“We talked about how to talk about it with our parents. Sometimes there are things you don’t want to tell your parents but we got to talk about it together.”*



## Program Success

Research shows that approaches grounded in a positive youth development framework -- programs that intentionally build on young peoples’ strengths, and enhance protective factors within youth themselves and their social contexts are a best practice in promoting health and health equity among young people. Results show that Encuentro aligns with a youth development frame.

### Satisfaction and Engagement

- Among families in the program group, 82% of teens and 67% of parents attended 5 or more program sessions.
- Both teens and parents reported high levels of program approval.
- 97% of parents would recommend this program to others.

### Teen Outcomes

*Compared with a control group, teens in the program reported:*

- Substantially more involvement in activities celebrating Latino culture.
- Greater communication with their parents about puberty, healthy relationships and sexual health topics.
- Increased awareness of healthy and unhealthy relationships compared to teens in the control group.

### Parent Outcomes

*Compared with a control group, parents in the program reported:*

- Engaging in more activities to share Latino values and traditions with their teens (cultural socialization).
- Greater communication with their teens about puberty, healthy relationships and sexual health topics.
- Involvement strengthened their social support networks and helped them connect with community resources for their teens and families.

## Program: Promoting Positive Youth Development

In each of the 4 Encuentro topic areas, program activities promote protective factors through 1) building supportive peer, family and community relationships; 2) providing opportunities for teens and parents to hear from each other; and 3) helping teens develop the motivation and skills needed to make healthy decisions.

The high level of Latino community input and collaboration in developing this program make it particularly powerful in addressing needs identified by the community.



Throughout the 16-weeks teens and their families participated in tailored, engaging programming developed by the partnership, informed by formative research, guided by the research base and illuminated by advisors with extensive experience supporting the healthy development of Latino youth. Examples of the teen+parent programming include:

### Family Values

A "Family Values" unit emphasizes helping teens develop a strong family identity. In an activity youth and parents create a "Values Tree" where they write down their families' values in a large outline of a tree. This powerful visual enables teens and parents to talk about how values keep families together and guide family decisions.



### Sexuality Education

Through a Sexuality Education Unit, teens work together to create male and female reproductive anatomy models with craft materials. This engaging activity increases teens' comfort in talking with adults and their parents about sexual and reproductive health.

*“The most important part of the program was the way in which we talked about my culture and that my son felt proud of his culture.”*

## Why Encuentro?

The growth of the Latino youth population combined with the reality that many Latino teens live in environments characterized by social disparities reveals a compelling need to develop effective health promotion programs tailored to this population.

By 2035, 1 in 3 U.S. young people will be Latino. In Minnesota, where there is a surge in immigration, almost 40% of the Latino population is under 20 years old

Latino youth are disproportionately affected by social determinants of health that create particular vulnerabilities during the teen years. For example, 1/3 of Latino youth in Minnesota live in poverty.

Encuentro is one of the few sexual health programs offered in the Twin Cities area to young Latino teens and their families.

## Funding & the Future

Encuentro was initially funded by a UMN PRC grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The UMN PRC has over 18 years of experience in research and programs that promote positive youth development and youth sexual health.

Encuentro is seeking funding to sustain and expand this teen+parent program in our community. The St. Paul Foundation and UCare Foundation are Encuentro's newest funders.

Encuentro is seeking additional community partners to host this teen+parent program.

## Contact

Abby Gadea: 612-638-0700 • gadea002@umn.edu  
Kara Beckman: 612-626-2511 • beckm118@umn.edu

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

...in partnership with community organizations