

Latin American Research and Service Agency (LARASA)

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The mission of the Latin American Research and Service Agency (LARASA) is to lead and influence change to improve the quality of life for Latinos in Colorado. When you improve the lives of Latinos, you improve the lives of all Coloradoans. Founders and leaders wanted to "bring about coordination and cooperation among existing agencies and organizations . . . to make studies of the industrial, economic, social and spiritual conditions among Latinos, and, in general, to promote, encourage, assist and engage in any and all kinds of work for improving. . . conditions among Latinos."

- ❖ LARASA's primary goal is to strengthen the capacity of the Latino community's well being through education for youth and adults; advocacy, leadership, and civic involvement; capacity building; and health prevention strategies.
- ❖ LARASA Learning Centers provide Colorado kids in grades 6-12 with an opportunity to participate in online education with individualized, in-person support from nurturing mentors. LARASA is working together with Hope Co-op to provide a tuition-free, virtual, public charter school designed to meet the needs of at-risk students in Colorado.
- ❖ ESL and citizenship classes are offered year-round and assistance with Immigration paperwork is also provided. Specialized Spanish classes in spoken practical Spanish for special areas and uses, such as medical Spanish may be arranged. Translation services are also available.
- ❖ The Civic Education Program promotes civic responsibility, community involvement, and leadership to address issues of importance. By monitoring and influencing public policy and through research and analysis, LARASA collaborates with local, state, and national organizations to inform and educate Latinos on issues that affect our community. In addition, LARASA serves as a voice for the Latino community before civic and policymaking bodies.
- ❖ Cultural Competency Training enhances the ability of people from different backgrounds to better communicate and work more effectively in diverse communities. The training curriculum is based on more than 15 years of experience.
- ❖ Education and Information Referral Services improve access through linkages to health care, education services, affordable housing and other essential services. EIRS assists an average of 1,000 Latinos annually, many of whom are monolingual speakers of Spanish.
- ❖ Community Advocacy builds community capacity and increases access to education, health care and other human services. LARASA collaborates with other non-profit organizations to educate the public about immigration, education, and health issues that affect Colorado's Latino community.

Opportunities for libraries include:

- Advice on outreach to the Latino community.
- Resources from a number of national and regional agencies flow through LARASA, including Spanish-language booklets on public education and health.
- Potential for partnerships in regard to public education (student retention) and higher education equity activities such as studies, research, and interest groups.