



Dear Greg Hall:

As an organization working with youth in the City Heights neighborhood, Izcalli supports Mid-City Community Advocacy Network Coordinating Council Building Healthy Communities (BHE) planning process and proposal to the California Endowment.

Izcalli, the Nahuatl word for "house of reawakening," is a community-based organization that began in 1993 by a group of young Chicano/Native American activists in San Diego who wanted to create a space for young Chicana/o students to learn about their history and culture. We currently facilitate *Circulo de Hombres* for Latino youth at Hoover High School, Serra High (students bused to) and Monroe Clark Middle School in the City Heights neighborhood, encouraging and helping students to stay and excel in school, go to college, and give back to their communities. *Circulo de Hombres* is a gang prevention, intervention, and youth development model that provides Latino youth with positive male role models, enriching cultural and recreational activities, and supportive communities. With a grant from the California Endowment, we are organizing youth, building their leadership skills, and helping them to challenge school disciplinary policies that create barriers for students of color from graduating.

Izcalli is committed to and will participate in the planning process through which residents, community organizations, and other stakeholders will identify and develop strategies that move the community towards achieving the BHE outcomes. We are currently providing programs and services to youth and their families that meet 4 of these outcomes. Our part-time program coordinator will dedicate 10% of his time to participate in the planning meeting while our volunteer Executive Director and board members, many of whom are staff members of institutions and organizations working in City Heights, will also commit to participating in the meetings. We will also identify and engage Izcalli students in the process to ensure that neighborhood youth have a voice and participate in the meetings as well.

We are very excited about the opportunity to participate in this initiative and hope the California Endowment considers City Heights favorably for support. If you have any questions regarding our role and participation in the planning process or our programs and services, please contact me at 619-857-1148. Thank you very much.

Sincerely,
Macedonio Arteaga, Jr.
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Executive Director
619.857.1148

Building Healthy Communities (BHE)

Izcalli - Organizational Description

Izcalli, the Nahuatl word for "house of reawakening," is a community-based youth development and cultural arts organization that began in 1993. For 15 years, we have assisted Latino youth in the region build their self-esteems and strengthen their resiliency. Our gang prevention and intervention model centers on *Circulo de Hombres*, a program that provides young Latinos with positive male role models, a forum for self-expression and personal development, enriching cultural and recreational activities, and supportive communities. We currently facilitate *Circulos* for Latino youth at Hoover High School and Monroe and Wilson Middle Schools in the City Heights neighborhood, encouraging and helping them to stay and excel in school, go to college, and give back to their communities. Recently, we were awarded a grant by the California Endowment to organize the youth we serve and build their leadership skills so they can effectively advocate for alternatives to suspension.

Izcalli Activities and BHE Outcomes

Through our existing programs, services, and advocacy initiatives, we are working to address critical issues facing youth, their families, and communities and to meet the following Building Healthy Communities (BHE) outcomes.

Outcome #5: Children and their families are safe from violence in their homes and their neighborhoods.

Through ***Circulo de Hombres***, Izcalli works to address domestic and community violence by providing young Latino males a forum to discuss their concerns and issues as well as opportunities learn anger management and conflict resolution strategies. We guide and assist Latino boys grow into "noble" men who are capable of achieving their dreams and visions. With guidance, mentorship, and support from positive male role models, the young men explore their identities, deconstruct the concept of Machismo, and learn about different ways they can express their masculinity without using force and violence.

The *Circulos* also provides youth with positive alternatives to gang membership by providing them with opportunities to engage in cultural and recreational activities with adult mentors, graduates of the program, and *Circulo* students from other schools. In addition to being a gang prevention program, *Circulos* also helps youth escape the violent and criminal life of gang membership. Izcalli communicates with incarcerated youth and provides them support and assistance after they leave jail and their gangs. Through gang prevention and intervention work, Izcalli is helping reduce violence in City Heights and other communities where rates of crime and violence are high.

Local Data

Qualitative data can be obtained from Izcalli graduates and program participants as well as school district staff, school counselors, parents, community leaders, and local law enforcement officers.

Outcome #6: Communities support healthy youth development

Izcalli's Circulos provides young Latinos males with positive role models, mentors, and a community of supportive individuals. We also offer Cihua Ollin, Nahuatl for "movement of women", for young Latinos. Cihua Ollin uses the talking circle format to address issues that pertain to women's professionals, mothers, artists, wives, daughters, students, and leaders, creating a space for support and well being for Latinas of different generations. We have worked with youth for 15 years with many of our "graduates" moving onto college and careers where they can give back to the communities from which they came.

Local Data

As an organization that has worked with youth for 15 years, we have qualitative data and information from Izcalli graduates and current program participants that demonstrate the success of our model on supporting healthy youth development.

Outcome #7: Neighborhoods and school environments support improved health and healthy behaviors.

Youth Leadership Development, Organizing and Advocacy

Izcalli has recently launched the Youths for Alternatives to Suspension (YAS) initiative to build the leadership skills and engage middle and high school students who participate in our programs and activities in advocacy efforts to challenge San Diego Unified School District disciplinary policies.

Each year, disproportionate numbers of African American/Black students and Chicano/Latino males are suspended from San Diego schools. Although the penalty is still a relatively low-frequency event, it has profound consequences on both the school environment and the young people involved in the incidents. Evidence of the negative impacts of suspension on youth has led many to question the effectiveness of disciplinary action, including indications that it increases the likelihood of students dropping out of school and does little to change their behavior. Suspended students are often further alienated from school and are at greater risk of joining gangs and becoming involved in other harmful behaviors such as substance abuse and criminal activities.

We are currently recruiting a group of students from our Circulos, Cihua Ollin, and Teatro programs who will participate in school district meetings and hearings to evaluate the effectiveness of its suspension policies. Our aim is to build a team of effective youth organizers and advocates while helping them to identify alternative actions that promote student achievement.

Community Education and Professional Development

Izcalli is also working to build the cultural and “generational” competency of educators, parents, and other adults to communicate with and engage young Latino males in their schools and communities. Many adults fear young males of color in our schools and neighborhoods, often associating them with negative behaviors such as crime, violence, gang activity, and drugs based on their appearances, the music they listen to, and the vernacular they use.

We are working with educators at several schools to help them better understand the culture of young Latino males in our communities. We are helping them to develop communication and engagement strategies that bridge cultural, ethnic, and generational divides. We intend to expand our community education and professional development activities by securing the resources and working with educators to host training workshops and conferences that highlight Circulo de Hombres and other successful youth development and engagement models.

Local Data

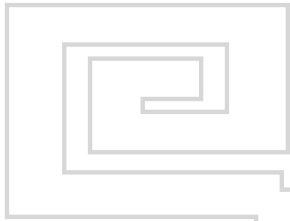
Data on school suspension rates can be obtained from the school district while information on the impacts of suspensions on lower income students of color can be obtained from Californians for Justice. Izcalli has qualitative data from our graduates and current program participants.

Outcome #8: Health gaps young men and boys of color are narrowed.

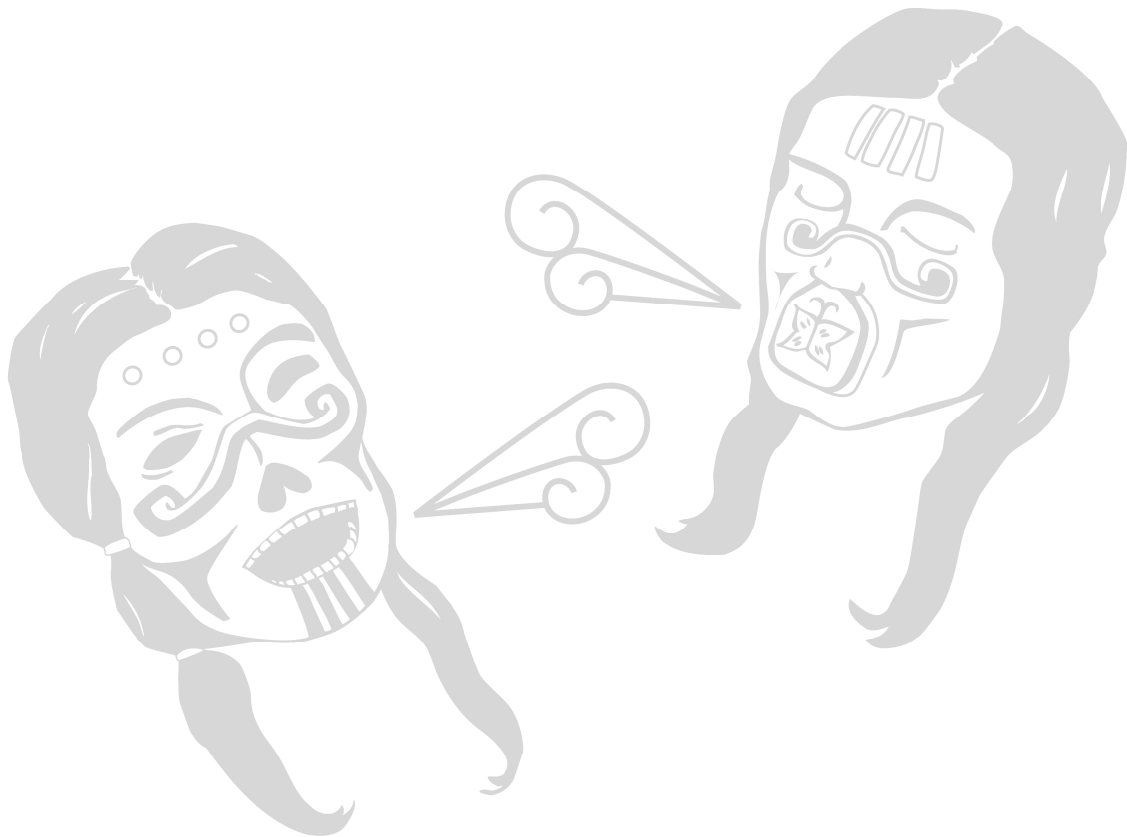
We are working to address health issues in our community and promote healthy behaviors by engaging our Circulo youth in discussions about reproductive health, sexuality, violence, nutrition, and exercise. During group discussions, we provide information about STDs, AIDS, and talk about male sexuality. We also connect youth to positive Latino male mentors who provide them on-going support and guidance with these issues.

Local Data

Data on STDs, AIDS, teen pregnancy, childhood/teen obesity, injuries and homicides, and other health issues for young Latino males and boys can be obtained from studies conducted by local health organizations and colleges and universities. Qualitative data on the impacts of our health education and Circulo program activities on youth can be obtained from graduates and current program participants.



TEATRO



IZCALLI

