Early education programs that meet the needs of immigrant children are essential to the stability of the entire immigrant family. But it is not enough that these programs merely exist; the quality of these programs must be culturally competent to address the diversity, and those most at risk, within the immigrant population. In New York City, immigrant families are being denied the opportunity to participate in early childhood education programs due to high costs, parents’ limited knowledge of options, and an inability to navigate the complicated maze of patchwork style services that currently overwhelm New York City’s child care system.

In this policy brief, the term “immigrant children” refers to children under the age of 18 who are either foreign-born or born in the United States to at least one foreign-born parent, and the term “young immigrant children” refers to immigrant children below the age of six.

According to the 2000 Census, 36 percent of New York City’s population of 8 million is foreign-born. The most populous 15 immigrant groups in New York City come from the Dominican Republic, China, Jamaica, Guyana, Mexico, Ecuador, Haiti, Trinidad and Tobago, Colombia, Russia, Italy, Korea, Ukraine, India, and Poland. In New York City, more than one out of two (54 percent) young New Yorkers live in immigrant families.

Given that the immigrant population is increasing in New York City, there is a disparity between the availability of adequate systems of care and the growing child care needs of this diverse population. A large portion of the immigrant community is being left out of essential systems of child care due to the inability of service providers to connect effectively with these children and families. Language barriers, immigrant status, general distrust of the government, and cultural stigma further undermine efficient delivery of services.

With increased funding, targeted outreach to immigrant communities, coordinated services, appropriate translation services, and improved parent engagement, New York City’s immigrant children and families can begin to eliminate the barriers to accessing quality early childhood education, helping to secure a more successful future.

This policy brief:

- Identifies the strengths and challenges confronting immigrant families trying to access early childhood education.
- Promotes an understanding of the effective policies and practices that encourage immigrant families to participate in early childhood education programs.
• Increases knowledge of immigrant parents’ perspectives, preferences, and expectations of early childhood education programs and experiences.

*Breaking Down Barriers* focuses on Bangladeshi, Chinese, Dominican, Haitian, Korean, and Russian communities of New York City.

Finally, this policy brief provides the following five recommendations to improve the capacity and collaboration of early childhood education and immigrant service providers to support inclusive programs for immigrant families.

1. **Language and Culture:** Improve language assistance services and increase cultural competency of child care program staff.

2. **Outreach:** Increase language accessible communication with immigrant communities throughout New York City, making them aware of available child care programs and services.

3. **Professional Development:** Ensure that child care providers are knowledgeable of and can address the unique needs and challenges facing immigrant communities, families, and children in accessing child care services.

4. **Funding:** Increase funding to city agencies and child care networks so that there are enough early childhood education programs and staff to address New York City’s growing immigrant populations.

5. **Data Collection:** Conduct an early childhood education needs assessment of New York’s immigrant communities and use these data to improve programs, increase outreach, and implement appropriate language assistance services.

To ensure diverse perspectives from New York City’s largest and fastest growing immigrant groups, the Coalition for Asian American Children and Families (CACF) focused its research on the following communities: Bangladeshi, Chinese, Dominican, Haitian, Korean, and Russian. CACF conducted preliminary discussions with child care and immigrant advocates, along with researchers, to identify the issues and recommendations stated above. Staff then conducted interviews with directors of community-based child care programs that include family day care networks as well as center-based care. Parents were recruited through community organizations and one religious institution.

**I. POLICIES FOR SUBSIDIZED CHILD CARE AND EARLY EDUCATION PROGRAMS IN NEW YORK CITY**

Because the increase in government support for child care and early education programs has come predominantly from the Human Resources Administration (HRA), New York City’s agency responsible for “providing temporary help to eligible individuals and families with social service and economic needs in order to assist them in leading independent lives”, and not through funding increases to multiple agencies, immigrant families and working class poor are often shut-out of access to affordable child care.

The lack of affordable child care has made it very difficult for eligible families to find available slots in *any* program. As a result, immigrant families in New York City must choose between several equally inadequate alternatives.
• Many families are forced to resort to informal care, where providers are unlicensed family members, friends or other within a social support network—a cheaper, more available, yet hardly comparable alternative.

• Among many immigrant families, however, even informal care is not accessible. Immigrant families may not have access to a social support network of family and friends to rely on for care.

NATIONAL TRENDS

According to national data, children of immigrants (including families with working parents) are more likely to be in parental care without regular care arrangements and less likely to be in center-based care than children of U.S. born citizens.

Types of Early Child Care (ages 0-3 years) Accessed by Immigrant Families Nationally

- 60% of all immigrant children are in parental care or do not have a formal care arrangement
- 33% of immigrant children with working parents are in parental care or do not have a formal care arrangement
- 24% of immigrant children are in the care of relatives
- 39% of immigrant children with working parents are in the care of relatives

Types of Child Care (ages 3-5) Accessed by Immigrant Families Nationally

- 43% of immigrant children are more likely to be in parental care or do not have a formal care arrangement
- 32% of immigrant children participate in center-based care although center-based care is the most common arrangement among all children ages 3-5
- 5% of immigrant children are in center-based care
- 11% of immigrant children with working parents are in center-based care
Sometimes extreme actions are taken; some immigrant communities have experienced an increase in the number of parents sending children back to their home countries to be cared for by relatives.

- The overall lack of access to subsidized child care and early education programs is intensified by the confusion regarding eligibility requirements.

**Options**

There are three options of early childhood education available in New York City:

1. **Child Care** aims to support working families. It is a subsidized program for children ages 0 to 13 with parents needing help in maintaining employment, dealing with homelessness, or addressing medical concerns. Child Care includes an educational component for children and is available through the New York City Administration for Children’s Services (ACS).

2. **Head Start** aims to promote school readiness and child development. It is a free social welfare program for children ages 3 to 5 living in very low-income families. Head Start includes family social services and emphasizes parental involvement. It is available through ACS.

3. **Universal Pre-Kindergarten** aims to close the achievement gap. It is a free educational program available through the New York City Department of Education for all eligible 4-year-olds. Programs are offered as either half day or full day in local elementary schools and community-based sites.

**Enrollment**

Child Care, Head Start, and Universal Pre-Kindergarten can be classified into four types:

1. **Informal care by an unlicensed provider.** This is unregulated child care provided by a caregiver such as a relative, friend, or neighbor in the child’s home or the caregiver’s home. To operate legally, a caregiver is required to care for no more than two children. To accept pay through public subsidies, the caregiver needs to submit a health and safety checklist.

2. **Family child care.** This is provided for up to 6 children under the age of 13 at the residence of a licensed provider. The provider must be registered by the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH).

3. **Group family child care.** This is provided for up to 12 children under the age of 13 at the residence of a licensed provider. The provider must work with at least one assistant to maintain the child-staff ratio of six to 1. The provider must be registered by DOHMH.

4. **Center-based day care.** Programs are for seven or more children from eight weeks to five years of age. The facilities are non-residential and are operated by non-profit organizations, religious institutions, for-profit institutions, and the New York City Department of Education. Many also serve as sites for Universal Pre-Kindergarten and Head Start. Programs must be licensed by DOHMH. The child-staff ratios and maximum group sizes are regulated depending on a child’s age.

From 1999-2005, New York City has witnessed a decrease in center-based enrollment, a decrease in family and group family child care, and a major increase in the use of informal care.
for families receiving subsidized care. This is a direct result of the history in New York City child care enrollment opportunities – limited available slots and long waiting lists.

“80% of the families with whom the staff of the Chinese-American Planning Council has followed-up months after referring to services are still not enrolled.”

– Program Director

Exacerbating this problem is the limited availability of full-day programs in both Universal Pre-Kindergarten and Head Start programs. Most of the programs that do exist do not even offer half-day programs; they are less than half day. This diminished capacity has forced some center-based care to close. The impact on immigrant families is devastating. The existing programs are incapable of accommodating what immigrant families need most, namely full-day care. Instead of expanding services, some centers have had to close entirely, leaving families with even fewer child care options.

Eligibility

Although showing a social security card to enroll children in child care is optional in New York City, many immigrant parents believe that federal restrictions placed on public benefits mean that they are ineligible for any programs funded with federal dollars. While New York State and New York City may be committed to meeting the needs of families, regardless of their immigration status, social security numbers are believed to be necessary to demonstrate need. This presents some families with an impossible situation. Undocumented families’ cannot access highly needed programs and services because they are unable to adequately demonstrate need through social security cards which they do not have. Even if their children are eligible due to their citizenship status, parents cannot demonstrate their needs.

The slots that are available through HRA are only offered to parents who receive public assistance, parents who are working, or parents who are transitioning off public assistance. If families are surviving outside of the system or work in a secondary labor market that provides no verification of employment – both scenarios apply largely to immigrant families, especially undocumented families – they are ineligible to access these available slots.

“Isn’t it true if the child is American born, the child is legal and [can access] social entitlements? So why does the city give us a hard time to prove parents’ legal status? ACS has us attach a picture ID and show that the parent is documented.”

– Program Director

In addition, most immigrant families in New York City are considered mixed-status. While the child is a U.S. citizen, one or both parents are not. The child in this case is in fact eligible for subsidized care, but the parents are unfamiliar with this policy and/or are too afraid of jeopardizing their immigration status to apply. Low-income immigrant families often work multiple jobs at non-traditional hours. Even if these families are eligible for subsidized programs, they cannot take advantage of them. In all cases, the forms to fill out are not translated at all or into enough languages, often stopping the eligibility process before it has a chance to begin.

Funding

Because there is insufficient and inconsistent funding, the future of subsidized child care is
The lack of funding for Head Start programs and Universal Pre-Kindergarten, specifically, limits the number of slots available for an already overwhelming number of children waiting for placement. While HRA and ACS have both increased their funding of subsidized child care, most of the funding increases have come from HRA. It has recently been announced that HRA funding is being transferred to ACS. The benefit of this transfer is that families on public assistance are guaranteed subsidized child care; however, the number of these families is rapidly increasing. The impact is a benefits mismatch – there will be more families eligible for subsidized child care than the actual availability of subsidies.

Currently, Child Care Block Grants have accounted for a growing percentage of the budget, but recent funding decreases will require New York City to pay for a larger portion of the total expenditures. 1999-2005 witnessed a 41 percent increase in overall spending for subsidized child care, but available slots did not experience a parallel increase because of an increase in cost per child. In other words, both spending and costs increased, but the number of children served remained the same.

“Income guidelines are so low for qualifying for daycare. A family’s not eligible because they are making a mere $1000 over the 200% poverty line.”

– Service Provider

State and federal programs are experiencing similar funding difficulties. While New York State is one of only a few states mandating pre-kindergarten for all, and funding has increased to secure some Universal Pre-Kindergarten slots, pre-kindergarten continues to be grossly underfunded. On a federal level, Head Start programs have not seen a significant increase in funding. In fact, federal Head Start has experienced significant increases in expenses due to mandated requirements.

**Costs**

Costs associated with early childhood education, especially at the infant level, are a significant factor preventing immigrant families from accessing these essential childhood development services. The cost of infant care in the community is significantly higher than care for preschool-age children. The market rate for preschool is $180 per week, while the infant care market rate is $267 per week. The cost for infant care at the New York City market rate at $13,384 per year exceeds the annual income of a single minimum wage earner. A family with two minimum wage earners can spend 44 percent (for children ages 3 to 5) to 65 percent (for children ages 0 to 1.5) of their income for full-time child care. This has even more dire implications for immigrant families, especially recent immigrants who tend to work in low-wage jobs, earning incomes well below the federal poverty level.

**Table 1: Family Annual Income Guidelines for Child Care in New York City**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FAMILY SIZE</th>
<th>INCOME MUST BE LESS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>$37,648</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>$46,463</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>$54,293</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>$62,123</td>
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</tbody>
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Because these policies and practices are shutting out immigrant families from early childhood education programs in New York City, many immigrant families are not benefiting from Child Care, Head Start, or Universal Pre-Kindergarten. Child Care is not supporting many working immigrant families, Head Start is not meeting the social welfare needs of many immigrant families, and Universal Pre-Kindergarten is not closing the achievement gap for many immigrant families.

II. PROVIDERS: NEEDS AND PERSPECTIVES

CACF interviewed staff from seven organizations serving the targeted immigrant populations. Staff included site coordinators, family child care network coordinators, and program directors of early childhood care and/or referral programs.

“There needs to be more funds for family day care providers to be trained and compensated for those trainings. I see a big difference in the homes of those providers who have been CDA (Child Development Associate credentials) trained. It gives them a sense that they are professionals.”

– Network Provider

Identifying the needs of providers and paying attention to their perspectives on the current child care system facing immigrant children and families is crucial to initiating systemic reform that benefits both providers and the families they serve. Some of the critical barriers and challenges which providers have identified are:

- Inadequate training to help providers outreach to the diverse immigrant communities in New York City;
- Lack of funding to maintain child care facilities and provide a quality educational experience for immigrant children; and
- Lack of bilingual staff.

Training

Immigrant communities in the United States and especially in New York City are diverse in many ways including, but not limited to, language, religion, immigration status, race, ethnicity, family structure, and ideas of child care. Providers acknowledged that not all of them are adequately trained and prepared to outreach and meet the needs of immigrant communities throughout New York City. Just as immigrant communities are diverse, so is the quality of care offered by family child care providers. There is a wide spectrum of care offered by these providers, and unfortunately, some family child care providers do not see themselves as part of a formal system or even as professionals at all.

These providers sometimes see themselves as merely babysitters, which compromises both the education and safety of children in their care. This is especially true in light of the fact that not all providers are trained to meet the needs of children for whom English is not their first language. The inability for providers to offer structured English learning will hinder the ability of these children to fully participate in an educational setting at an older age.

Costs

Providers revealed that it is very difficult in New York City to open and keep open child care facilities. With skyrocketing real estate
prices and limited urban space, there are many high costs associated with opening and maintaining child care facilities. For current family child care providers, as well as potential child care providers, funding is needed to assist in preparing homes to become child care facilities. More funding is necessary for providers to better respond to the needs of immigrant families and children.

“The market rate for setting the cost per child does not consider the cost for running a business.”

— Network Provider

Providers who participated in this research stressed that more funding is necessary to improve the quality of children's educational experience. Providers would like to see more funding invested in computers, adequate and appropriate books, experiential learning like field trips, arts curriculum, and transportation. But most of all, providers need more funding for translation services and language access for immigrant families.

“Most families prefer English to be taught so that children are prepared for school.”

— Service Provider

Staffing

Providers believe that high-quality language assistance services are imperative to meeting the needs of immigrant communities. To that end, bilingual staff is absolutely necessary when working with limited English proficient parents. An added benefit is the potential increase in the number of family child care provider networks. In this case, bilingual staff can help meet the needs of limited English proficient providers, who can in turn meet the needs of parents and children. As one provider said, “[T]he greatest need is to hire more bilingual staff. We saw a dramatic increase [in enrollment] when bilingual staff was hired, materials were translated, and staff represented the community.”

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— Program Director

Unfortunately, there are communities that lack the infrastructure necessary (e.g., community based organizations, collaborations with providers, and bilingual workers) to greatly increase their access to quality child care. ACS re-eligibility forms have been translated into Spanish, but the translation is poor; blatant grammatical and spelling errors appear throughout the form. In addition, translation into Spanish is not enough given the diversity of the immigrant population in New York City. For example, although his community is both Latino and Chinese, one provider acknowledged, “University Settlement’s Family Day Care Program has primarily Latino providers. It is not seen as a program for Chinese immigrant families because there are not enough providers. We currently do not have training or services in Chinese.”

III. FAMILIES: NEEDS AND PERSPECTIVES

The parents who participated in this study come from six different immigrant communities:
Bangladeshi, Chinese, Dominican, Haitian, Korean, and Russian. They speak different languages and have different ideas about child rearing. Even with these differences, all agree that trust is the most important criterion when selecting child care. New York City has made efforts to gain their trust and address the needs of parents with programs like the Child Care Resource and Referral Hotline. However, most parents in this study do not even know that the hotline exists. In addition to this lack of knowledge, or how to access services that provide information, parents also experience difficulties with the child care system in general. From the overwhelming amount of paperwork to the lack of full-day child care programs, parents are having an increasingly difficult time overcoming the systemic barriers to quality and affordable child care. Parents are clear about what they want in terms of child care, but too often what they want and need is not easily accessible or not available at all.

Knowledge and Awareness

Parents stated that immigrant families across the board have a difficult time accessing information about child care resources. As was stated before, most families are unfamiliar with the Child Care Resource and Referral Hotline. One major reason is that translation services are offered only in Chinese and Spanish. This leaves the Bangladeshi, Haitian, Korean, and Russian speaking families without access to the referral hotline itself and to any promotional materials that might make families aware of its existence. And while more families are aware of New York City’s 311 information line, an overwhelming number of families in all the immigrant communities surveyed for this report found it too confusing to use. The families complained that 311 only refers them to other government agencies, not directly to the child care information they need.

“It is crazy and hard. It would be hard to access child care as a new immigrant even if you speak the language. It is a difficult process anyway.”

— Haitian Parent

Language access is different in the various immigrant communities. Lack of access to appropriate translation services reflects a real difference in levels of social capital in immigrant communities. For example, Dominican families report that they are satisfied with the level of access to child care services in Spanish, while Korean families reveal that they have very little knowledge about services available to them in Korean. In general, however, regardless of language access, most families are either ignorant of child care options or are unclear about what those options mean. For example, Haitian parents in a focus group claimed that they had never heard of family child care providers available to them; however, once that option was explained to them, one parent revealed that his child participated in family child care. The overwhelming method of sharing information on child care programs within immigrant communities is word of mouth, not formal information provision. City agencies and child care providers are not effectively using direct, language appropriate outreach or ethnic media to educate immigrant families.
“I did not know that there is public child care assistance. But I think I would prefer to use a private Korean child care because it is an easier process and I don’t feel comfortable disclosing personal information. If I use any public assistance it could jeopardize my citizenship.”

— Korean Parent

A final barrier contributing to the lack of awareness and knowledge of child care programs among immigrant families is the stigma associated with using public assistance. Because of this stigma, some immigrant families do not want to utilize any form of subsidized care. Believing they must be completely self-sufficient, families are afraid that accessing subsidized care will label them as burdens on the government, which they also fear may jeopardize their immigration status. If these parents had access to other parents actually using subsidized child care, through peer-to-peer training, the stigma associated with its use may be eliminated.

“When children attend programs, they learn skills to communicate with other children, socialize with other children, and be independent.”

— Chinese Parent

Without complete knowledge and equitable access to information about their child care options, many immigrant families face challenging situations to find appropriate, safe, and affordable care.

Systemic Difficulties

The systemic difficulties facing immigrant parents when accessing subsidized care range from overwhelming paperwork to language barriers and problems with enrollment. Parents revealed that they are frustrated with the amount of confusing paperwork they must fill out. Even when the paperwork is filled out correctly, families are often placed on very long waiting lists, which may require even more paperwork. Some immigrant families said that if they could afford it, they would prefer to pay for private daycare, which offers less paperwork and immediate enrollment — and less hassle in general — or pay a trusted individual for informal care.

Whether the parents are Bangladeshi, Chinese, Dominican, Haitian, Korean, or Russian, those who face language barriers find accessing child care an overwhelming and persistent concern. Parents with limited English proficiency need to build relationships with bilingual staff, of which there is a current lack. Without bilingual staff, parents with limited English proficiency have a very difficult time understanding the successes and challenges their children face every day in child care programs.

“Early education definitely helps to build up a child’s foundation for elementary school. The child won’t be ready if you just put the child into kindergarten after being cared for at home.”

— Chinese Parent

Enrollment poses other systemic challenges for immigrant families. A physical examination is required of all students enrolling in a child care program. Enrollment for some
families is delayed because they cannot get an appointment or cannot afford an appointment with a doctor. Another barrier to enrollment is the re-eligibility process, which is laborious and confusing, especially when forms are not translated correctly or at all.

The extensive paperwork and complexities of navigating the system are made even more challenging for immigrant parents who are unfamiliar with the eligibility process and resources to assist in the process. It is therefore even more difficult for those parents with limited English proficiency.

**Preferences and Expectations**

Parents from all immigrant communities in this study articulated that finding providers whom they trust to care for their children is the most important criterion in choosing a child care program. The ability to communicate with the providers leads to trust. Child care program staff members who speak the same language as the language spoken at home is a strong preference for immigrant families. A Dominican parent, for example, said, “I would really like and want the provider to be bilingual, and I prefer a Spanish speaking person to take care of my baby”.

“**It is very important for the children to keep [their] own culture and the language…I want them to speak Russian. The agency reinforcing speaking Russian is great.”**

— Russian Parent

That being said, parents differ in their opinion regarding the level to which their children should learn the home language and culture through a child care program. To that end, a Haitian parent felt that “it really should not matter if the child care is set for the child to learn Haitian or the culture because it is my responsibility for them to know the culture and speak the language”.

While most say that, ideally, the child should speak both English and his/her native language, families differed on the method by which culture and language should be taught – either within or outside of the home. The difference may be associated with the level of English proficiency of the parents. Those parents who are limited English proficient are more likely to want programs that support bilingualism but not at the sake of learning English. Some parents mistakenly fear that bilingualism will prevent their child from learning English and many are unfamiliar with research around bilingualism. For example, research has shown long-term cognitive and social benefits of bilingualism, the need for systematic support for the development of their home language, and potential long-term negative consequences associated with children who lose their home language.

In addition, most parents prefer child care programs that prepare their children for school. This includes programs that include activities that develop language and math skills as well as social skills to interact with adults and other children.

Another strong parental preference within immigrant communities is child care that offers flexible hours. Parents are attracted to family child care providers that offer more flexible hours than center based care. Parents whose children attend programs in child care centers, however, express the desire for more flexible hours in terms of drop-off and pick-up. There is growing evidence among Chinese immigrant families, specifically from the region of Fuzhou,
indicating that parents are sending their children back to China to be raised by family members. Trust, native language and culture, and flexible hours are guaranteed.\textsuperscript{xii}

It is important for those designing programs to include the preferences and expectations of immigrant families so that they are given real options for safe and appropriate child care.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

Research has demonstrated the many advantages of early childhood education. The Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP) acknowledges several benefits of high quality early child care. According to CLASP, early childhood education:

- Supports a child’s early development and socialization;
- Helps children of immigrants adapt to a new culture and language and to overcome linguistic isolation;
- Improves parenting skills;
- Increases family access to health care and other benefits; and
- Links parents to the communities in which they live.\textsuperscript{xii}

Unfortunately, many of New York City’s immigrant families are unable to take advantage of the benefits of early childhood education because of barriers preventing their access to these programs. These barriers include:

- Lack of appropriately translated and culturally sensitive materials and child care professionals;
- Not enough effective outreach and language access to immigrant communities about programs and services available to them;
- Not enough training for child care professionals to educate them on the unique challenges facing immigrant families and children;
- High costs associated with child care programs and the lack of funding to agencies to develop new and maintain current child care programs and facilities; and
- Ineffective government response to the needs facing immigrant families and children.

Eliminating the barriers to early childhood education requires that changes address these barriers and lead to an early childhood education system that is responsive to immigrant families in New York City and fosters the growth and development of all children.

To ensure that New York City’s immigrant families and children have access to an early childhood education system that provides quality programs and opportunities, CACF makes the following recommendations.

1. Language and Culture: Improve language assistance services and increase cultural competency of child care program staff.

The current child care system does not have the capacity to address the language and cultural needs of the diverse immigrant communities in New York City. While language assistance services are often available in Chinese and Spanish, they are not available in the other languages represented by the immigrant communities in this study, namely Bengali, Haitian Creole, Korean, or Russian. If trust in child care providers is a prominent concern for all immigrant families seeking
child care, appropriate translation services, an increase in bilingual staff, and cultural awareness must be a priority for providers.

All documents (e.g., forms, outreach materials, signage, etc.) must be translated correctly. For example, immigrant parents should receive translated information on where they can go to get a physical exam for their children in order to stop any delays to the enrollment process. Providers must be trained to work with children whose first language is not English by offering structured English learning. And for child care workers and educators who are bilingual, salaries must be increased.

2. Outreach: Increase communication with immigrant communities throughout New York City, making them aware of available child care programs and services.

One of the reasons immigrant families and children do not access early childhood education programs at a rate that is comparable to non-immigrant families is because immigrant families often do not know that these programs and services exist. And even when immigrant families do know the programs exist, the process of accessing these programs is confusing – often because the information is not accessible in languages that represent the diverse immigrant communities.
Families and children in need of child care are not the only people who would benefit from a more aggressive outreach approach. More outreach is also needed in immigrant communities to recruit providers from within these communities.

In addition, not all resources that might be able to increase communication with and services to immigrant communities are being utilized. Organizations and government agencies should take advantage of ethnic radio and television as a means to increase outreach to immigrant communities. There are parents in every immigrant community who are accessing early childhood education services. Organizations should develop parent-to-parent peer education programs that focus on accessing these and other services. On every level, mainstream organizations need to re-examine and improve upon their staffing capacity for providing effective outreach to immigrant communities.

Along with the need for outreach to make immigrant communities aware of programs and services, there are research and training needs within the immigrant communities of New York City. Fortunately, New York City is full of institutes of higher education. Universities are untapped resources, especially in urban centers. Increasing community-university partnerships is crucial to meeting the research needs of immigrant communities and the training needs of child care providers.

3. Professional Development: Ensure that child care providers are knowledgeable of and can address the unique needs and challenges facing immigrant communities, families, and children in accessing child care services.

It is essential that all providers working with immigrant communities are responsive to the unique needs of this population. Additional training for providers is required so that they are equipped to recognize the developmental needs of immigrant children, and most importantly, so they know how to approach sharing this information with parents in a culturally competent way. Trainings must address the cultural differences among immigrant communities and the challenges these differences present. Because so many immigrant families access family day care programs more than other types of child care, the number of family day care networks that offer supervision and training to providers must increase.

Many providers are immigrants themselves and must be given opportunities to improve their own English skills. One of the criticisms of family day care providers by the immigrant families interviewed for this study is a general lack of professionalism. Any training program for providers must include a clear explanation of professional standards and implement a system to evaluate and monitor professionalism.

4. Funding: Increase funding to city agencies and child care networks so that there are enough early childhood education programs and staff to address New York City’s growing immigrant populations.

To address the citywide shortage of affordable child care, funding must be increased to directly support more slots for low-income families as well as to child care networks to support more family child care providers. While the city and the state have made efforts to increase slots for Universal Pre-
Kindergarten, there is still a significant lack of necessary full-day programs. Local and state officials must be committed to supporting full-day Universal Pre-Kindergarten for all four-year-olds and full-day Head Start and Early Head Start programs. Ultimately, the citywide increase in capacity will benefit many children from immigrant families as well.

However, in order to ensure that immigrant families’ needs are addressed and that the immigrant communities’ capacity to support these families is increased, specific funding should be made available. It is essential to build current staff capacity within family child care networks and center-based programs by having funds to hire more staff, especially bilingual providers, to work with the growing immigrant communities. In order to support these diverse communities, funding must be available to increase the capacity of family child care networks to recruit, train, and support more providers serving immigrant families. Particular funding streams should be earmarked for identified emerging communities who currently have little to no options for formal child care. In addition, start-up grants and health and safety grants must be increased and the application process must be simplified in order to attract more immigrant providers.

V. CONCLUSION
New York City continues to see a dramatic increase in its population through immigration. Children of immigrants can greatly benefit from high-quality early childhood programs that would prepare these children with better skills to learn and succeed as well as connect the families to much needed support services. It is imperative that policymakers and providers understand what barriers may impede immigrant families from accessing early education programs and how these barriers may be reduced in order to ensure that every child in New York City has access to safe and supportive care.
The Coalition for Asian American Children and Families (CA CF), the nation’s only pan-Asian children’s advocacy organization, aims to improve the health and well-being of Asian Pacific American children and families in New York City.

50 Broad Street, 18th Floor
New York, NY 10004

Telephone: (212) 809-4675
Fax: (212) 785-4601
Email: info@cacf.org
Website: www.cacf.org

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ENDNOTES


iv It should be noted that licensure does not guarantee excellence in care. Some argue that parents should look for programs that are not only licensed but also accredited.

v Matthews, Hannah and Danielle Ewen. Loc. Cit.

vi Ibid.

vii Ibid.


xi New York University’s Center for Research on Culture, Development, and Education has embarked on an infant study. Researchers interview mothers from various communities. Preliminary research has begun with 60 Fuzhuonese families. Six months into the study, only eight families have kept their infants with them in the United States.

xii Matthews, Hannah and Danielle Ewen. Loc. Cit.