Our Children’s Fear: Immigration Policy’s Effects on Young Children

Webinar

March 2018
Overview

• Immigration context
• Overview of CLASP’s “Compromising Our Nation’s Future” project
• Findings from CLASP research
• Recommendations
• Q&A
Immigration Context in the U.S.
Young Children in Immigrant Families

• 1 in 4 young children (ages 8 and younger) live in an immigrant family.
  – The vast majority (94%) of these children are U.S. citizens.

• Most children in immigrant families live with parents who have some form of lawful immigration status.
  – An estimated 1.6 million children under age 5 have at least one undocumented parent.
Children of Immigrants Are Geographically Dispersed

Share of Children in Immigrant Families, by State, 2015

Source: KIDS COUNT Data Center.
The Current Immigration Policy Context

• Three key themes:
  – Executive orders increasing enforcement and making all undocumented immigrants priorities for deportation
  – Removing protections for groups previously granted discretion
  – Restricting immigrant families’ access to public benefit programs
Increased Enforcement

• January 2017 executive orders focused on expanding enforcement capacity at the border and in the interior.
  – ICE enforcement in communities has increased by 146%.
• Also eliminated priorities for deportation, effectively making all undocumented immigrants a priority for removal.
  – Undocumented parents of U.S. citizen-children, including those previously granted discretion, are now at greater risk of deportation.
Removing Protections

- Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) was rescinded on September 5th, 2017.
  - More than 800,000 beneficiaries are impacted.
  - One survey of DACA recipients found that 25% are parents to U.S. citizen children.
  - An estimated 40,000 DACA recipients work in the education, health, and social services industries.

- Loss of status means loss of employment, employer-sponsored health insurance, and other benefits (drivers licenses, in-state tuition, etc.).
Restricting Access to Public Benefits

• Administrative efforts to change “public charge” definition and other proposals that seek to restrict immigrants’ and their families’ access to critical benefits and income supports
What is “Public Charge”

• Under immigration law, a “public charge” determination is based on whether an individual is, or is likely to become, dependent on the government for basic subsistence.
  – Determination is made when a person applies to enter the U.S. or when applying to adjust status to become a lawful permanent resident
• The Trump Administration is developing a proposed rule to expand the services and programs that are considered in the “public charge” determination.
  – This will likely include use by an applicant’s citizen children
CLASP’s Compromising Our Nation’s Future Project
Overview of CLASP’s Research

• Between May and November of 2017, we conducted site visits in 6 states.
Key Findings: Impacts on Young Children and Their Caregivers

Our Children’s Fear
Immigration Policy’s Effects on Young Children

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March 2018

Immigration Policy’s Harmful Impacts on Early Care and Education

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March 2018

Compromising Our Nation’s Future

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Young Children Fear Their Parents Will Be Taken Away

• Children as young as three are aware of the possibility of losing a parent.
• Fear is evident in children’s behavior.
  – Providers described disturbing new behaviors that were distinct from past years.
• Children who had lost a parent to deportation and/or witnessed arrest experienced the most significant behavioral changes.
Children’s Daily Routines are Interrupted, In Turmoil

• Families are withdrawing from “ordinary life”—limiting how much time they spend out of their homes.
  – Largely due to perceived increases in immigration enforcement in their communities

• Children have less access to community resources.
  – Staying home from child care or school
  – Limiting time spent playing outside, running errands, etc.
Children are Not Attending ECE Programs

• ECE programs are experiencing decreased attendance at key moments.
• Some are also experiencing lower enrollment and more limited family engagement.
Children Are Losing Access to Nutrition, Health Care Services

• Families are declining or withdrawing from services due to fears of how participation will affect their immigration status, how data is shared, and ultimately immigration enforcement consequences.

• Children are no longer receiving therapy and health care services due to limited mobility.
Children are Experiencing Increased Instability

• Young children are facing greater economic and housing instability:
  – More frequent moving, living in overcrowded housing
  – Increased job loss and more difficulty finding work among immigrant parents
  – Exploitation of immigrant parents by landlords and employers
Parents are Under Immense Stress, Need Resources

- Immigrant parents are struggling with difficult decisions.
- Parents are looking to ECE providers for support and information:
  - Stress management and parental mental health
  - Assistance with legal services
  - Immigration policy and immigrants’ rights
  - Family safety planning
- Community resources are limited.
Many Providers Feel Unprepared to Meet Families’ Changing Needs

• For many ECE programs, parents’ needs in the current immigration context fall outside their areas of expertise.
  – Feel like they lack the resources that families want and need

• Providers are experiencing great emotional strain and stress.
ECE Staff Are Directly Affected by Immigration Policy Changes

• Many providers are immigrants themselves, and are experiencing increased stress both professionally and personally.
• Providers reported experiencing increased racism and xenophobia.
• Providers in several states employed teachers or assistants with DACA status.
Organizational Responses to Policy Changes Vary

• Programs differ in capacity to respond to current immigration context.
  – Some are offering new resources and leveraging partnerships to provide trainings and workshops.
  – However, many lack resources and information to adequately support families and the workforce.
  – Program leadership is key.
DHS Sensitive Locations Policy

• Few programs had formalized policies or procedures related to potential immigration enforcement activity.

• DHS guidance states that immigration enforcement actions should generally be avoided in certain locations, including:
  – Known and licensed child care programs
  – Pre-kindergarten programs
  – Head Start programs
  – Preschools
  – Other ECE programs
Dire Consequences for Young Children

• Children’s day-to-day lives are characterized by increased fear, stress, and instability.
  – Emotional and economic hardships experienced during the early formative years can have serious and lasting consequences for development.

• Millions of children are being denied their rights as U.S. citizens simply because of their parents’ immigration status.
A Better Path Forward: Recommendations for Policymakers, Practitioners, and Philanthropy
A Better Path Forward

• Our nation’s collective success is tied to the individual success of all of our children.

• Policymakers and advocates should ensure that:
  – The best interests of children are held paramount in immigration policy decisions
  – Immigrant families have access to the programs and services they need to promote their children’s healthy development
A Better Path Forward

- Policymakers, advocates, practitioners and philanthropy should:
  - Speak out about the wellbeing of young children of immigrants and the developmental consequences of the current crisis
  - Safeguard the wellbeing of young children in immigrant families in federal, state and local legislation, laws, and policies
Federal Policy Recommendations

• Congress should take legislative action to:
  – Provide a pathway to citizenship for undocumented immigrants, including parents and Dreamers
  – Safeguard the wellbeing of children in immigration policies and enforcement actions
  – Expand the sensitive locations policy

• DHS should create new protocols and strengthen existing protocols to minimize harm to children in immigrant families impacted by enforcement.
State Policy Recommendations

- Policymakers, advocates, and philanthropy should ensure that:
  - Immigrant families are not deterred from enrolling in critical basic needs programs
  - Immigrants and their families are represented in key coalitions, councils, and activities
  - Adequate resources are available to support:
    - Free or low-cost legal services in communities;
    - Collaboration between ECE and immigrant-serving organizations; and
    - Training and resources for the ECE workforce, including trauma-informed care.
Recommendations for ECE Programs

• Early childhood programs should:
  – Ensure that the needs of children in immigrant families are reflected in program practices and operations
  – Adopt or strengthen policies that promote children’s and families’ safety, security and privacy; and share these policies with staff and parents
Recommendations for ECE Programs (continued)

• Programs should:
  – Partner with community-based organizations to ensure that parents and staff are connected to immigration-related resources and to support parents in developing family safety plans
  – Talk to parents, social service providers, and immigrant-serving organizations to identify community-specific solutions to program participation
Additional Information

• Reports available at clasp.org include:
  – Appendix in *Immigration Policy’s Harmful Impacts on Early Care and Education* includes resources for providers and immigrant parents.
Please submit your questions in the chat box.
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