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## Future Research Directions and Suggested Strategies

### Suggestions from Study Participants

Study participants made suggestions and shared a number of strategies which will be useful to policy makers and child care providers alike. As opposed to developing our own policy recommendations, we felt an obligation to share the suggestions of the parents and providers directly. Some of these are suggestions for policy reforms to make child care more accessible and affordable and others are successful strategies providers have used in their own programs to create a more welcoming child care setting for these families.

*For policymakers.....*

### Expand access to quality, culturally appropriate child care

- Increase access to quality, affordable preschool programs.
- Provide opportunities for members of the refugee and immigrant communities to become licensed by addressing licensing and documentation barriers and providing appropriate, culturally sensitive training in the first languages of participants.
- Don't segregate refugee and immigrant children in only a few programs—everyone should have access to child care so there is more of a mix of children.
- Meet basic needs of the families (i.e. food, shelter, health) to allow a focus on school.
- More quality child care programs that can accommodate non-traditional hours.
- Address the shortage of providers with certification in early care and education whose first language is other than English with loan forgiveness programs and other measures.
- Provide more funding for child care providers to hire interpreters and use language services to communicate with parents.
- More bilingual staff for R & Rs to conduct more outreach in the community, assist parents in learning about what quality child care is and how to find it, how to interview providers and how to apply for child care assistance and pay for child care. Have materials translated. Provide staff assistance because some parents are illiterate in their native language.

Ease fears about legal status by providing outreach in the community to demystify eligibility and documentation requirements and inform parents about confidentiality.

### **Address legal status and documentation issues in Colorado**

- Make the Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP) more accessible by providing more funding to shorten waiting lists, make interpretation of program policies more consistent and ease documentation requirements. This would help to increase access to child care, including adding hours to Head Start for these families.
- Ease fears about legal status by providing outreach in the community to demystify eligibility and documentation requirements and inform parents about confidentiality.
- Allow children to attend a child care program without producing a birth certificate.

### **Expand training opportunities for child care providers in the following topics:**

- Cultural diversity and communication
- How to be an effective translator and how to work with translators
- Diversity—how to incorporate multiple cultures into a single classroom
- How children learn a second language for non-English speaking staff; support services and materials regarding culture, customs and beliefs
- Understanding immigrant and refugee views of education and educators
- Beliefs and customs in different cultures, including guidance on nonverbal communication
- How to choose and read stories to a group of children that speak a different language than the one being read
- How to more effectively teach non-English speaking children

*For child care providers...***Make the transition to child care easier for ELL children.**

- Have a community member present for the first few days when children are enrolled.
- Have providers learn a few key words in the child's native language.
- Conduct home visits at the beginning of the year.
- Offer classroom visits before the start of the year.

**Validate and preserve culture, religion and language.**

- Teach about cultures and religions so children don't lose their identity.
- Pay more attention to dietary restrictions.
- Bring parents into the classroom to attend or participate in cultural events such as potlucks, performances and world holiday festivals.
- Ask parents to volunteer to talk, sing, dance and/or cook something from their culture.
- Incorporate celebrations from around the world. Invite parents to come in and share special things about their culture.
- Validate the cultures of families and talk to parents and children about the good you see in their cultures.
- Have materials, children's books, etc. in child's first language and encourage parents to read to children in their first language at home.
- Have bilingual staff in all parts of the program, including the front office.

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from insensitive  
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**Promote cultural sensitivity and tolerance.**

- Teach parenting skills and hygiene practices in a culturally sensitive way.
- Teach parents alternative methods of discipline instead of reporting them.
- Protect children from insensitive remarks by other children—teach children to respect differences.
- Talk openly about skin color, differences, traditions, and respecting and appreciating differences.
- Hire a cultural liaison so it's clear in the community that the needs of families are being met.
- Have members of staff from a child's cultural community act as a bridge for learning and respecting norms.

If we built relationships with different communities and they could be here during open houses to interpret and represent [that would help improve attendance and communication.]

—Director, Child Care Center

### **Improve parent/teacher communication.**

- Explain events such as “Star of the Week” to parents at a conference so they fully understand and the child doesn’t feel left out.
- Hold student performances and student-led conferences where the children present their work to their families so parents are drawn in and the interaction is meaningful.
- Translate and clearly explain the disciplinary practices of the program.
- Be sensitive to parents’ needs and have more informal discussions with them to help them feel more comfortable. Parents may not know how to schedule formal meetings to discuss their concerns so try to have informal conversations with parents while they are dropping off or picking up their children.
- Make sure parents know that teachers value their involvement with their child’s education.

### **Encourage parental involvement through outreach, meetings and events.**

- Take advantage of reliance on word of mouth and get one or two key people in the community involved in reaching out to families to encourage enrollment.
- Survey parents on what they want programs to offer. The provider who made this suggestion said answers included classes on nutrition, CPR, infant massage and aerobics. She reported having 330 parents attend their aerobics class in five months. She felt that this helped them build trust with parents.
- Hold a potluck dinner at the beginning of school and have additional nights during the year when children exhibit their work to their parents.
- Build relationships with different communities so they can be present during open houses to interpret in order to improve attendance and communication.
- Call parents and make sure they are able to come to events; offer transportation.
- Hold some events during the day to accommodate those working second and third shift.
- Try to accommodate families in which both parents work by holding events and meeting on Saturday or Sunday or after 6 PM on weekdays.
- Work on increasing the involvement of fathers through workshops and training geared to their needs.
- Match immigrant or refugee parent with non-immigrant or refugee parent or involved parent with uninvolved parent to make parents feel more comfortable.

Take advantage of reliance on word of mouth and get one or two key people in the community involved in reaching out to families to encourage enrollment.

- Hold monthly parent meetings covering a variety of topics.
- Hold numerous information nights for immigrant and refugee parents to learn about the curriculum their children are receiving.
- Offer cultural parties, end-of-year programs in native languages.

**Promote school readiness.**

- Encourage enrollment in quality preschool for ELL children.
- Build on social emotional skills.
- Teach social skills, norms, rules prior to school.
- Build background knowledge to enhance comprehension of learning.
- Support parents to learn English or participate in adult education classes.
- Foster an understanding of school expectations.
- Encourage classroom visits before starting kindergarten.

