Supporting Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Families in Early Care Policies and Practice

Smart Start Annual Conference
May 7, 2009

Hannah Matthews
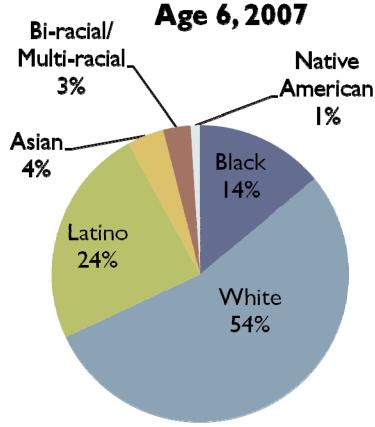**Center for Law and Social Policy**
(CLASP)

Presentation Overview

▶ The Need to Address Cultural/Linguistic Diversity

▶ Supporting Diverse Children and Families in Policy and Practice

▶ Recommendations and Discussion

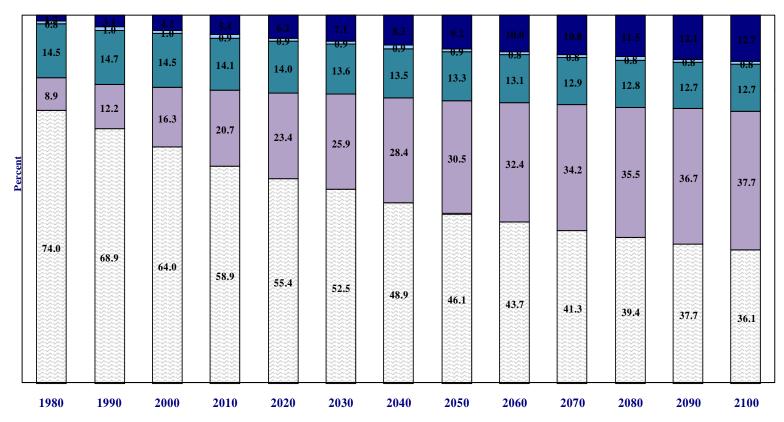# The Need to Address Cultural and Linguistic Diversity

Young Children are Racially/Ethnically Diverse
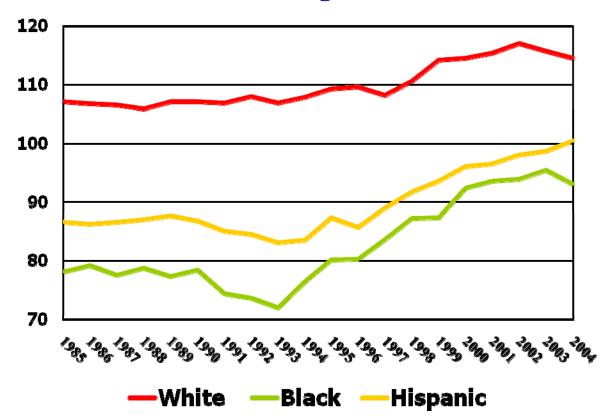
Racial/ethnic Composition of Children Under Age 6, 2007

Bi-racial/Multi-racial 3%

Native American 1%

Asian 4%

Black 14%

Latino 24%

White 54%

Source: National Center for Children in Poverty

Children of Color Are An Emerging Majority

- ☐ White, Non-Hispanic
- ☐ Hispanic
- ■ Black, Non-Hispanic
- ☐ American Indian, Non-Hispanic
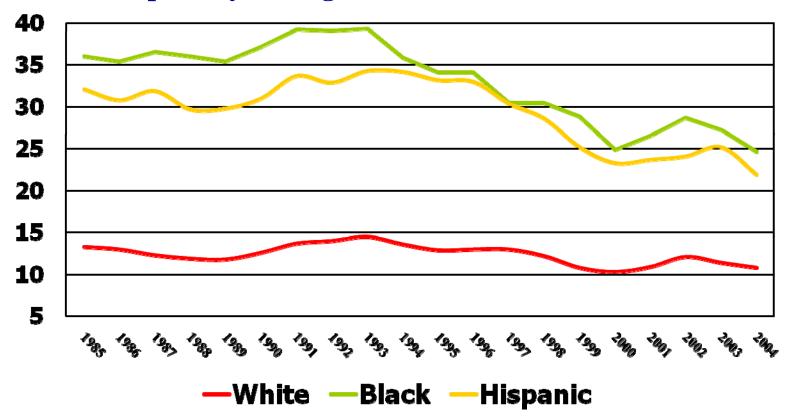- ■ Asian/Pacific Islander, Non-Hispanic

5

Racial/Ethnic Disparities Endure Over Time

FCD Child Well-being Index (CWI)

"Measuring Social Disparities" (2008) by Donald J. Hernandez and Suzanne Macartney; University at Albany, SUNY.

For Example…

Percent in poverty among families with children under 18

"Measuring Social Disparities" (2008) by Donald J. Hernandez and Suzanne Macartney; University at Albany, SUNY.

The Immigration Context

- Children of immigrants are the fastest growing segment of the child population.
    - One out of five young children in the U.S. has an immigrant parent.
    - One out of seven young children in the U.S. has at least one limited English parent (LEP) parent.
    - One out of three young children of immigrants lives in a linguistically isolated household.
- Children of immigrants face advantages and disadvantages.

Sources: Capps et al., *The Health and Well-being of Young Children of Immigrants,* Urban Institute, 2005 and Hernandez, "Demographic Change and the Life Circumstances of Immigrant Families," The Future of Children, 2004.

Percent Change in Population of Children of Immigrants, Under Age 6, 1990-2000

Percent change, 1990-2000

☐ -7 to 33% ☐ 35 to 76% ☐ 81 to 144% ☐ 152 to 270% ■ Major immigration states (35 to 76%)

Source: Capps et al., *The Health and Well-Being of Young Children of Immigrants.*

Children in Immigrant Families Are Less Likely To Access Child Care and Early Education Programs

▸ Many immigrant families, and immigrant-serving organizations, are unaware of early care and education programs and the importance of high-quality early learning experiences.

▸ High-quality programs are insufficiently available in immigrant communities.

▸ There is a shortage of bilingual and bicultural providers.

▸ Many programs lack intentionality in working with immigrant families or ELLs.

▸ *Cultural competence is about quality <u>and</u> access.*
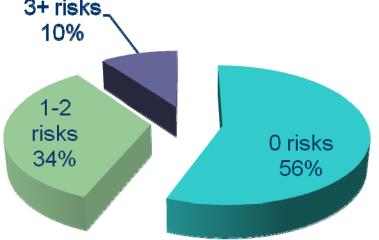
Why Address Cultural Competency Issues in Early Childhood?

- ▸ Children's cultural identities and language skills are developing during the early years.

- ▸ Cultural and linguistic continuity between home and child care is essential for healthy development.

- ▸ There is an overrepresentation of minority children in poverty and at-risk.

Many Young Children Experience Multiple Risk Factors

Exposure to Multiple Risk Factors Among Young Children, 2007

3+ risks
10%

1-2 risks
34%

0 risks
56%

These risks include: lives in poverty, with a single parent, in households where both parents have less than a high school education, in families with parents who do not speak English well or at all; and/or has parents with no paid employment.

Supporting Diverse Children and Families in Policy and Practice

What's The Goal?

▶ Increase responsiveness to diverse children, families, and providers.

▶ Build capacity to address the needs of diverse children and providers.

▶ Ensure that definitions of quality are inclusive of all children and families.

  ▶ Incorporate new standards of quality.

▶ Create settings in which *all* children thrive.

What are Culturally Competent Approaches?

▶ Recognize each child's development as culturally-driven

▶ Recognize that individuals' and institutions' practices are embedded in culture

▶ Align quality with policies, practices that build on home language preservation and development

▶ Identify strengths, commonalities and shared goals

▶ Share decision-making

▶   Adapted from NAEYC draft definition of cultural competence for early childhood.

What Can Programs Do?

▶ Hire staff who reflect the children and community

▶ Use cultural mediators

▶ Support home language development

▶ Incorporate children's home culture in daily activities

▶ Create opportunities for ELLs to lead, excel

▶ Tailor programs to the needs of diverse families.

▶ Provide meaningful cultural competency training, opportunities for cross-cultural learning for all staff.

Policies that Promote Cultural Competency

▶ **Staff qualifications and professional development**

- ▶ Hire bilingual staff—at all levels.
- ▶ Create professional development ladders:
    - ▶ Include community-based training in multiple languages and financial supports.
    - ▶ Expand peer to peer training and networks.
    - ▶ Recognize credentials and degrees from other countries.

Policies that Promote Cultural Competency

- ▶ Language access
  - ▶ Create a language access plan for communication with LEP persons
  - ▶ Improve language access to licensing and professional development systems
- ▶ New partners and collaborations
  - ▶ Use cultural mediators.
  - ▶ Disseminate translated materials in accessible formats.
  - ▶ Target outreach to immigrant and language minority communities

Key questions to consider

- Who is included in the design and development of policies and programs?
- What research informs the development of programs and practice?
- How does the policy/practice affect culturally/ linguistically diverse children and families?
- How are the diverse circumstance of families considered?

Recommendations

Recommendations for State and Local Policymakers

- Fund cultural mediators and hire bilingual staff
- Encourage collaboration between early care and education programs and immigrant serving organizations.
- Conduct local assessments to understand the demographics of the young children population and to determine unmet need in service provision.
- Provide resources for targeted outreach to diverse communities.

Recommendations for State and Local Policymakers (cont'd)

- Support diverse providers' access to licensing, professional development, and training opportunities.

- Incorporate cultural and linguistic competency in existing program and content standards.

- Contract directly with immigrant-serving organizations to provide child care services.

- Use new Early Childhood Advisory Councils to address needs of culturally and linguistically diverse children.

Recommendations for Programs

▸ Create relationships and partnerships with local organizations serving diverse families

▸ Employ cultural mediators.

▸ Increase the pool of qualified, bilingual and culturally competent early care and education staff.

▸ Create a language access plan to ensure that parents with limited English proficiency can communicate with providers and that written materials are competently translated.

▸ Advocate on behalf of immigrant families with state subsidy agencies, Head Start programs, early intervention programs and other state and local early childhood programs

Contact information

Hannah Matthews

Senior Policy Analyst, Child Care and Early Education

Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)

(202) 906-8006

hmatthews@clasp.org

Additional resources are available on our website:
www.childcareandearlyed.clasp.org

Appendix

A Definition of Cultural Competence

▸ "Cultural competence is a congruent set of behaviors, attitudes, policies, structures, and practices that come together in a system, agency or among professionals and enable that system and agency or those professionals to work effectively in cross-cultural situations.

▸ "Cultural competence is achieved by identifying and understanding the needs and helps seeking behaviors of individuals and families.

▸ "Culturally competent organizations design and implement services that are tailored or matched to the unique needs of individuals, children, families, organizations and communities served."

A Definition of Linguistic Competence

▶ "Linguistic competence is the capacity of an organization and its personnel to communicate effectively, and convey information in a manner that is easily understood by diverse audiences including persons of limited English proficiency, those who have low literacy skills or are not literate, and individuals with disabilities. Linguistic competency requires organizational and provider capacity to respond effectively to the health literacy needs of populations served. The organization must have policy, structures, practices, procedures and dedicated resources to support this capacity."