

# Young Children of Immigrants and the Changing Landscape for Early Education



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# The Immigration Context and Early Childhood

- Children in immigrant families are less likely to access child care and early education programs
- “Immigrants” are not a homogeneous group.
  - There are no “one size fits all” solutions to improve access for immigrant families.
  - Participation in early education varies by circumstance of arrival, country of origin, parental education and English proficiency.

# The Immigration Context and Early Childhood

- Low-income immigrant families face many of the same barriers accessing child care and early education as all low-income families.
  - Immigrant families face additional barriers, for example related to language, culture and immigration status.



# What are the Barriers for Immigrant Families?

- Immigrant families face multiple barriers accessing early care and education, related to:
  - Awareness
  - Accessibility
  - Responsiveness



Source: *The Challenges of Change*, Center for Law and Social Policy, 2007.

# What's Needed?

- 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.



# New Approaches

- Attention to the needs of immigrant families infused throughout all policies, standards, and content.
  - Articulate a vision for providing high-quality early education to ELLs.
  - Include immigrant communities in the design and development of early care and education programs and policies.
  - Training on ELLs and cultural competency for early childhood professionals at all levels
- Collaboration with immigrant-serving organizations
  - Create formal partnerships with diverse organizations, including immigrant-serving organizations.
  - Important to find immigrant “leaders” to serve as bridges to communities.
  - Use cultural mediators.

# New Approaches

- Targeted outreach and education in immigrant communities
  - Dissemination of translated materials in accessible formats.
- Increasing bilingual staff and interpretation/translation services
  - Recruit and support a culturally and linguistically diverse workforce.
  - Include dedicated funding for translation/interpretation

# 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.



# Recommendations for State and Local Policymakers and Advocates

- Conduct local assessments to understand the demographics of local immigrant populations and to determine unmet need in service provision.
- Provide targeted resources for cultural mediators, bilingual staff, outreach and education
- Support immigrant providers' access to licensing, professional development, and training opportunities.
  - Include community-based training in multiple languages and financial supports.
  - Recognize credentials and degrees from other countries.

# Recommendations for State and Local Policymakers

- Incorporate cultural and linguistic competency in existing program and content standards.
  - New standards, including in QRIS, should reflect demographics of children.
- Use Early Childhood Advisory Councils, and other platforms, to encourage collaboration between early care and education programs and immigrant serving organizations.
- Examine all policy and funding opportunities for supporting culturally and linguistically diverse children.

# Recommendations for State Policymakers

- Expand access to state-funded preschool programs by targeting ELLs for outreach and enrollment.
- Ensure that preschool curriculum and instruction support both English and home-language development and expand the number of dual-language programs.
- Require that all preschool staff—including teachers, directors, and principals—have meaningful training in second-language acquisition strategies and cultural competency.
- Require preschool providers to create language access plans.

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