

RIAL SEMINAR ON YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

Rio de Janeiro, May 20 and 21, 2008

Panel 5 – Presentation Summary of Latino Coalition

- **What parameters are used to define the target populations?**

Our constituency consists of Latino youth between the ages of 14-21 who fall into two categories:

- a) At-risk: school drop outs, teen pregnancy, drug/alcohol use/abuse, gang membership/affiliation, living in poverty, siblings involved in any of the above negative lifestyles,
- b) Adjudicated: Youth that have stood before the court for any of the above and other misdemeanors or more serious crimes

- **What are the mechanisms adopted to promote the participation of disconnected youth in the definition of labor insertion policies, programs and actions?**

Outreach: We extend an invitation to grassroots community and faith-based organizations that already have established youth programs in targeted neighborhoods.

Recruit: We recruit organizations to recruit disconnected youth that show interest in programs that can offer a life change and provide life coaches for each individual participant.

Retain: We assess the programs of each organization and provide technical assistance and capacity building to help enhance or expand their programs to reach more, heal more and retain more youth as employable candidates to local employers.

Reproduce: We reproduce leaders through mentoring and leadership development programs who then become our outreach arm to the neighborhoods and the cycle starts over again and is sustained by the new youth leaders that serve as role models for employees and employers in the community.

- **What results were obtained on the labor insertion of disconnected youth in the labor market?**

Over a three year period a total of 2,951 at-risk and adjudicated youth have been served; One thousand two hundred fourteen at-risk or adjudicated youth either entered the workforce for the first time, entered the military, entered and/or completed long term occupational training or entered full-time post-secondary school; Two hundred and fourteen at-risk or adjudicated youth received their high school diploma, G.E.D. and/or a certificate.

- **How do you create environments that are conducive to promoting positive youth development and moving away from the unhealthy activities and environments associated with gangs? How do employment and training activities support this aim?**

Using the arts, such as, music, drama, and dance – we create an environment that speaks to youth culture and expression that attracts their interest and provides them a unique opportunity to discover and develop their innate gifts and talents. There is also a spiritual element that can address certain needs to help gang

members be transformed from the inside-out. Employment and training allow for youth to use their particular skills and passion to build community while receiving wages, which can be a deterrent to gangs and other negative lifestyles.

- **What strategies are used to provide remedial education services for youth that have very low literacy and numeracy skills?**

Programs must be tailored to be flexible. After school, night and weekend tutoring programs tailored to meet at the times and places where youth are most available.

- **How do you create partnerships between various service providers and systems to coordinate services, including law enforcement, courts, community-based organizations, governmental programs, etc?**

The best partnerships are created through building relationships of trust. Trust allows for open communication, which allows for community coordination of services amongst all the providers listed above. The partnerships described above always hinge on finding and developing leadership at the grassroots level.

- **How are programs adjusted to local characteristics?**

Staff cultural competence of CBO/FBO's is imperative to the sensitivity required to make the necessary adjustments for effective programs.