La Fe PREC is committed to providing research, education and collaborative projects to support Latinos and non-Latinos in their efforts to engage policy makers and health and human service systems in promoting and improving Latino family and community bienestar.

La Fe PREC is a component of Centro de Salud Familiar - La Fe, based in El Paso, Texas, a multiple service organization with over 40 years of social justice, advocacy and direct service delivery experience.
Abuelos y Nietos Juntos (Grandparents/Grandchildren Together) is a demonstration project that includes a monthly *platica* (discussion) Spanish support group sponsored La Fe PREC. The first objective is to outline how, through community partnership building, the grandparents developed a mutual support system among themselves, accessed community resources and learned about civic engagement/advocacy. National, State and local trend data about the prevalence of grandparents caregivers is included. The leading psychosocial factors contributing to this trend are identified. The second objective examines how the interweaving of community partnerships cultivates empowerment among the grandparents. The capacity and knowledge among grandparents has grown over the past 4 years. Projected outcomes are identified, including promotora and civic engagement training for grandparents so they can serve as resource navigators and service/policy advocates. This poster session offers an understanding of the iterative process for the development of support group and how it evolves empowered grandparents.
Grandparent Support Group
What Grandparent Caregivers Need:

- **Respite services that provide occasional care for their grandchildren.** Grandparents do not often get a chance to go out by themselves. Many commented that they "wanted care for their grandchildren that they could trust that when they came back to get their grandchildren, child protective services would not have taken them away" (Burton, 1992).

- **Parenting classes designed especially for grandparents.** While grandparents have been parents before, they still may need help parenting. They may not be up-to-date on the issues facing children today. Parenting classes designed for grandparents may be helpful. (Glass & Honeycutt, 2002).

- **Intergenerational social and leisure programs.** Grandparents (and grandchildren) would like to participate in activities involving others like them. Programs designed for grandparents and grandchildren would allow them to meet others like them, build friendships, and have fun without sticking out as different from everyone else. (Landry-Meyer, 1999).
Celebrating Grandparents
Some additional needs:

- Legal counseling concerning foster care and guardianship options
- Seminars to help them understand drug use in their adult children
- Emotional support including counseling and support groups
- Education regarding the impact on their grandchildren to exposure to drugs, even in vitro
Direct Services Provided:

- Monthly Spanish support group
- Monthly Community resource packets
- Referral Services and Follow Up
- Spiritual support/retreat
- Group Celebrations (Christmas/Mother’s Day/End of School Year)
Support Group *Platica*
Grandparent Advocates
Cheyenne, 8, (from left) Dylan, 12, and their grandmother Maria Elena Garcia make breakfast recently. Garcia is raising her two grandchildren and is part of the Abuelos Y Nietos Juntos project run by La Fe center.

Grandparents raising children

Program helps struggling families

CYNTHIA ROMERO

Maria Elena Garcia says everything happens for a reason. The 71-year-old grandmother has been raising her two grandchildren, Dylan, 12, and Cheyenne, 8, since they were born.

“I brought them home from the hospital and have been raising them since,” Garcia said. “It was like starting all over again because I had already raised my children and it’s been hard because I’m older and I’ve never really had any help.”

Garcia said the program helped her when she was introduced to The Abuelos Y Nietos Juntos Program by her grandson’s school.

“Just as you always struggle until you get help,” Garcia said. “They came just in time for me.”

Garcia said the program provided her with resources to help with her grandchildren, including food stamps, clothing and medical attention.

The program is offered by La Fe Policy Research and Education Center, which promotes changes in civic policies for the benefit of grandparents who are raising their grandchildren on their own.

Abuelos Y Nietos Juntos

The program for Abuelos Y Nietos Juntos, which began in March 2007, started out by learning what the grandparents’ struggles were and what service providers were best suited to help them.

According to Yolanda Santos, a policy associate at La Fe Policy Research and Education Center, the program will now focus on the grandchildren and their needs.

Amy Casso, policy analyst at La Fe Research and Education Center, said the Abuelos Y Nietos Juntos Project is serving as a model for the future.

“We want our service providers to come to the meetings we have with our grandparents so that they can see what the needs are of the grandparents and the children,” she said.
What Grandparents, Service Providers, and Data Taught Us

CONCERNS AND NEEDS

- **Top Concerns**
  - Financial
  - Legal
- **Additional Concerns**
  - Childcare
  - Healthcare
  - Transportation
  - Housing
- **Further complicating the challenges of GRGs**
  - the “sandwich generation” caring for grandchildren and own parents
  - Immigration status
- **Race/ethnic GRG differences** – language, economic, and cultural

POLICY ISSUES

- **Increase Kinship and Foster Care funding.**
- **Increased flexibility to utilize Title IIII Foster Care funds for kinship care.**
- **Simplification of Guardianship Process.**
- **Improve data collection methods to identify growing GRG.**
- **Improve service provider data collection on GRG, and develop more costs-effective service coordination approaches.**
- **Develop improved culturally and linguistically responsive services targeting Mexican Americans GRG.**
- **Develop GRG respite support services and facilities.**