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Hispanics Face More Adversity

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New Mexico's Hispanic children have it rough— at least according to a recently released study by the non-partisan children and family advocacy group, New Mexico Voices for Children.

The new Hispanic Kids Count report shows that the state's Hispanic children suffer from a number of hardships, especially regarding economic security and educational attainment, compared to their white, non-Hispanic counterparts.

More than half of all children in New Mexico are Hispanic, yet the percentage of Hispanic children living in poverty is higher at 30 percent than for New Mexico children in general, 25 percent, according to New Mexico Voices for Children Research Director Gerry Bradley.

Evangeline Trujillo, president of the Mexican American National Association of Women in Albuquerque and chair of the Hispano Roundtable of New Mexico, called the report's findings "disturbing" and said Hispanic organizations need to unite on the issues and demand help from policy makers and legislators.

"We need to get them to pay attention to root causes of poverty that have lifetime affects on children and therefore on our economy," Trujillo said.

"Hispanic poverty exists because we have not paid enough attention to early preparation of our young people educationally or to child care and health care issues that would give them equal footing."

The report states the percentage of Hispanic children with no parents in the work force also is higher than the state average and that things don't seem to improve as these children enter adulthood.

The percentage of 16- to 19-year-old Hispanics who are idle— not in school, working or enlisted in the military— is slightly higher at 14 percent than for the general 16- to 19-year-old population.

National Hispanic Cultural Center Executive Director Eduardo Díaz dubbed the report's findings "alarming."

"There's a direct correlation between education and economic security," Díaz said.