



POLICY BRIEF: STATE ADVOCACY TO SUPPORT **Increased Access for Latino families in Louisiana**

In June of 2022, Advancing Communities for Equity released a report of its work with Jefferson Ready Start Network, examining under-participation in its early learning opportunities by Latino families. This policy brief outlines three key findings from the report that have implications for state policy and advocacy.

In 2019, the U.S. Census Bureau estimated that 14.9% (or 64,441) of the Jefferson Parish population (432,493) identified as Hispanic, compared to 5.3% of the population statewide[i]. Enrollment in Jefferson Parish Schools by those who identify as Hispanic is over 36% or 15,801 students. Despite this population density, only 835 Latino children under the age of five currently participate in registered, certified, or licensed[ii] publicly funded early learning in Jefferson Parish (exclusive of family child care) as of October 2021. Jefferson Ready Start Network (JRSN) seeks to better understand the lack of participation in its early learning sector by Latino families, and develop a path forward to increase access to early care and education.

Support for Jefferson Parish's efforts (and other communities) could be bolstered by efforts at the state level to fully leverage federal funding for immigrant families.

Finding 1: Policy and resources related to the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) limits immigrant families from fully utilizing the subsidy.

Specific Recommendations:

- Eliminate CCAP eligibility barriers that make utilization a challenge. For example: Minimum work requirements and work verification for families in non-traditional employment may exclude families from meeting the application requirements.
- Eliminate program structures, like Tracking Of Time Services (TOTS) fingerprinting, that incite latent fears of government programs. For example: Technologies like geofencing can help verify attendance.
- Tailor information on program eligibility by immigration status needed so that families can determine what options are available. For example: Create guidance that describes what early learning programs are available for parents seeking asylum, parents who are citizens, and children who are citizens.
- Eliminate misinformation that discourages participation. For example: Currently, state resources incorrectly outline verification of parents' citizenship for eligibility for the CCAP.
- Currently, CCAP funds cannot be flexibly used for unregistered family child care. While Jefferson Parish increases its supply of registered, licensed, and culturally and linguistically responsive providers, flexibilities regarding how CCAP subsidies can be used can better support working families. Many states allow for these funds to be used for more types of informal care than in Louisiana. Guam, Hawaii, Kansas, and Wisconsin^[vi] pay families directly and allow them to pay a provider of their choosing. Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, New Mexico, and North Dakota pay providers directly unless a family chooses an in-home provider, in which case the family uses CCDF funds to pay the provider directly.

Finding 2: Professional development opportunities and training in culturally and linguistically responsive practices are limited in Louisiana.

Specific Recommendations:

- Require training on culturally relevant and responsive practices for directors and teachers to build up the supply of centers that can meet dual language learners needs.
- Require entities contracting with the LDOE to provide professional development services offer resources for groups that speak languages other than English, inclusive of Early Childhood (EC) Guides, CLASS® observers, trainers, Early Childhood Ancillary Program trainers and coaches, Child Care Resource and Referral trainers and coaches, and mental health consultants.

Finding 3: Navigating Louisiana's early childhood system is difficult for Spanish-speaking families.

Specific Recommendation:

Review, refine, and strengthen existing resources and application processes related to early learning targeted at Spanish-speakers for the ease of navigation, clarity, and usability to encourage engagement and participation. For example: While performance profiles can be translated into Spanish, the video explaining what they mean is not available in other languages.

The full report issued by Advancing Communities for Equity can be viewed at <https://www.aceforus.com/post/expanding-access-for-latino-families-in-jefferson-parish>