



COMUNIDADES LATINAS
UNIDAS EN SERVICIO

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release:

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New Tobacco Research Finds Minnesota's Latino Population Smoking Significantly Less than General Population

While Latina women's rate low, men and young adult rates high, requiring continued need for culturally appropriate approaches to tobacco cessation

St. Paul, Minn. (Dec. 4, 2008) — Results from the first quantitative study measuring tobacco use in Minnesota's Latino communities were released today by Comunidades Latinas Unidas En Servicio (CLUES), Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota (Blue Cross) and ClearWay MinnesotaSM. The report, titled "Tobacco Use in Minnesota: A Quantitative Survey of Members of Minnesota's Latino Communities" found adult Latinos overall are smoking at a rate lower than that of Minnesota's general adult population—13 percent as compared to 17 percent. The Latino smoking rate equates to more than 25,000 Latinos who still smoke. Additionally, the report found that only 4 percent of Latina women smoke, a considerably lower rate than the 16 percent of women who smoke in the general population.

Other highlights from the survey include:

- Twenty-two percent of Latino men in Minnesota smoke, which is similar to the high rate of men who smoke in Minnesota's general population. It is important to note that the large difference in smoking rates between women and men in the Latino community is likely tied to cultural prohibitions on smoking by women.
- Young adult Latinos ages 18 to 24 are more likely to smoke (18 percent) than older Latino adults (13 percent). Similarly, the research shows that Latinos ages 18 to 24 began experimenting with smoking at an earlier age (age 14) than older Latinos (age 16).
- Of Latinos who smoke, 39 percent fail to identify themselves as smokers when asked, a major barrier to quitting. An additional barrier is only 41 percent of smokers feel comfortable asking for help to stop smoking, which helps increase the odds of quitting successfully.

"While overall Latino smoking rates are lower than the state's smoking rate, we are deeply concerned about the high rates of smoking in men and young adults who appear to have begun experimenting with smoking at an earlier age," said Jesse Bethke Gomez, president of CLUES. "The tobacco industry disproportionately targets the Latino community, so we must continue to use culturally competent tobacco cessation programs for our communities and commence a call to action to Latino families to drive down the rate among men, and prevent women and children from ever starting to smoke."

While much work remains to reduce tobacco use among Latino communities, there is some good news:

- Most current Latino smokers in Minnesota have tried to quit—74 percent reported quitting for a day or more within the 12 months before the study.

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- Nearly all Latinos are well-informed about the health risks of smoking—99 percent are aware smoking causes lung cancer, 93 percent are aware smoking causes heart disease.
- Nearly all Latinos, 91 percent, report they don't allow smoking in their homes. The rate was even higher, 94 percent, for those with children in the home.

This report affirms that cultural values, such as the Latino emphasis on family, can be leveraged to create more culturally appropriate and effective tobacco control programs. Existing programs will continue to address cultural barriers, such as the tendency not to ask for help, which prevent smokers from using counseling and stop-smoking medications to quit.

CLUES is using this new quantitative data to train 20 Minnesota State University – Mankato students and 10 rural community health workers (*promotores*). They will use this information when speaking with community members about how to quit smoking. Another 250 health professionals are expected to learn about the data and its uses at the Second Latino Community Health Workers Conference of Minnesota this Saturday, December 6, from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Paul and Sheila Wellstone Center for Community Building in St. Paul. Communities are urged to continue conversations about tobacco use among Latinos and to use the findings to build awareness of the positive health benefits from further reductions in the smoking rate.

“This data, combined with information gleaned from our 2006 qualitative report, paints a complete picture of tobacco use within the Latino community and sheds light on tobacco-related health disparities,” said Marc Manley, M.D., vice president and medical director, Blue Cross. “Tobacco use is the leading cause of preventable death and disease in our state and costs Minnesotans nearly \$2 billion annually. It’s extremely important to understand the barriers to quitting and use culturally appropriate solutions. We look forward to working with the Latino community to lower rates even further.”

“Now we know where we’re doing well and where we can improve, and these reports will help guide our strategies going forward,” said Bethke Gomez. “I’m confident this information will result in tailored approaches to reduce tobacco use and improve the health of thousands of Latino community members.”

These reports grew out of a collaborative project called Diverse Racial and Ethnic Groups and Nations (DREGAN). In this participatory research and action project, CLUES represents Minnesota’s Latino communities and works with Blue Cross and ClearWay MinnesotaSM to reduce tobacco’s harms.

Copies of the both the new quantitative report as well as the 2006 qualitative report can be downloaded from any of the sponsor websites at www.clues.org, www.bluecrossmn.com/preventionminnesota or www.clearwaymn.org.

NOTE ABOUT THE SURVEY: The quantitative survey was conducted from January 2006-March 2007 using a combination of face-to-face and telephone interviews and achieved a 50 percent response rate from a random sample of Minnesota Latino community members. The 805 respondents were located in the 11 county metro region, six southern counties, and three northwestern counties.

Comunidades Latinas Unidas en Servicio (CLUES) was established in 1981. The organization’s mission is to “enhance the quality of the Latino community in Minnesota.” CLUES started as a mental health service agency addressing the unique cultural and language needs of Spanish-speaking Latinos. CLUES is now Minnesota’s largest Latino human services agency, providing a comprehensive array of self-sufficiency and behavioral health services for Latino children, families, and individuals. Core services include mental health, chemical health, employment, education, aging-well, and family services. CLUES is one of the few agencies to provide linguistically appropriate and culturally proficient services to Spanish speakers in Minnesota and the only one that is a dual-diagnostic provider of both chemical and mental health services. All direct service staff members are bilingual and culturally competent. In 2007, CLUES had more than 30,000 client visits at three sites in Minneapolis, East St. Paul, and West St. Paul.

DREGAN Latino Quantitative Tobacco Use Report / Page 3

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota, with headquarters in the St. Paul suburb of Eagan, was chartered in 1933 as Minnesota's first health plan and continues to carry out its charter mission today: to promote a wider, more economical and timely availability of health services for the people of Minnesota. A nonprofit, taxable organization, Blue Cross is the largest health plan based in Minnesota, covering 2.9 million members in Minnesota and nationally through its health plans or plans administered by its affiliated companies. Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota is an independent licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association, headquartered in Chicago. Go to www.bluecrossmn.com to learn more about Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota.

ClearWay MinnesotaSM is an independent, non-profit organization that improves the health of Minnesotans by reducing the harm caused by tobacco. ClearWay Minnesota serves Minnesota through its grant-making program, through QUITPLAN[®] Services and through statewide outreach activities. It is funded with 3 percent of the state's 1998 tobacco settlement. For more information on QUITPLAN Services, call 952-767-1400 or visit www.clearwaymn.org.

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