Ilze Earner, Ph.D.
Immigrants and Child Welfare Project
Hunter College School of Social Work

Lessons Learned: Best Practices with Immigrant and Refugee Families, Children, and Youth


Available from Bridging Refugee Youth & Children’s Services at www.brycs.org
Today’s Presentation

► Immigration Trends
► Immigration Status / Access to services, benefits and resources
► Special Needs of immigrant, refugee families, children and youth
► Implications for child welfare services
► Examples of best practice models
► New Directions: Permanency planning, safety and well-being
Who Comes to the U.S.?

- **Legal Immigration:** 600,000-900,000+ per year
- **Refugees:** 54,700
- **Undocumented:**
  - Early ‘90s - 200-300,000 per year
  - Late ‘90s - 500-800,000 per year
  - Current - unknown - estimates are close to 1 million
- **Unaccompanied Minors:**
  - 48,000 per year
  - 7,500 in Unaccompanied Minors Program (2004)

Sources: The Urban Institute, Washington, D.C.
USCCB, 2006
US Foreign-Born Population
35.7 million in 2004

- Refugees (2.5 million) 7%
- Legal permanent residents (LPR) (10.5 million) 29%
- Legal temporary residents (1.2 million) 3%
- Naturalized citizens (11.2 million) 31%
- Undocumented immigrants (10.3 million) 29%

Source: The Urban Institute, 2005
Where do they come from?

½ from Latin America and ¼ from Asia

Source: The Urban Institute, 2005
Immigration Status:
1996 PRWORA made immigration status a factor in eligibility for government benefits

►►Qualified Aliens*
- Refugee
- Asylee
- Cuban-Haitian Entrant
- Amerasian Entrant
- Legal Permanent Resident
- Paroled > 1 year
- VAWA
- Special immigrant status

►►Not-qualified Aliens*
- PRUCOL
- Paroled < 1 year
- Out of status
- Undocumented

*Restrictions and/or exceptions apply
Mixed Status Families: The Growing Challenge

► Who are they? –
- One or more non-citizen adult
- One or more citizen children

► 9.1 million children
- 13% of all children
- 85% of children in non-citizen families

► Undocumented Families –
- 2 out of 3 children are U.S. citizens
- Dual track citizenship?

Source: The Urban Institute, 2005
Special Needs of Immigrant and Refugee Families, children and youth

► Language
  - 48 million non-English speakers >5+
  - 61% Spanish

► Education
  - 32% of all immigrant parents < high school education
  - 50% of LEP children have parents with high school education
    - 20% of these have < 9th grade

► Health Care
  - 22% of children of immigrants do not have health insurance
  - 13% of immigrant youth have fair/poor health

► Poverty
  - 1 out 4 children of immigrants lives in poverty

► Hunger
  - 37% of children of immigrants experience hunger

Source: The Urban Institute, 2005
Child Welfare and Immigrants/Refugees

Data
- Numbers?
- Why not?
- How to get numbers

Services
- Child protection
- Preventive Services
- Foster Care
- Kinship care
- Adoption
Implications for Child Welfare

► Assessment
  ► Accurate
  ► Appropriate

► Language Access
  ► Communication – Bilingual staff; use of interpreters
  ► Translation of documents

► Culturally competent service provision
  ► Stages of migration framework
  ► Immigration status – access to services
  ► Informal service network
  ► Bicultural staff
Examples of Best Practice Models

► New York City
  - Children’s Services Sub-Committee on Immigration and Language Access
  - Handbook on Immigration & Language Access
  - Language Card
  - Director of Immigrant Issues
  - Training
  - Executive Order 41
  - Local Law 73 (Language Access)
Calgary, Canada

- The Call Centre
- Jointly developed by refugee-serving agencies and Child and Family Services
  - 24 hour one-stop telephone contact
  - Telephone resource for child welfare workers to obtain information about culture, language, resources in the community for refugee families, children and youth
  - Prevent removals; connect families to resources
  - Cost-effective
BRYCS Model: St. Louis, Atlanta, and Cleveland

- Cross-service training model
- Refugee-serving organizations collaborate with public child welfare to address family needs
- Resource manual
- Training
- Contacts
Meeting the needs of families and child welfare: permanency, safety well-being

Lessons Learned: The 5 “C”s:

- **Community-Based**
  - Expert knowledge resides at the local level, immigrant-serving CBOs; non-profit, mutual assistance, and faith-based organizations

- **Collaboration**
  - Information-sharing; open communication; recognize differences and address ‘turf’ disputes; use capacity-building agenda

- **Coordination**
  - Practice, program, policy; cross-training, task force, coalition-building

- **Cost-effective**
  - Use existing resources

- **Common sense**
  - Stop, think, listen
Future Directions

► Interorganizational collaborative relationships
  - Task force, advisory councils, cross-training

► Training and education
  - Immigrant Communities and Child Welfare Training Collaboration
  - Caribbean Child Welfare project and other local initiatives

► Integration
  - Addressing the special needs of mixed status families and children of foreign-born parents – no ‘dual track’ citizenship

► Research
  - Culturally competent practice with diverse populations
  - Migration framework
  - Impact of globalization