

What Can Philanthropy Do?

Coming Together for Children in Immigrant Families in a Changing Policy Landscape

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Approximately 18 million children of immigrants live in the United States, comprising one quarter of the total child population and nearly 42 percent of all children of color. Children of immigrants face a unique combination of challenges: barriers related to their or their family members' immigration status, policies and programs that fall short of addressing their needs, institutional racism, and xenophobia.

Recent federal policy changes and executive actions—from the travel ban to ramped-up enforcement to weakened protections for unaccompanied

children—have created an atmosphere of fear and uncertainty in immigrant and refugee communities. This climate will negatively affect both short- and long-term outcomes for children in immigrant families as well as other vulnerable populations.

While there is philanthropic capacity in the areas of child development, education, family support, health, immigrant integration, and legal services, it is imperative that funders come together to address specific threats to children in immigrant families and to maximize their impact.

Children in immigrant families currently face a range of risks and unique vulnerabilities:

Parental and family separation due to deportation

Threats to the mental and physical health, including the effects of toxic stress

Deteriorating economic security due to job loss when caregivers are detained or deported

Reduced access to critical health and safety net programs due to fear or lack of access to information

Roundtable Recommendations for Philanthropic Impact

The following recommendations for philanthropy emerged from a 2017 roundtable session (“Advancing Opportunity for Children of Color in Immigrant Families: A Cross-Sector Approach”) hosted by the Annie E. Casey Foundation and Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants (GCIR) in partnership with Grantmakers Income Security Taskforce (GIST) and the Early Childhood Funders Collaborative (ECFC).

Capacity Building.

Grantmakers can incubate and fund collaborations between immigrant rights organizations and health, mental health, early childhood, education, and social service providers to:

- **Adapt and disseminate Know Your Rights and family preparedness training and materials**, such as model guardianship agreements and powers of attorney in the event of detention or deportation.
- **Design trauma-informed and culturally and developmentally appropriate rapid response systems** for children and families facing detention and deportation, including youth-designed support groups and social networks.
- **Provide training for key partners**, including child services and advocacy organizations, schools, child welfare agencies, hospitals and health clinics, law enforcement agencies, youth development agencies, youth-led organizations, and state and local courts. These trainings should provide an overview of current immigration policies and their impact on the health, well-being, and economic security of children in immigrant families, as well as specific implications for different agencies. For example, trainings can identify strategies to avoid putting immigrants at risk by limiting the amount of personal information and data that is collected from clients.
- **Encourage the development of cross-sector partnerships.** For example, child development experts and the legal community can partner to incorporate research on child and family impacts into legal briefs and court proceedings. And immigrant rights, early childhood, and education organizations can advocate for the elimination of school expulsion and collaborate on innovative two-generation models. For those who work with dual language and English language learners, new programmatic models and cross-sector approaches will be needed to address immediate needs and advance long-term efforts to achieve greater educational equity and academic success for this population.
- **Support the integration of racial equity trainings** for organizations across all sectors, including immigrant rights, child advocacy, education, and human services, among others.
- **Highlight the disproportionate impact of specific policies on children of immigrants and other youth of color**, including interventions and opportunities for collaboration in high-need areas such as criminal justice reform (e.g., bail and bonds, sentencing, stop and frisk, incarceration, school to prison to deportation pipeline, etc.).

Roundtable Recommendations for Philanthropic Impact

Policy Advocacy.

Grantmakers can build awareness and promote systems change by supporting efforts to:

- **Identify and engage new allies**, such as associations of education and medical professionals, mental health providers, social service agencies, and youth development and youth-led organizations, among many others.
- **Develop and disseminate fact sheets and action alerts** on how the federal budget, administrative changes to federal agency operations, and other critical policy issues (e.g., Census 2020) will impact children in immigrant families.



- **Share real-time information** on state-level efforts to advance protections for children in immigrant families, as well as on attempts to deny access to critical safety net programs for this population, across immigrant rights organizations, pediatric professionals, mental health providers, early childhood programs, education stakeholders, and social services agencies, among others.
- **Monitor the treatment of children** during enforcement operations, including whether they are being targeted in schools and other community settings, as well as those in federal custody and immigration detention facilities. It will be critical to respond to the needs of children who are in state child welfare systems as a direct result of immigration enforcement activities.
- **Convene key stakeholders to share expertise and identify strategic policy advocacy opportunities.** In the short-term, such coordination could advance rapid response efforts (e.g., joint advocacy campaigns, statements) to uplift the impact of fast-changing federal and state policy developments on children in immigrant families. Long-term efforts could address structural barriers through broader systems change (e.g., advancing policies that provide pathways to permanent immigration legal status; expanding access to culturally competent and trauma-informed physical and mental health care, affordable housing, safe and high-quality education from birth through post-secondary; addressing over-policing of children and youth of color; and increasing opportunities for long-term economic opportunities, including asset-building).

Narrative and Strategic Communications.

Grantmakers can advance positive and fact-based narratives about children in immigrant families by supporting efforts that:

- **Provide communications training and related leadership development opportunities** for immigrant youth as well as a wide range of organizations that serve and/or interface with children in immigrant families.
- **Promote collaborative strategic communications** to develop talking points and fact-based messages that resonate with key audiences; counter misinformation and negative stereotypes about immigrant children, youth, and families; avoid unintended consequences or backlash for other impacted communities; and align with other movements that advance protections for native-born children of color, LGBTQ youth, and other vulnerable groups.

Research.

Grantmakers can support joint research and data projects that:

- **Document the impact of current policies and rhetoric** on children in immigrant families through both qualitative and quantitative methods.
- **Develop methods to gather disaggregated data on race and ethnicity at the state and local level** to support in-depth research on children in immigrant families.
- **Involve immigrants and other affected community members** in the design and execution of participatory research efforts.
- **Advance awareness of the nexus of criminal justice, child welfare, and education**, such as including children of immigrants in school to prison pipeline studies; identifying whether there are disproportionate numbers of immigrant children in the juvenile justice and child welfare systems; and exploring how children of immigrants experience educational systems differentially from early childhood to higher education.

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