Ensuring Effective Language Access Services and Policies in Early Childhood Programs

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  - ✓ Early Childhood
  - ✓ K-12
  - ✓ Adult Education and Workforce Development
- Language Access
- Governance of Integration Policy

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• **Overlooked but Essential: Language Access in Early Childhood Programs**

  By Maki Park, Jacob Hofstetter, and Ivana Tú Nhi Giang

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• **FACTSHEETS BY STATE**

  **Dual Language Learners: Key Characteristics and Considerations for Early Childhood Programs**

  By Ivana Tú Nhi Giang and Maki Park

Speakers

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Overview

• Overview of Issue
  – Why Language Access?
• Language Access Laws & Applications to Early Childhood
• Demographics of Dual Language Learner (DLL) Families
• Evidence of Barriers to Access
• Fact Sheets Walk-Through
• Policy Opportunities & Implications
• Q&A
Why is Language Access Important?

➢ Ability to enroll and participate in programs regardless of English language ability
➢ Limited English Proficient (LEP) families less likely to know about or be able to register for many public programs, raising equity concerns
➢ Program relevance & quality for these families also a concern
  ▪ Language skills/match not always reflected in quality ratings
➢ An issue not only for LEP families, but also LEP providers
  ▪ LEP child care providers face many barriers registering in system & accessing subsidies and other support
➢ Language access is foundational to equity, but often overlooked
Title VI of the *Civil Rights Act of 1964* forbids discrimination on the basis of national origin in federally assisted programs. This includes not providing access to services to individuals solely because they do not speak English proficiently.

Limited English Proficient (LEP) individuals have a right to meaningful access to federally assisted programs, and recipients of federal funding have an obligation to provide access to their services. This includes state and local level recipients of federal funding as well as those providers receiving indirect federal funding (i.e. through vouchers).

Executive Order 13166 extends this requirement to cover both federally conducted and federally supported activities.
Any ECEC program that receives funding through U.S. Department for Health & Human Services (HHS) (or other federal agencies) must provide access to their services for LEP individuals, including children and adults. Including Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF), Head Start, and Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) programs.

HHS has issued its own LEP Guidance for recipients of its funding.
- Provides information and guidance on how recipients can ensure compliance with Title VI language access requirements.
- Includes an assessment (the 4-factor analysis) to help recipients better understand the best mix of language assistance services.
- Guidance on how to ensure effective interpretation, accurate translation, properly trained staff, and appropriate planning.
➢ CCDF, Head Start, and MIECHV each have their own regulations and statutory language regarding the accommodation of LEP children and their families.

➢ These programs have additional requirements that carry more specific obligations for programs or state agencies receiving funding.
  ▪ For example, CCDF regulations require states’ lead agencies to report on what strategies they are using to conduct outreach to LEP families while Head Start requires the use of interpreters and translators where appropriate.

➢ The extent of implementation, evaluation, and accountability around language access requirements in ECEC systems is difficult to gauge across diverse programs, geographies, and providers.
One-third of all U.S. children ages 0 to 5 in are DLLs. Nearly half (44 percent) of these DLLs had at least one LEP parent—that is, approximately 3.3 million children.

Multiple, compounding factors contributing to lack of access:

- DLLs more than three times as likely to have at least one parent whose highest level of educational attainment is less than a high school diploma or equivalent (29 percent vs. 9 percent, respectively).
- Roughly half (51 percent) of DLL households were low-income, compared to 38 percent of non-DLL households.
- Among DLLs in low-income households with at least one LEP parent and at least one parent with limited formal education, approximately one-quarter (26 percent) of those households had no internet access.

Based on MPI’s NCIIP’s analysis of 2015-19 ACS data.
Evidence & Implications: Barriers to Access

➢ Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG), Child Care Development Fund (CCDF)
  • More than 15 years of evidence—insufficient language services, data for LEP parents has meant disproportionately lower access.

➢ Maternal, Infant, & Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV)
  • Without more culturally and linguistically diverse home visiting staff, immigrant-background families rendered invisible and underserved.

➢ Head Start, Early Head Start
  • Proportionately serving DLLs for years; demonstrates potential for other programs with same federal civil rights mandates to improve.

➢ State Pre-K
  • Only 8 states proved proportionate DLL enrollment in 2019-20—raising need for more data in and across states as a first step in improving access.
One-quarter (26 percent) of DLLs—roughly 1.9 million children—in households speaking dozens of languages other than the top 10 most common languages after English.

At state/local levels: even greater diversity; less commonly spoken languages may constitute larger shares.

- More targeted language services requires greater funding and resources.
Language barriers and efforts to overcome them are likely to play a significant role in DLL families’ access to early childhood services.

- Out of the 164,000 DLL children living in Massachusetts in 2015–19, 42 percent had at least one Limited English Proficient (LEP) parent, meaning the parent reported speaking English less than “very well” in the ACS (either “well,” “not well,” or “not at all”). Either one or both parents for approximately 11,000 of these DLLs reported speaking English “not at all.”

- About one-fifth (22 percent) of DLLs in the state lived in linguistically isolated households, which the U.S. Census Bureau defines as households in which all members who are age 14 or older speak a non-English language and also speak English less than “very well” (that is, they are LEP).
Policy Recommendations

➢ Include robust language access requirements in new ECEC funding streams across federal, state, and local levels

➢ Identify DLLs in state early childhood data systems

➢ Integrate language access accountability into state systems (QRIS)

➢ Build language access into program reporting and evaluation

➢ Use regional/community hubs to provide language access support

➢ Partner with trusted community organizations
➢ Use Q&A chat function to write questions

➢ Or email events@migrationpolicy.org with your questions

➢ Or tweet questions to @MigrationPolicy #MPIdiscuss

➢ A recording and slides will be available at:
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