

Breaking Down Barriers: The CLASP Immigrant Families and Early Education Project

*Project Overview and
Preliminary Impressions
from Site Visits*

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CLASP
CENTER FOR LAW AND SOCIAL POLICY

Project Goals

- To gather information about the barriers immigrant families with children face in accessing early education services;
- To inform policymakers about these barriers, as well as about practices and policies to address them; and
- To promote high-quality, inclusive early education services for children in immigrant families.

Project Phases

- Research national-level data on the participation of immigrant families in early education.
 - See *Reaching All Children? Understanding Early Education Participation Among Immigrant Families*
http://www.clasp.org/publications/child_care_immigrant.pdf
- Visit eight communities to learn about the barriers immigrant families face in accessing quality early education programs.

Why Early Education?

- Many children of immigrants face multiple risk factors for school failure.
- For children of immigrants, high-quality early education has the potential to:
 - address school readiness and English language acquisition.
 - provide access to comprehensive services, such as health services and screenings.
 - introduce families to resources available in communities.
 - promote parental involvement in education.

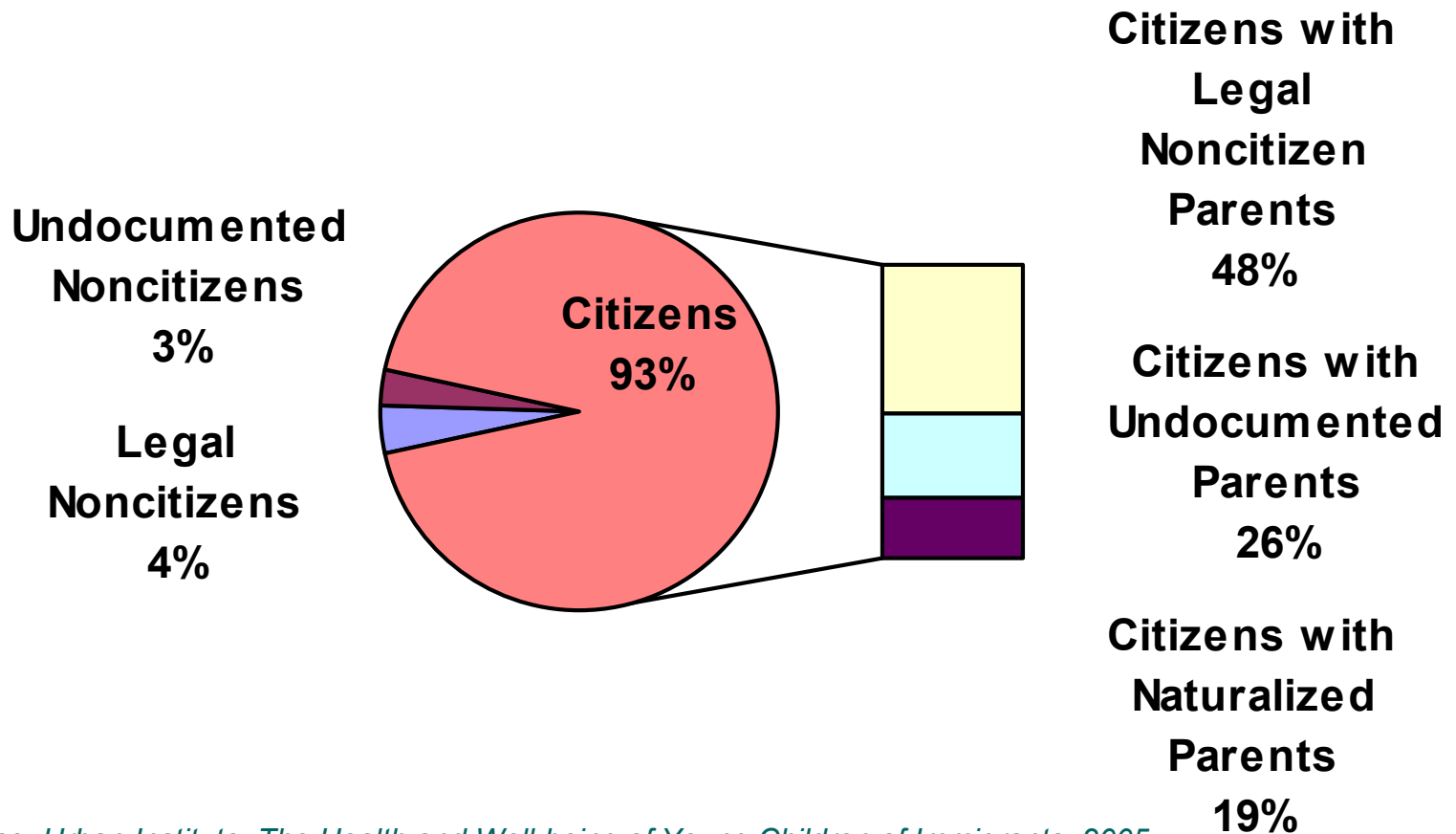
Reviewing the Research: Three Main Questions

- To what extent are immigrant families participating in early education programs?
- How does their participation vary by children's age and by immigrant groups (country of origin, language)?
- What are the relevant demographic characteristics of immigrant families that may affect participation?

The Immigration Context

- Children of immigrants:
 - comprise one in five children in the U.S.
 - are the fastest growing segment of the nation's child population.
- Immigrant families are from a diverse set of countries, come to the U.S. for a variety of reasons and are increasingly dispersed within the U.S.

Legal Status of Young Children of Immigrants, Under Age 6



Source: Urban Institute, *The Health and Well-being of Young Children of Immigrants*, 2005.

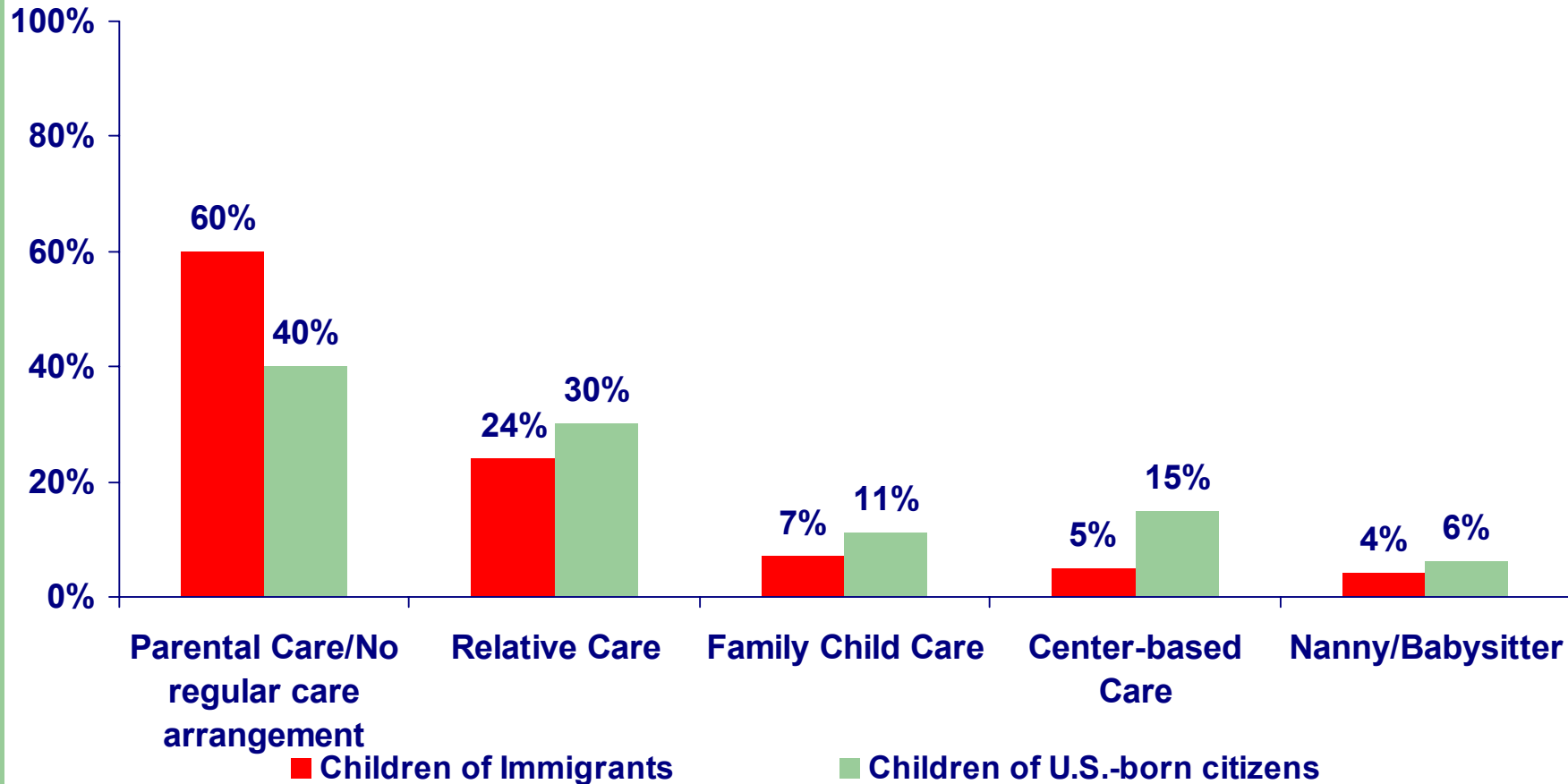
Overall Findings

- Compared to children of U.S.-born citizens, children of immigrants are:
 - more likely to be in parental care, and
 - less likely to be in any type of regular nonparental care arrangement.
- Children of immigrants are less likely to participate in preschool or center-based care.

Child Care Participation

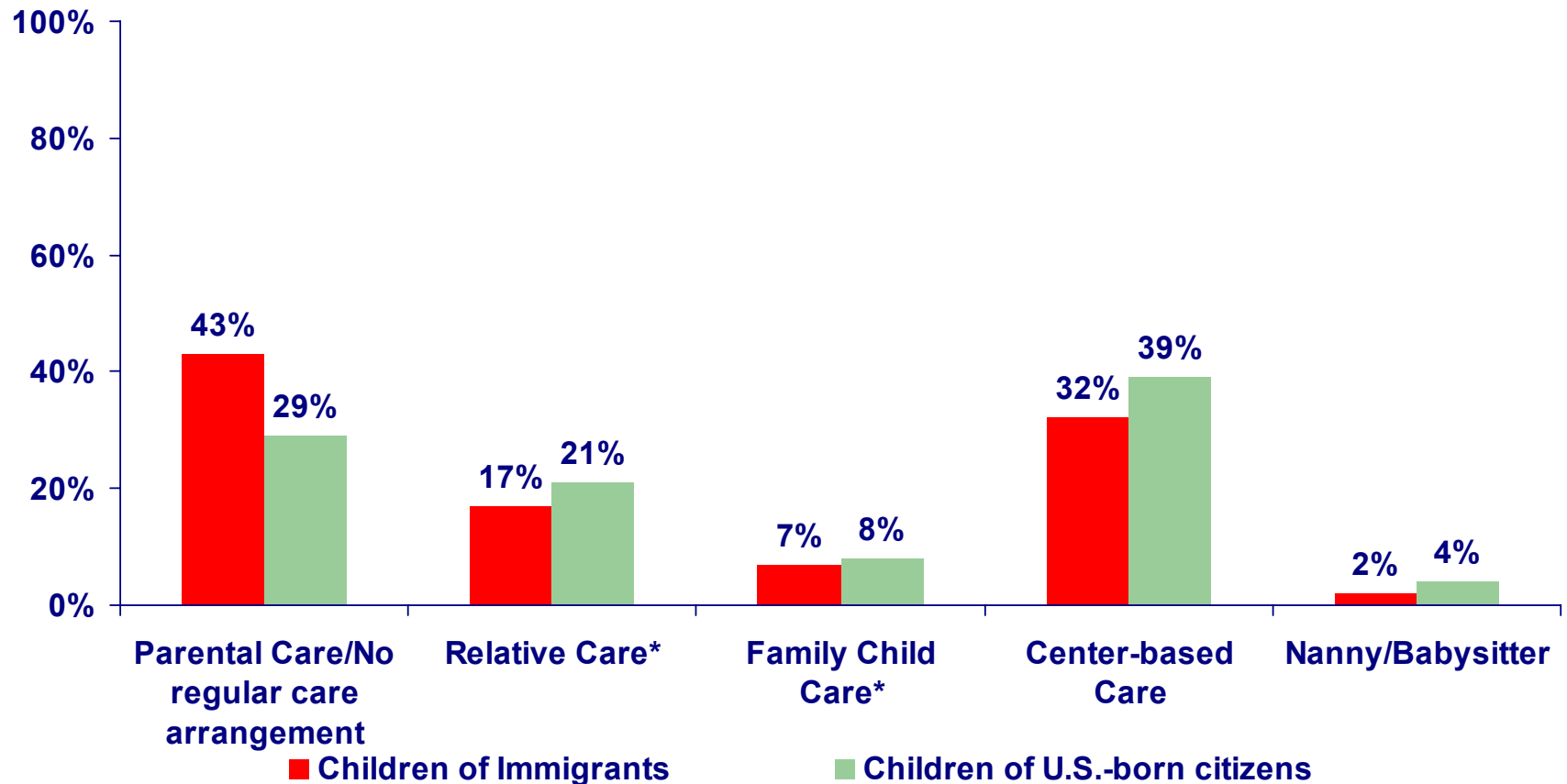
- When all children (in both immigrant and native-born families) are in nonparental care:
 - Infants and toddlers are most likely to be in relative care, and
 - Preschool aged children are most likely to be in center-based care.

Child Care Arrangements of Children Under Age 3



Source: Urban Institute, unpublished analysis of data from 2002 National Survey of America's Families

Child Care Arrangements of Children Ages 3-5

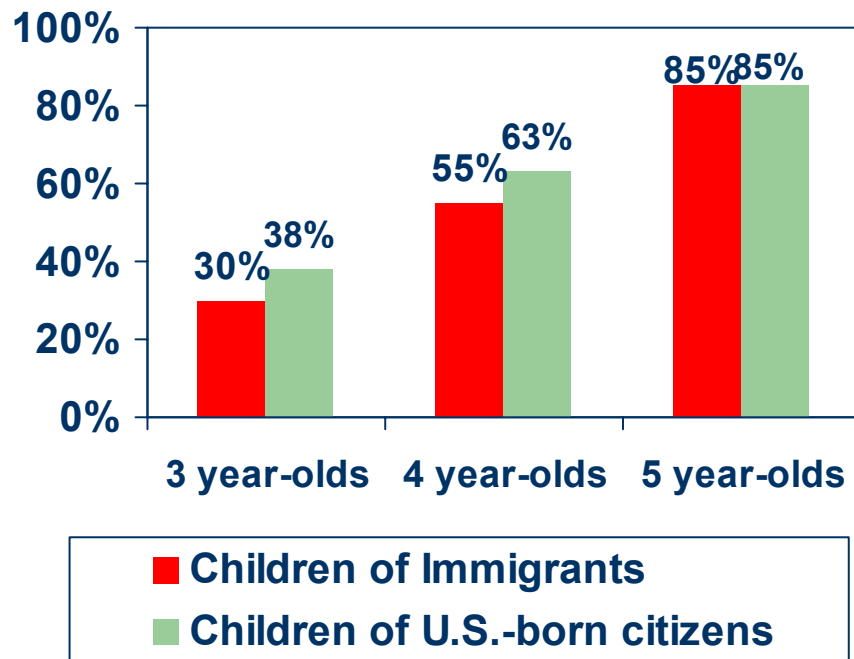


*Difference is not statistically significant.

Source: Urban Institute, unpublished analysis of data from 2002 National Survey of America's Families

Participation in Preschool or Kindergarten by Age

Participation in Either
Preschool or Kindergarten



- At ages 3-5, children of immigrants are less likely to attend *preschool* than children of U.S.-born citizens.
- At ages 4 and 5, a larger share of children of immigrants attend *kindergarten*, compared to U.S.-born citizens; the latter attend *preschool* at higher rates.

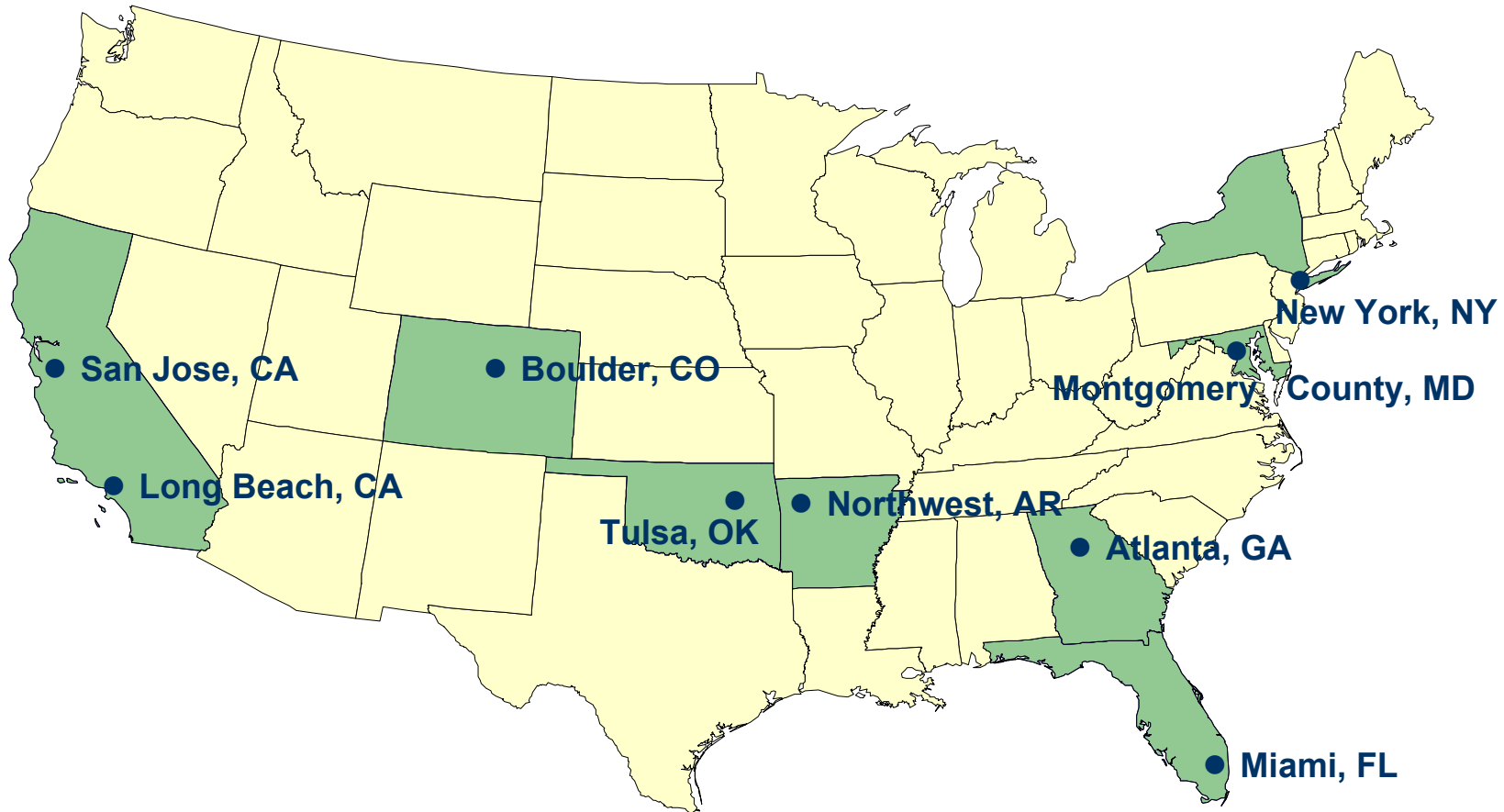
Participation in State Pre-Kindergarten Programs

- Data on participation of children of immigrants is not widely available.
- At least 12 states include English Language Learners (ELL) among “at-risk” group targeted for eligibility for state-funded pre-kindergarten or prioritize enrollment for ELL children in some way:
 - AR, CA, CO, IA, IL, KS, MD, NE, NC, TX, VT, VA

Factors Influencing Preschool and Center-Based Care Participation for All Children

- Income
 - Children of immigrants are more likely to be living in low-income households.
- Maternal Education
 - Children of immigrants are more likely to have parents with less formal education.
- Maternal Employment and Household Composition
 - Children of immigrants are *more* likely to live in two-parent households but *less* likely to have two working parents.

CLASP Site Visits



Site visits—Preliminary Impressions

- Lack of connection between early care and education providers and immigrant serving organizations.
- Similar access issues affecting participation in early care and education arose in all sites, but ways to address them vary depending upon the assets and resources available in each community and whether there is an infrastructure.
- Early care and education is critically important and can be a link to many other issues affecting families that can undermine healthy family functioning such as housing, lack of access to medical and dental care, GED and transportation.

More Preliminary Impressions...

- Important to find immigrant “leaders” to serve as bridges to communities
- There are special challenges to serving specific communities, i.e. refugees and migrant workers.
- State preschool programs do not have immigration restrictions. However, other barriers prevent children in immigrant families, as well as all children, from enrolling, e.g., lack of access to wrap-around care, inadequate number of slots, transportation issues. In some areas, there is no outreach targeted to immigrant populations.

Preliminary Impressions: Federal Programs

- Federal child care subsidies are so limited that they are not easily accessed and immigrants are restricted from eligibility.
- Head Start programs have no immigration restrictions, but are under-funded and there are inadequate numbers of slots available. Head Start is in demand as it is a link to comprehensive services.
- Even though federally funded programs are required to comply with federal civil rights laws, programs, including Head Start, are not always providing meaningful access to non-English speaking families, especially for languages other than Spanish.

Factors Limiting Access for Immigrant Families with Young Children

- Language
- Fear of deportation
- Inadequate number of qualified bilingual and bicultural staff
- Lack of awareness from immigrant communities of early education issues and programs
- Lack of awareness in the early childhood community of immigrant issues
- Lack of access to early education programs because of the nature of immigrant employment
 - e.g., low-wage, unstable employment, shift work schedules

Factors Limiting Access for Immigrant Families with Young Children, ctd.

These factors limit access for all families, but particularly immigrant families:

- Lack of affordable, high-quality programs in the community
- Lack of transportation
- No access to subsidies or inadequate subsidies

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