Jefferson Ready Start Network & Service to Latino Families with Young Children

ADVANCING COMMUNITIES FOR EQUITY

How can equitable access to early care and education transform local communities?

The future of our communities is tied to the success of our children. At Jefferson Ready Start Network (JRSN), our vision is that all children birth to age 5 in Jefferson Parish have access to high-quality early childhood experiences that will prepare them to succeed. However, local data shows that less than 10% of eligible infants and toddlers are in care. This percentage is even lower for certain communities within the parish, including the Hispanic and Latino communities.

Driven by local data and context, JRSN collaborates with local leaders, community members and thought partners to develop intentional plans, secure and weave together resources and implement creative solutions. JRSN partnered with [Advancing Communities for Equity](#) (ACE) to better understand the lack of participation in its early learning sector by Latino families and to develop a path forward to increase equitable access to early childhood services.

ACE explored various sources of quantitative and qualitative data, including the [Jefferson Parish Early Learning: Capacity and Access Landscape Analysis](#) to better understand barriers to access for Jefferson Parish Hispanic and Latino families. In Jefferson Parish, there are roughly 432,000 people who identify as Hispanic. However, only an estimated 835 Latino children under the age of 5 are enrolled in early care and education programs. The need to increase access is clear. This report identifies barriers, explores local context and makes informed recommendations.

Equitable access to early care and education is critical to supporting the future of Jefferson Parish. **By supporting our children today, we are also supporting families, our community and the workforce of tomorrow. I hope you will join in our efforts to build a stronger future for Jefferson Parish.**

Sarintha Buras Stricklin, Ph.D.
Executive Director
Jefferson Ready Start Network

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Charmaine Caccioppi
Chair
Executive Vice President/
Chief Operating Officer,
United Way of Southeast
Louisiana

Ileana Ledet
Vice Chair
Senior Vice President
of Policy, Greater New
Orleans, Inc.

Donna Austin
Director of Decision
Support,
People's Health

Lisa Barback
Executive Director,
Westbank Business and
Industry Association

Jerry Bologna
President & CEO,
Jefferson Economic
Development Commission

Tim Coulon
Chair, Jefferson Business
Council

Dr. Gina Easterly
Family and Community
Systems Team Lead,
Bureau of Family Health,
Office of Public Health,
Louisiana Department of
Health

John Fitzpatrick
Chief Deputy, Jefferson
Parish Sheriff's Office

James Garvey
Chair, Louisiana Board of
Elementary and Secondary
Education

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Superintendent, Jefferson
Parish Schools

Dr. Keith Leidermann
Chief Executive Officer,
Kingsley House

Todd Murphy
Former President, Jefferson
Chamber of Commerce

Chad Nugent
Chair, Jefferson Parish
School Board

Ajit Pethe
Chief of Schools, Jefferson
Parish Schools

Dr. Libbie Sonnier
Executive Director,
Louisiana Policy Institute

Erin Thompson
Corporate Education and
Development Manager,
People's Health

Dr. Allison Trigg
Executive Director of
Tulane Mental Health
Consultation Services,
Tulane University

Scott Walker
Chair, Jefferson Parish
Council

Kate Wendel
Director of Economic &
Workforce Development,
Jefferson Economic
Development Commission

Chloe Wiley
Foundation Initiatives
Manager, Blue Cross
Blue Shield of Louisiana
Foundation

**ADJUNCT ADVISORY
COUNCIL MEMBERS**

Paula Polito
Owner & Director,
Beary Cherry Tree Child
Development Center

Monique Rouege
Owner & Director,
Carlie Care Kids Academy

Caroline Starlight
Advocacy Events Manager,
Jefferson Chamber of
Commerce

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Executive Summary

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.**

Jefferson Parish (JP) Schools have been leaders in the state in developing culturally and linguistically responsive pathways for English language learners in its PreK-12 schools, as well as dual language instruction[iii] in 12 of its schools, and 7 PreK sites. The system employs English as a Second Language liaisons at nearly every school. JP Schools provides a host of resources to families in their home language in compliance with federal law, and has developed institutional knowledge of the organizations, resources, and processes that facilitated its growth in services to Latino families. There is now an opportunity to extend this impact into early childhood, providing Latino students with the opportunity to enter school better prepared for success.

Jefferson Ready Start Network seeks to increase vertical alignment within the system, from birth to grade 12, to address the gaps in early childhood services to Latino families. **This report, developed by Advancing Communities for Equity, utilizes the Administration for Children and Families' framework on early childhood access[iv] to examine the current state of Latino families' participation in the Jefferson Ready Start Network, as part of the Louisiana Department of Education system.** Recommendations and findings for every level of the system are offered to inform priorities that will have a transformative impact on children and their families. It is a call to action to systems leaders at the local, regional, and state level to address barriers that limit service to Latino families with young children.

The Research

Leaders at Jefferson Ready Start Network contracted with Advancing Communities for Equity to conduct comprehensive research in Jefferson Parish to better understand low participation by Latino families in its early childhood educational services (registered family child care, early learning centers, and Head Start). The research was guided by three key questions and related activities as outlined below:

Table 1

Research Question	Research Activity
What are the early learning needs of Latino families with young children?	Family focus groups
What are the gaps in current offerings, and what are opportunities in Jefferson Parish to build a culturally and linguistically responsive early childhood system ?	National, state, and local policy and resource research
What formal and informal networks of support could JRSN leverage to expand access and culturally and linguistically responsive early learning opportunities to Jefferson's Latino families with young children?	Research of Jefferson Parish-based early childhood supports and Latino serving organizations

The resulting information uncovers new opportunities for Jefferson Ready Start Network to develop a comprehensive strategy that builds on its previous successes with relationship building, workforce development, and advocacy to increase access. It is clear that to increase participation in the early childhood system by Latino families, a three-pronged approach will be needed: building awareness of the benefits of early childhood, increasing options for families, and developing and expanding the early childhood workforce to be culturally and linguistically responsive.

Findings and Recommendations

Research activities, findings, and recommendations are fully described in the report, utilizing the tenets of the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) access framework. Equity is a tenet described in the report as "the ability to reach underserved children." This report in its entireity utilizes equity as a lens through which to examine the four other tenets of access. The summary below describes high-level recommendations for Jefferson Ready Start Network.

> **Tenet of access**
> **Families have the ability to access early care and education with reasonable effort, as indicated by the sufficient availability of age-appropriate slots near parents' homes or workplaces, and information about those options must be readily available.**

Finding 1: Jefferson Ready Start Network is currently leading work to increase access to early learning by Latino families through enrollment and outreach, but participation is low. A comprehensive approach, grounded in research and best practices, can catalyze these efforts.

Recommendation: Build up the supply of culturally and linguistically responsive early care and education options, keeping in mind the high concentration of Hondurans and Mexicans in Jefferson and their unique needs.[v] Utilize national guidelines to inform the development of targeted outreach and engagement strategies specific to Latino families.

Finding 2: Jefferson Parish Schools has established local, state, and national relationships in the development of culturally and linguistically responsive PreK-12 education to Latinos in Jefferson. At the same time, Jefferson Ready Start Network has developed opportunities for Spanish-speaking families to navigate the early childhood system, as well as a broad coalition of support for early childhood across business, health, and policy. These resources position JRSN and JP Schools to advance a comprehensive strategy that increases access to early childhood families to Latino families.

Recommendation: Engage leaders within JP Schools in strategy development to fully leverage existing community relationships with organizations and families to increase the supply of early learning opportunities, build on institutional knowledge, and expand effective strategies to achieve greater vertical alignment, serving younger children and families across myriad, complex needs.

Detailed recommendations on p.18

Finding 3: The Latino community in Jefferson relies on trusted, known non-profits and faith-based organizations to provide them with information and navigate connections to resources. Entities included in JRSN's initial research are excited by JRSN's vision, and interested in participating in future efforts. These organizations provide an opportunity to increase awareness and build workforce strategies to reach its goals.

Recommendation: Develop and cultivate relationships with Latino-serving organizations by participating in community meetings and events, and exploring partnership opportunities for direct services to families.

Detailed recommendations on p. 21

> **Tenet of access**
> **Families have an ability to afford child care that meets their needs, in consideration of eligibility for subsidies and family contribution towards child care.**

Finding: The current structure and resources related to publicly available programs limit its utilization by Latino families, and must be addressed at the state and local levels.

Recommendation: Develop resources specifically for immigrant families that explicitly address which early learning options are available to them by subsidy and based on their citizenship status. Identify supports for families that speak dialects of Latin American countries, like Garifuna, Q'eqchi', and Nahuatl.

Detailed recommendations on p. 23

Finding 1: Culturally and linguistically responsive environments for Spanish-speaking children are lacking as it relates to instruction, and services related to children with disabilities and mental health.

Recommendation: Recognize that as early learning services to Spanish-speaking families in early care increases, the need for the early childhood workforce and related services will need to scale. Engage service partners, like Early Steps and mental health consultation early in the strategy development process. Be prepared to think outside of the box to scale developmental screening of Latino children with targeted initiatives like training the trainers, screening events, and partnerships with faith-based organizations and the health care system.

Finding 2: Professional development opportunities for Spanish-speaking teachers are currently not sufficient to support a plan to increase the supply of culturally and linguistically responsive options for families.

Recommendation: Continue to offer robust professional development opportunities while 1.) Identifying Spanish-speaking trainers and coaches; 2.) Offering training in Spanish, and sharing resources for high-quality online coursework in Spanish; and 3.) Expanding offerings to teachers and directors in culturally and linguistically responsive practices to build up the supply of high-quality family child care and centers in Jefferson Parish that can meet Dual Language Learners' (DLL) needs.

Finding: Families are interested in early learning opportunities for their children, but trust is key. To meet their needs, families require culturally and linguistically responsive care with a wide variety of scheduling options across the mixed delivery system (family child care, center-based learning, Head Start, Early Head Start, and school-based Pre-K).

Recommendation: Consider family child care and two-generation workforce development strategies that provide parents with an opportunity to work, while their young children have the opportunity to participate in high-quality early learning programs.

Areas for State Advocacy

Support for Jefferson Parish's efforts (and other communities of diverse learners) could be bolstered by efforts at the state level to fully utilize federal funding for early learning families.

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

- Develop and require training on culturally relevant and responsive practices for directors and teachers to build up the supply of centers that can meet DLL children's 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.

A note about terminology used in this report

Dual language learner (DLL) is the industry standard[vii] and most accurate term that should be used to describe children not yet in a K-12 educational setting who are developing home languages along with additional languages. Dual language learning can be *simultaneous* (a child starts learning multiple languages from birth) or *sequential* (a child starts learning one language at home and then enters an early childhood educational setting and begins learning an additional language)[viii].

Hispanic and Latino both describe different communities, and these terms should be used with an understanding of those differences.

- Hispanic typically refers to those descended from Spanish people and sometimes refers to those who speak Spanish.
- Latino refers to those from Latin America, which captures the variety of backgrounds people from Latin America may have - descendants of varying backgrounds and those who may not speak Spanish (such as indigenous people and those with roots in countries where Portuguese is spoken)[ix].

Per Yes Prep: "The term Hispanic has been highly rejected due to its ties with Spain, which colonized much of Latin America. Thus, the term Latino is used as an alternative to Hispanic."[x]

> Someone from Latin America may have ancestors who "were Chinese, Japanese, Palestinian, German, Italian … etc. Hispanic to me means from Spain. Being Latine means that you are "mix", the product of the mestizaje of various ethnocultural and racial origins – African, Indigenous, European being the most prominent. This mestizaje is what makes us, Latines, unique."[xi]

When using Latino/a, Latinx can be used as a gender neutral term[xii], and the use of Latine as a gender neutral term is also growing in popularity[xiii].

Report Framework

"Access to early care and education means that parents, with reasonable effort and affordability, can enroll their child in an arrangement that supports the child's development and meets the parents' needs."
                    –Administration of Children and Families (2017)

In 2017, the Administration of Children and Families (ACF) released a framework by which states and communities can evaluate access in the report "Conceptualizing and Measuring Access to Early Care and Education."[xiv] The Guidebook clarifies and defines access, describes the indicators and measures of access, and identifies ECE access datasets and sources. For the purposes of developing a plan of action, Jefferson Ready Start Network will utilize the four primary dimensions outlined by ACF to identify specific areas to better serve its Latino families with young children. This includes:

1. Reasonable effort, or the ease with which a family can locate high-quality early care;

2. Affordability, or the out-of-pocket expense paid for by the family;

3. Supports the child's development, or the program's ability to address the child's individual needs;

4. Meets the parents' needs, or the availability of programs that meet the individual family's needs.

The fifth dimension, **Equity**, or the ability to reach underserved or disadvantaged children, will be utilized as a lens through which to consider each dimension.

This report describes each dimension in greater detail, while identifying needed changes in policies and practices, disparities in the current system, and areas for future study, specific to the Latino population of Jefferson Parish.

The Research

Jefferson Ready Start Network is keenly interested in its families' access to quality early learning, and has consulted with Start Early to conduct a [comprehensive landscape analysis](#) that includes child care demand and a gap analysis for the parish. The data and analysis provides an expansive overview of available services for families of young children in Jefferson, as well as areas where an increased supply of quality care could address unmet demand. Advancing Communities for Equity's report builds upon the landscape analysis, delving into barriers to early childhood access with a lens on Jefferson's Latino families.

There are potential challenges in utilizing census data alone for marginalized groups that may distrust sharing personal information with governmental entities. Several metrics are helpful in gauging the scale of the Latino families in Jefferson Parish and the problem to be solved:

- 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.

- Enrollment in Jefferson Parish (Pre-K - 12) Schools by those who identify as Hispanic (as of January 2022) is over 36% or 15,801 students.

- Only ~835 Latino children under the age of five currently participate in registered, certified, or licensed[xv] early learning in Jefferson Parish.

Given data at this point and time, we can assume that only 1.9% of Latino kindergarteners in Jefferson Parish will have had learning experiences in a school-like setting before their first day. In addition to navigating the unknown terrain of language navigation, the social and learning dynamics in groups, and cultural differences, academic standards can become secondary.

To fully assess the gaps and opportunities related to access, Advancing Communities for Equity has engaged in a number of activities in Jefferson Parish including:

- Gathering data and information related to Jefferson Parish Schools' current services to Latino families in both early childhood and PreK-12 settings;

- Researching of current policy and practice as it relates to access, and serving Dual Language Learners to ground recommendations in data to maximize impact;

- Hosting focus groups of Latino parents of young children to understand families' needs;

- Exploring and assessing the community of Latino-serving organizations in Jefferson Parish to develop an engagement strategy that leverages existing relationships;

- Evaluating existing early childhood professional development offerings for the region's Spanish-speaking population to determine approaches for increasing representation by Latinos in the early childhood workforce.

These activities are by no means exhaustive, and scrape the surface on a complex access problem that will require many stakeholders and years of planning, piloting, and implementation - with robust monitoring and evaluation - to remedy. The findings and recommendations provide short and long-term strategies to chart a path to build meaningful relationships with the Latino community centered around increased opportunities for children and families to thrive in Jefferson Parish.

Tenet One: Reasonable Effort

Reasonable effort refers to the ease with which a family can access early care and education that meets their needs. It refers to the available supply of high-quality programs (of all types, including family child care) with available slots within a geographical location, as well as information available to families.

Finding 1

Jefferson Ready Start Network is currently leading work to increase access to early learning by Latino families through enrollment and outreach, but participation is low. A comprehensive approach, grounded in research and best practices, can catalyze these efforts.

With awareness of the growing population, and with an eye on Pre-K 12 efforts underway in Jefferson Parish Schools, JRSN has worked to increase access to early learning opportunities for Latino families through enrollment events. JRSN has a website that is translatable in 17 languages and its early childhood application is available in Spanish. The entity has recruited and hired two consecutive EC Guides to support Spanish-speaking families throughout the CCAP application process. Additionally, JRSN has participated in community outreach events at the Hispanic Apostolate to provide information and application guidance. Other Jefferson Parish Schools staff who are bilingual have made themselves available to participate in these events, which have been fully booked when offered. JRSN has marketed early learning enrollment through Latino-focused media channels, like Telemundo, and at community events like a diaper drive at the Hispanic Resource Center. Continued staffing and relationship building can expand upon these efforts.

As JRSN looks to the future, with an intentional and strategic eye on planning, there is an opportunity to design a culturally responsive early childhood system with best practices in mind. The Division for Early Childhood (DEC) of the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) has developed the seven (7) characteristics of responsive organizations[xvi]. These best practices can be utilized as a lens through which JRSN plans its next steps, as well as evaluates its efforts:

1. Respect for the values and practices of all members;

2. Encouragement of multiple viewpoints to enrich the whole organization;

3. Seeking ways to extend competence of the leadership as well as practitioners, with regard to differences in family cultures, values, and languages;

4. Development, implementation, and review of policies and procedures in recruitment and leadership development at all levels of service to ensure meaningful local, state, national, and international representation and participation of people from different cultural, ethnic, and language backgrounds;

5. Encouragement and support of the development and dissemination of products that address family cultures, values, and languages;

6. Meetings and conference presentations that incorporate the impact of family cultures, values, and languages in all early childhood activities and services; and

7. Incorporating evidence-based practices with children and families from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

With these practices in place, JRSN can develop a multi-year strategy that supports its access goals and improves the quality of its services for all young families and educators. Other resources and organizations that provide guidance for supporting DLL learners are linked in Appendix A on p. 49.

Recommendations:

- Utilize national guidelines to inform the development of culturally responsive outreach and engagement strategies specific to early childhood education.

- Given the high concentration of Hondurans and Mexicans in Jefferson Parish,[xvii] consider collecting and examining data on maternal country of origin, and study early childhood supports in those countries to inform outreach and offerings.

- Continue enrollment outreach and intake practices that reach the Latino population in Jefferson Parish:

  » Assess currently used communication and application materials to determine what may need to be refined or developed.

  » Continue targeted hiring of bilingual Jefferson Ready Start team members to support outreach, training, and intake efforts.

Finding 2

Jefferson Parish Schools has established local and national relationships in the development of culturally responsive PreK-12 education to Latinos in Jefferson. At the same time, Jefferson Ready Start Network has developed opportunities for Spanish-speaking families to navigate the early childhood system, as well as a broad coalition of support for early childhood across business, health, and policy. These resources position JRSN and JP Schools to advance a comprehensive strategy that increases access to early childhood families to Latino families.

Over the last years, Jefferson Parish Schools have developed and implemented a robust plan to provide support for English Language Learners (ELL) in its PreK to 12 schools[xviii] in compliance with federal law. The system employs three English as a Second Language (ESL) coordinators across 11 dual language schools, and 75 dual language coaches. There are several interpreters and translators (Arabic, Vietnamese, and Spanish) who play multiple roles, two bilingual parent liaisons, and a team of 6 bilingual social workers. Most schools have an ESL coach, with the exception of 10 schools where there is no ELL population. Jefferson Parish uses the Center for Applied Linguistics guiding principles to inform the strategy.

Jefferson Parish Schools has a Newcomer Program with teachers who provide specific support for students who have been in the country for less than 12 months and enter school mid-year. JP Schools also has a Parent Center on the Westbank to connect families with resources, and plans to open one on the Eastbank, although these have not been fully operational during the COVID-19 pandemic.[xix] The district pays for access to a Language Line, which any staff can use to communicate with interpreters when there is a language barrier that cannot be addressed with the available resources.

School-based ESL coaches screen children to determine eligibility for related services. This is not inclusive of PreK students because there is no developmentally appropriate screening tool. However, because a typical PreK classroom presents rich opportunities for language-rich learning, there is less concern about the lack of screening at this level. Jefferson Ready Start Network may want to further research what ESL PreK students experience in its dual language immersion program.

> *"Access is always the issue. We need bilingual people at every level. When a family comes to us for help, it is our responsibility to have someone who can meet their needs available at all times. Sometimes families ask for information about early childhood and we have to go through several departments to get the answer. The more we can coordinate our efforts, the better."*   *-Karina Castillo*

Enrollment data from Jefferson Parish Schools provides information on where families of young children may be likely to live (as siblings of existing PreK - 12 students). As of January 11, 2022, there are 15,801 Latino students enrolled in

Jefferson Parish schools across the district. Zip code-level data (See Appendix B, p. 51) and neighborhood-level mapping (not included in this report) provides increasingly specific detail to inform where targeted efforts to expand early learning services could be successful. The left hand side of Table 2 (below) shows the density of Latino students in specific zip codes. On the right hand side of Table 2, from Start Early's landscape analysis, the share of licensed child care capacity in these zip codes shows the pressing need for increasing the supply of available care in targeted cities, like Kenner and Harvey. **However, it should be noted that no data exists about the availability of culturally responsive early care in Jefferson Parish, demonstrating that this is a need in every zip code where Latino families with young children can be found or could be served in the future.**

Table 2

Latino families in JP Schools* and licensed capacity of early learning centers by zip code							
	Most Latino-dense zip codes based on PreK-12 students enrolled in JP Schools*				Share of Total Licensed Capacity for all early childhood seats in Jefferson Parish**		
	City	Zip Code	Total PreK-12 children in JP Schools	% of Total Hispanic students	Estimated number of all children birth to 5 by Zip Code	Licensed capacity of early learning by Zip Code	Percent of licensed capacity by Zip Code
Eastbank	Kenner	70065	3204	30.82%	3,308	1,078	9%
Eastbank	Metairie	70003	1575	15.15%	8,057	4,853	41%
Eastbank	Metairie	70001	1378	13.26%			
Westbank	Gretna	70056	1126	20.83%	2,918[†]	1,919	16%
Westbank	Marrero	70072	1026	18.98%	2,340	1,803	15%
Westbank	Harvey	70058	1014	18.76%	1,757	579	5%

**From JCampus Transportation data from families identifying as Hispanic.
** From the Start Early landscape analysis
[†]Inclusive of Terrytown

Recommendations:

- Engage leaders within JP Schools in strategy development to fully leverage existing community relationships with organizations and families to increase the supply of early learning opportunities, build on institutional knowledge, and expand successful strategies to achieve greater vertical alignment, serving younger children and families across myriad, complex needs.

- Identify communities to target for increased and/or expanded culturally responsive early learning options utilizing PreK-12 student zip code and neighborhood data.

- Increase supply and availability of bilingual staff and interpreters at multiple locations to support the future demand for applications and services, including transition meetings.

- Review, refine, and strengthen existing marketing materials and application processes related to early learning targeted at Spanish-speakers for the ease of navigation, clarity, and usability to encourage engagement and participation.

- Because there are no PreK English as a Second Language (ESL) screeners, there is a gap in identifying school-based PreK students who could benefit from the school's ESL resources. Identify opportunities to leverage the school's capacity to meet the needs of these students and families.

Finding 3

The Latino community in Jefferson relies on trusted, known non-profits and faith-based organizations to provide them with information and to navigate connections to resources. Entities included in JRSN's initial research are excited by JRSN's vision, and interested in participating in future efforts.

Jefferson Parish has a rich network of formal and informal networks of Latino-serving organizations and services. To scale this work, Jefferson Parish Schools[xx] has worked with a number of Latino-serving organizations. These relationships could be expanded to support Jefferson Ready Start Network's goals for increased access. Specifically notable were:

- The Children's Bureau, Catholic Charities, and the Hispanic Apostolate helps families with homes, uniforms, and other supports for those that are undocumented.

- The Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of Louisiana has helped with teaching parents computer skills workshops.

- La Voz de la Communidad are working on a grant to establish a community center where families come to enroll they can learn more about schools in the area.

- The Language Access Coalition holds monthly meetings with interpreters and parent liaisons.

- The Mexican and Honduran consulates support initiatives that benefit Latino students.

In addition, two entities contacted mentioned helping families enroll in early learning opportunities. Jefferson Parish's newly created Cultural Liaison role works with minority communities and increases their access to resources.[xxi] In addition to hosting resource events with partners, in the past, this individual has helped families enroll in Head Start at local churches. ECCO helps families navigate school applications and is sometimes asked about early childhood programs. Jefferson Ready Start Network can continue to engage them in future planning, as each would benefit from targeted guidance from Ready Start Network to ensure that families are being presented with all the early learning options available to them.

Given existing efforts and relationships, as well as the desire to expand access, one recommendation is to create a suite of resources that Latino-serving organizations can use for a variety of purposes to increase demand, interest, enrollment, and workforce participation in the early learning system. This helps to create a groundswell of energy and interest in early childhood and potentially forges the path for seeding new partnerships with and between organizations.

Recommendations:

- Develop and cultivate relationships with Latino-serving organizations by participating in community meetings and events, and exploring partnership opportunities for direct services to families.

- Create a suite of resources (or a toolkit) in English and Spanish that Latino-serving organizations can utilize during community meetings to build the case for:

    » The benefits of early childhood education, outlining brain development, academic, economic, and social gains for increased access.

    » Guidance on enrollment, describing the options, resources, and navigation supports available to families.

    » The early childhood workforce needs, describing who is eligible, the known needs, and possible opportunities to participate in JRSN initiatives.

Tenet Two: Affordability

Affordability refers to the out-of-pocket expense for early care and education that is incurred by families. Subsidies available through the Child Care Assistance Program are one way that Louisiana helps eligible working families to reduce the cost of early care and education. However, current structures of this funding, related resources, and implementation are rife with barriers that limit participation from immigrant families in the program.

Finding

The current structure and resources related to publicly available programs limit its utilization by Latino families, and must be addressed at the state and local levels.

Access to Federal Subsidies for Early Care

Eligibility to utilize federal funds for child care subsidies can be one of the main obstacles to accessing early care for immigrant and undocumented families. The 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) established restrictions that exclude immigrants from some federal programs. Among these are the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG), which funds the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) and is administered by the

Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) as the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP).

Navigating the various requirements and limitations adds a layer of additional complexity to choosing a quality child care option. Lead agencies may not request verification of citizenship status from parents or families or consider it while determining eligibility for CCDF funds (like CCAP) and may only verify the child's eligibility status. The requirement to verify the child's immigration status is waived under the following circumstances[xxii]:

- Head Start Collaborations - Head Start (and Early Head Start) does not verify the immigration status of any child, and therefore collaborations of CCDF and Head Start funded programs are exempt from verifying a child's immigration status as well[xxiii]

- Child Care Subject to Public Education Standards - includes public and private Pre-K settings and out-of-school programs subject to educational standards

- Non-profit Exemption - charitable non-profit organizations (for example, a non-profit early learning center) may not be required to verify citizenship for eligibility, and it is up to the funding Lead Agency (LDOE) to determine eligibility verification requirements[xxiv]

CCDF funds have limited eligibility to 'qualified immigrants' – a term inclusive of lawful permanent residents and refugees, and exclusive of undocumented immigrants[xxv]:

- CCDF eligibility must be determined based on the child's immigration status (not the parent) and is restricted to 'qualified immigrants'.

- The CCDF operator (the state) is not allowed to require the social security number (SSN) from the family or to check the parents' immigration status, only the child's.

- Categorical eligibility for CCDF includes families experiencing homelessness, children with Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and Individual Family Service

Plans (IFSPs), Early Head Start Partnership participation, as well as families eligible for TANF (and participating in FITAP) per the Department of Child and Family Services(DCFS)[xxvi]. Categorically eligible children must still be qualified aliens or United States citizens[xxvii].

At the state level, up to thirty percent of TANF funds (based upon guardian citizenship status) can be transferred[xxviii] to CCDF and are then subject to the less stringent CCDF rules.[xxix] Currently, 27.5% of TANF funding is utilized for the LA-4 program administered by the LDOE.[xxx]

Additional barriers may come in the form of federal law regarding those seeking citizenship who may not be sure if accessing publicly funded child care affects their immigration status. The United States government Public Charge rule stipulates that "An alien who is likely at any time to become a public charge is generally inadmissible to the United States and ineligible to become a lawful permanent resident. Under the final rule, a public charge is defined as an alien who has received one or more public benefits, as defined in the rule, for more than 12 months within any 36-month period."[xxxi] In other words, accepting some public funds can make someone who is undocumented in the U.S. ineligible for citizenship later on. Accepting CCDF does not count toward a public charge finding, but accepting TANF might (in Louisiana, this could mean participating in FITAP, Family Independence Temporary Assistance Program).[xxxii]

> *"My son is 4 years old and has autism. He has a high range of social skills but he doesn't communicate well. I don't have any support. We just got here. I struggle with him because he can sometimes be reactive and physical so it's hard. My other child is one year old. I have been knocking on doors to find therapies and help with him. Because we are seeking asylum, we cannot receive anything of value from the government so I don't believe we can enroll in day care."*

Generally speaking, immigrant families, and organizations that support them, require information about which publicly funded programs are available to them given citizenship and asylum status. Structuring enrollment guidance in this way could be helpful with consideration for the various dialects of Latin America.

Table 3

This guidance is based on available information as of February, 2022. Because of the ever-changing nature of immigration policy, it is recommended that these requirements are reviewed for accuracy before publicizing.

Immigration Status	Eligibility
Undocumented Immigrant Child	**Early Head Start/Head Start:** Does not verify the immigration status of any child or their family. No matter the source of funding for the seat at a head start center or in a head start classroom, the child or family's immigration status shall not be considered.[xxxiii]
Qualified Immigrant* or U.S. citizen Child	**Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP):** CCAP eligibility must be determined based on the child's immigration status (not the parent) and is restricted to U.S. citizens and 'qualified aliens.'[xxxiv] Undocumented immigrants are not eligible for CCAP. The CCAP operator (the state) is not allowed to require the social security number (SSN) from the family or to check the parents' immigration status, only the child's, per CCDF regulation. In addition to the maximum income requirements, eligibility for CCAP also requires that a child's head of household be earning at or above minimum wage at their job, even if employed informally*. **Cecil J. Picard LA 4:** Only age and income are used to determine eligibility,[xxxv] similar to CCAP, eligibility is determined only based on the child's immigration status.[xxxvi]
Qualified Immigrant* Household	**B-3:** Child's head of household must be able to provide proof of identification and proof of residency.[xxxvii] Louisiana does not issue state IDs to unauthorized immigrants; [xxxviii] however, passports are an acceptable form of identification, and utility bills and leases can provide proof of residency.

*Qualified immigrants (sometimes referred to as 'qualified aliens') are lawful permanent residents and refugees.[xxxix]

State Advocacy for Changes to CCAP

Children who are citizens may be eligible for the CCAP subsidy, and the citizenship of their families is not a consideration. However, certain parameters of CCAP may be limiting, and misinformation may limit participation by Spanish-speaking families, despite federal requirements.

Per the Administration of Children and Families, "The law and rule require states to provide information to the public about choosing child care. Specifically, the rule requires states to establish a consumer-friendly and easily accessible website that ensures the widest possible access to services for families who speak languages other than English and persons with disabilities."[xl] **Unfortunately, there are still many barriers to accessing CCAP subsidies:**

- **Resource documents are at best unclear, and at worst threatening:** Many of the documents published by the LDOE include language that can be perceived as threatening to immigrants and create barriers to access.

  » **Terminology matters:** The terms 'documents' or 'documentation' can be triggering when interacting with government services for someone who is considered "undocumented" as it relates to citizenship.

  » **Birth Certificates:** Being asked to provide birth certificates for children can instill fear, especially when immigrant families may be attempting to limit contact with government authorities.

  » **Social Security Numbers:** Requesting social security numbers (SSN), even when not required, can be confusing and lead to people abandoning applications that have not been completed. The CCAP application asks for SSN, and while it is not accompanied by the red (required) asterisk, it may not be clear that SSN is not required. It should be noted on the application that not providing a SSN for household members will not preclude a child from being eligible for the program.[xli] It is questionable why this sensitive information is even requested on the application.

  » **Residency:** The current LDOE Child Care Assistance Program FAQ states that the "households must be a legal alien or U.S. citizen".[xlii] However, all that is required in terms of residency eligibility for the head of

household is that they be a resident of Louisiana.[xliii] The form does not make clear that proof of legal residency in the United States is only being requested for the child, rather than for the family (as is required by federal law). The wording could present a barrier to a family where one or more family members are undocumented, even if the child is a citizen.

- **Employment requirements for applicants present additional challenges,** even for families who are gainfully employed:

  » **Minimum wage requirements:** In order to be eligible for CCAP, a child's head of household must be earning at or above minimum wage at a job - even if they are not employed formally. This is a significant challenge in immigrant communities, where undocumented workers are often employed by employers seeking to pay less than they would a documented citizen. Recently, an EC Guide discovered a potential applicant was being paid below minimum wage, which was why they were unable to afford child care in the first place. As a result, they were ineligible for the program.

  » **Work requirements:** Louisiana requires families applying to and receiving CCAP to work a minimum of 20 hours per week (this was decreased from a required 30 hours in 2018),[xliv] which is more stringent than federal funding requirements, and presents a barrier to families. Federal rules require families be working in order to receive benefits, but do not require a minimum number of hours in order to increase access for families in more industries with more volatile hours.[xlv] In states with no minimum hourly requirement, the hours working impacts the amount of subsidy the family receives for child care.[xlvi] Twenty-six states require a minimum number of hours per week, ranging from fifteen per week in some states to thirty in others. One state has only a monthly hourly requirement, rather than a weekly measure.[xlvii]

  » **Employer letters:** To mitigate the barriers created for informal workers, the LDOE accepts notes from employers attesting to the employed status of the employee (as long as this employee is earning minimum wage). Some employers (especially in more informal settings) are resistant to provide this to government bodies as they fear it could be used as evidence of tax evasion in an audit or of employing

undocumented workers. Other employers, in more formal settings (such as Walmart) are also resistant to provide letters, especially when employees have not yet begun working. They express concerns that an employee may get their child care benefits and then never show up to work. Being unable to secure a required letter of employment disadvantages immigrant families at the outset – limiting their ability to secure both child care and work, further marginalizing immigrant families, and keeping them from improving their quality of life.

- **The state's EC Guides program is promising, but not currently accessible.** The program involves an LDOE contractor (a Guide) recruiting families locally to apply for CCAP and assisting them with the application process to limit the number of errors and increase the acceptance rate. This pilot has little impact on Spanish-speaking families:

  » **One Spanish-speaking EC Guide:** There is currently only one Spanish-speaking EC Guide. She is a recent hire, after a previous Guide resigned. In the 2021-2022 school year, 40 Hispanic and Latino families were certified for CCAP with three rejected and 10 awaiting verification as of May 19, 2022. For context, five Asian-identifying families have utilized the program. The majority of applicants through EC Guides are Black and White families.[xlviii]

  » **Limitations of EC Guides:** For Spanish-speaking families, this process can be difficult because a Guide may not be able to translate the document verbally, meaning families need to read and make sense of these documents on their own.[xlix] The LDOE provides an interpretation service to Guides, whereby they can contact the LDOE Communication Center (1-877-453-2721) and be connected with an interpreter via the phone when working with a Spanish-speaking family, which is helpful, but not as supportive as the Guide program.

  » **Poorly translated documents:** The LDOE does provide translated CCAP documents. However, when these documents were reviewed by a fluent and native Spanish speaker, they proved to be poorly translated and extremely difficult to understand. LDOE should consider a review of documents to ensure quality translation.

- **Tracking Of Time Services (TOTS) fingerprinting** is used to track attendance and make payments to providers[l] and raises challenges with trust and logistics:

  » **Fear of fingerprinting:** Among undocumented and citizen immigrants there can be fear of providing fingerprints to government authorities, especially without clear guidance on information sharing and the potential implications.

  » **Multiple designees:** All guardians designated to pick up the child must participate in the TOTs system, which can often lead to the various designees picking up a child forgetting to scan in or out, especially those who check the child in and out less often. Missing five days (during non-COVID times) in a month can lead to a family being kicked out of the CCAP program. During COVID, missing a month can lead to a family being kicked out. This is one of the most common reasons families lose access to benefits.

Advocacy to address these structural barriers will help Jefferson Ready Start Network to attract and retain Latino families to participate in the Child Care Assistance Program.

Recommendations:

- Develop resources specifically for immigrant families that explicitly address which early learning options are available to them by subsidy and based on their citizenship status.

- Reduce participation barriers to specific subsidized programs by limiting and/ or avoiding proof of residency requirements, where possible, in recognition that multiple families may live under the same roof, and individuals may not have their names listed on billing statements.

- Advocate for structural changes to CCDF and related resources at the state level, described on p.10, to increase participation by Latino families in CCAP.

Ones to Watch:

Help Me Grow North Texas has developed a coordinated referral and intake system for early learning programs in 18 counties and is participating as a Child Trends Equitable Access grantee to address participation by Latino and Asian families.

Texas Education Agency (TEA) manages an English Learner Portal, with supports and resources for educators as well as parents and families.[li] While the site is not the easiest to use, and cannot be filtered by K-12 or early childhood, it has compiled resources and information for families of English learners statewide. It also includes resources for teachers who are guiding language learners.

Tenet Three: Supports the Child's Development

This dimension outlines measurable practices that early childhood "program staff engage in, or program-level policies intended to promote children's positive development."[lii] This includes designation of quality, language(s) of instruction, specialized services for vulnerable children and children with disabilities, and the coordination of services.

Finding 1

Culturally responsive environments for Spanish speaking children are lacking as it relates to instruction, and services related to children with disabilities and mental health.

Language of Instruction

It is unclear how many early childhood classrooms in Jefferson Parish may employ practitioners fluent in languages other than English, and in particular, their availability in communities with a high density of Latino families. However, gaps at other levels of the system suggest that access to practitioners fluent in languages other than English is likely limited. Spanish-language speakers are needed at all levels of the system, including application navigation, as well as service providers, and early childhood teachers, directors, coaches, and trainers.

Specialized Services: Mental Health Consultation

Mental Health Consultation is a service contracted by the LDOE and available to early learning centers in the state. Currently, the TIKES Mental Health Consultant program has no Spanish-speaking consultants (or Vietnamese or French).[liii] The organization has not had a large demand for family consultations from Spanish-speaking families, however they do recognize that this is likely due to limited supports in Spanish. Some flyers and handouts are provided to centers and families in Spanish since the start of the pandemic. TIKES is not currently utilizing Spanish translation services that may be available through Tulane.

TIKES has sometimes provided referrals and recommendations to families via directors with connections to therapists or coaches who speak Spanish. TIKES has not engaged on this directly with families, but instead through program directors (ninety-five percent of the time TIKES consultants work with the center and workforce rather than families). For example: a director spoke mainly English and the family had limited English proficiency and TIKES made referrals and connected the family with resources via the director. Training for teachers and directors in centers about trauma (trauma informed trainings) - talking about how families attending their centers may have experienced those traumas - have led to great outcomes. Through these training sessions, TIKES has been able to support the workforce to process their own experiences. However, it should be noted that new immigrants may have experienced new traumas that teachers and Mental Health Consultants have not previously encountered, and as services to Latinos increase, training related to these impacts may need to be addressed to adequately support families.

Massachusetts has implemented a trauma-informed paraprofessional home-visiting program for immigrant families where the home visitors are also refugees and immigrants and are employed by the lead agency.[liv] The program is called Visiting Moms. This type of program could support initial connections to Latino families.

Specialized Services: Children with Disabilities

The Early Steps regional coordinator identified several gaps in support for Spanish-speaking families.[lv] The first was the need for therapists and coordinators fluent in Spanish. Early Steps (in the metro area) currently does not have any Spanish-speaking Family Service Coordinators. However, they do contract with eight foreign language interpreters, who accompany coordinators and therapists on visits with families. These interpreters (all independent contractors and independent LLCs) are extremely well versed in the Early Steps work and practices, and are valuable collaborators.

Prior to the pandemic, there could be difficulties in scheduling when interpreters were involved, as schedules had to meet the needs of families, therapists, and interpreters. The shift to virtual visits has been very effective in mitigating these issues and has allowed Early Steps to serve more families. Spanish-speaking families frequently take advantage of virtual and teletherapy visits and only positive feedback has been received regarding virtual visits.

Early Steps flyers are currently being updated, and updates will also be made in Spanish. In regard to resources used during visits, all of the therapy tools are available and used in Spanish as needed.

Gaps in the transition process from Early Steps to public school settings for Spanish-speaking families are an additional barrier to high-quality education for Spanish-speaking families.[lvi] Therapists develop their own ways of supporting families through this process, including attending all transition meetings with Spanish-speaking families in order to support their ability to advocate for their kids. Therapists also have an understanding of the support they could assist families

in requesting from the school system, such as finding schools with multi-lingual teachers and paras. More systemic support should be offered to Spanish-speaking families throughout the transition process to support navigation of the system and ensure families have a full understanding of the resources available.

Recommendations:

- Recognize that as early learning services to Spanish-speaking families in early care increases, the need for the early childhood workforce and related services will need to scale. Engage service partners, like Early Steps and mental health consultation early in the strategy development process. Be prepared to think outside of the box to scale developmental screening of Latino children with targeted initiatives like training the trainers, screening events, and/or partnerships with faith-based organizations and the health care system.

  » Collect data on the number and retention of Spanish-speaking early childhood teachers and directors.

  » Develop trainings that specifically address traumas that new immigrants may have encountered in coming to the U.S..

  » As the Spanish-speaking workforce increases, assess if the currently used Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) database can be utilized in Spanish.

  » Consider transition activities for Spanish-speaking children and families to enter the PreK-12 system to create greater vertical alignment and support school readiness efforts.

- Explore Head Start partnerships and/or resources where more information and models on providing training for Spanish-speaking families are available and there are no barriers to access for immigrant families.

- Provide Type III early learning centers with access to interpreters and translation services. Once in early care, Latino-families will have specific questions or concerns and may not have access to an interpreter. An on-call interpretation service should be made available to all programs under Jefferson Ready Start Network. All written materials will need to be translated into Spanish, as well. Centers will either need support or resources to do this.

Finding 2

Professional development opportunities for Spanish-speaking teachers are currently not sufficient to support a plan to increase the supply of culturally responsive options for families.

General Barriers to Attracting Spanish-speaking ECE Workforce

As of 2020, 26 percent of kids in the U.S. were identified as Latino by the National Kids Count Data Center.[lvii] However, many of these children have not been met with culturally appropriate educational opportunities as early learners – Spanish is spoken by 15.8 percent of the workforce among the overall early childhood workforce, but that number is around 23 percent in family child care settings and only 10 percent in preschool settings.[lviii]

Sometimes efforts to "professionalize" the workforce have created barriers for Spanish-speaking and immigrant members of the workforce. Head Start and some states are requiring bachelor's degrees for early childhood teachers and other certifications (ex. Louisiana's Early Childhood Ancillary Certificate or ECAC). These qualifications can be much more difficult to obtain for potential educators who do not have English proficiency and when Bachelor's degrees obtained outside of the U.S. are not accepted.[lix] As a result, workers with limited English proficiency end up in informal and unlicensed settings, rather than those where subsidies can be applied. Sixty nine percent of immigrant family-based workers have limited English proficiency.[lx] Additionally, family-based providers may be uncomfortable applying for licenses or joining a pilot depending on if they are an immigrant or non-citizen, or serve those families.[lxi]

Quality Rating System

Louisiana's system is nationally renowned for its integrated structure.[lxii] Louisiana's Quality Rating System evaluates the quality of teacher-child observations in publicly-funded early childhood programs everyday using the CLASS® assessment. Using a system of third-party and local observers, over 1,000,000 minutes of classroom observations are conducted annually. Jefferson Parish Schools has cultivated a cadre of Spanish-speaking observers to support its dual language instruction program. To meet the needs of Latino families, programs led by

Spanish-speaking directors and teachers will increase in Jefferson Parish, requiring additional Spanish-speaking CLASS® observers who can evaluate the quality of teacher-child interactions.

Performance profiles for each early learning center are available publicly on LouisianaSchools.com and are translatable into Spanish. A short video explains how quality is measured in Louisiana. However this video is only available in English, making it inaccessible to families whose primary language is not English. This limits non-English speakers in making an educated choice regarding the quality of early learning centers suitable for their family.

Professional Development Opportunities at the Jefferson Ready Start Network

Jefferson Ready Start Network has, since its inception, worked beyond the enrollment and accountability functions that it is charged with as a lead agency. In addition to implementing federal (Preschool Development Grant) and state programs (LA B to 3), JRSN has developed a number of professional development programs and supports, like its Early Childhood Ancillary Certification (ECAC) program, curriculum coaching, and early childhood leadership development pilots with national partners.

JRSN seeks to increase early learning participation within the Latino community, which will require expanding robust professional development opportunities to Spanish-speaking individuals who may be interested in running a family child care business in their home, teaching in an early learning center, training and/or coaching teachers who only speak Spanish, and assessing the quality of teacher-child interactions in Spanish-language classrooms.

As JRSN implements culturally responsive practices, there is also an opportunity for all leaders and teachers in Jefferson Parish early learning centers to consider how to improve engagement with all families and backgrounds, regardless of home language. This targeted effort will improve the quality of engagement across the parish for all families as teachers learn about how to appreciate the diversity and uniqueness of each family.

Early Childhood Ancillary Certification (ECAC) programs

To ensure that there is adequate Latino representation in the early childhood workforce, the state's systems of professional development should meet the needs of those interested in teaching. It is possible that early childhood teachers and directors in Jefferson Parish seeking an ECAC may look to programs outside of JRSN's Believe and Prepare program. There are currently 28 other BESE approved ECAC programs in Louisiana. However, of those programs, only one currently offers the program in Spanish. Two others may have some capacity to expand current offerings, but are currently limited. The CDA certification process, which is the credentialing aspect of the ECAC, is available in Spanish so the barrier is at the state level. The state is in the process of evaluating the quality of its ECAC programs, but it is not clear how the accessibility of ECAC training content factors into the evaluation process or not. Because of the limited nature of existing training, and JRSN's keen interest in expanding the Latino workforce, translating its existing ECAC program and identifying training partners would greatly help with this challenge. Additional information about Louisiana's ECAC programs is available in Appendix C on p. 53.

Arizona Early Childhood Career and Professional Development Network provides resources and supports to families, with a strong focus on the workforce. Arizona maintains a registry of the early childhood workforce which it uses to "raise the status and compensation for early care professionals."[lxiii] Joining the registry allows participants to be eligible for stipends and awards, and to apply for open positions and use the achievement tracking to negotiate for raises. Arizona provides professional development which is credited through the workforce registry. Through engaging with the website and registry, members of the workforce can join lots of free trainings, and get credit for them as long as they use the registry. Many professional development credits are provided in Spanish, like Spanish Empower coursework.[lxiv]

Professional Development Supports through the Child Care Resource and Referral Agency

Agenda for Children (AFC) is currently the Child Care Resource and Referral Agency for Jefferson Parish, and has professional development offerings for early childhood teachers and directors. It has not previously been focused recently on the growing Spanish population. Recently, AFC began looking at census and child count data, and determined that there has been a 40 percent increase in the Latino population in Greater New Orleans between 2010 and 2020, with the greatest increase in the Jefferson Parish area.[lxv]

Agenda for Children is exploring how it can be responsive to shifting demographics. To date:

- There are not any trainings offered exclusively in Spanish, but Agenda for Children is working with their professional development director to understand more here. There are no contracted trainers with Agenda who speak Spanish.

- Agenda for Children does have a bilingual project assistant, who refers families and center staff to resources. However, this is generally when someone reaches out to her, and is not a service that is offered.

- Agenda for Children is trying to develop a deeper understanding of which centers are serving the Latino community, and trying to understand the best ways to engage families, especially those who may be interested in working in a center. AFC is seeking to partner with Pre-K classrooms in schools already offering bilingual programs.

- Agenda for Children suggested that Head Start programs may have the financial resources to provide services to Spanish-speaking teachers and that partnerships could be explored. Head Starts already provide parenting workshops that could be relatively easily shifted into a child care workforce pathway.

- As Agenda for Children looks to develop workforce pathways for the Latino community, they are attempting to gauge the level of interest from families who may want to join the early childhood workforce. They are brainstorming how AFC can connect these families to resources, what sort of pipelines to certification and entry into the workforce could be explored, and how to

reach the population who may be in more informal settings. They are excited to partner with Jefferson Ready Start Network to do this.

Jefferson Ready Start Network has a strong record of addressing the professional development needs of its community in English, and in the dual language PreK programs in the school system. Translating content, and finding trusted partners to help deliver it will support its increased access goals.

Recommendations:

- Develop workforce training initiatives that leverage existing efforts and relationships:

  » Translate JRSN's Believe and Prepare materials (and others) into Spanish, and identify bilingual partners who can provide early childhood training in Spanish to those interested in participating in the early learning workforce.

  » Assess currently used professional development resources to determine if translations are available. This includes Making the Most of Classroom Interactions (MMCI) materials and Teachstone modules utilized with the ancillary certificate program. Determine if Spanish-speaking Teachstone facilitators are available to provide guidance to participants in the ECAC program, in alignment with what is provided to English-speaking teachers currently.

  » Continue to utilize JRSN partners to understand what workforce funding may be available to support a strategy that increases the number of Spanish-speaking teachers, directors, and family child care entrepreneurs in the early childhood workforce.

  » Expand offerings to teachers and directors in culturally responsive practices to build up the supply of high-quality family child care and centers in Jefferson Parish that can meet Dual Language Learners' (DLL) needs.

  » Consider partnering with high-quality early learning centers with Spanish-speaking leaders and/or veteran teachers to participate in workforce and/or service delivery initiatives.

- Leverage the expertise of CLASS® reliable school personnel in Jefferson Parish Schools' Dual Language Programs to assess the quality of teacher-child interactions in Spanish-speaking classrooms.

- Advocate with state and regional partners to increase professional development opportunities in Spanish, inclusive of CLASS® trainers and observers, Early Childhood Ancillary Certificate coursework and coaches, and all services provided to early learning staff by the Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (training, technical assistance, coaching, resource materials, and other opportunities), and Mental Health Consultation services.

Tenet Four: Meets Parents' Needs

The fourth dimension refers to the degree to which the available high-quality programs in the community meet the needs of parents. This includes hours of operation, transportation, and culture (language, traditions, food) of early learning programs.

Finding

Families are interested in early learning opportunities for their children, but trust is key. To meet their needs, families require culturally responsive care with a wide variety of scheduling options across the mixed delivery system (family child care, center-based learning, Head Start, Early Head Start, and school-based Pre-K).

JRSN wanted to ground this work in the voices and perspectives of families in Jefferson's Latino community. Focus groups were identified as a community engagement strategy that would allow for robust discussion regarding interests, preferences, and concerns regarding early learning options. The plan included one neighborhood focus group, one virtual focus group, and two church-based focus groups, with interpretation services. For in-person focus groups, child care with Spanish-speaking teachers would be provided. All participants would receive a $25 Visa gift card, and could complete a survey at the end for an additional $25 gift card. Survey results were included in Start Early's report.

Coordination efforts for the focus groups were learning opportunities, in and of themselves, around what types of family engagement are most fruitful. Two focus groups fell flat. The first was an in-person neighborhood focus group in the neighborhood of one of the parish's highly rated centers, in the midst of a densely populated community of Latino families. The director was interested in engaging families, who she regularly watched waiting for their children's school buses each morning. Mothers with little ones in strollers were approached with information regarding a focus group at the attractive center during the weekend. There appeared to be curiosity about the early learning center, and families provided their phone numbers and/or email, and confirmed attendance. Despite affirming their plans to attend, no one came to the center at the appointed time. One of the six prospective attendees responded to a text to explain that she had been called into work. The virtual focus group had a similar turnout, despite being coordinated by a known nonprofit entity. The lack of participation in these efforts provided an opportunity to consider possible reasons for non-attendance:

- Despite its proximity in the neighborhood, the early learning center is unfamiliar, and potential participants were approached by a stranger.

- It was unclear to participants of the in-person focus group if any familiar friends or neighbors would be in attendance.

- For the virtual focus group, the coordinating entity did not inquire about families' comfort with technology.

Later discussions with Latino leaders[lxvi] validated these assumptions, and stated that these results are not atypical given the design. It was also shared that families are a bit exhausted by surveys, may be unable to answer them, even when in Spanish, due to literacy concerns, and may not fully understand the purpose of focus groups, or how the research could possibly be of benefit later on.

The two subsequent focus groups provided the desired perspective, with robust participation from members of two churches, coinciding with a weekly bible study event hosted by the Iglesia de Getsemani in Metairie. The coordinator is an administrator at the church who confirmed participant attendance and who was present for both focus groups. Participants from the two churches recognized

others from their congregation, if not all of the other participants. This created a convivial and lively setting with organic conversations jumping off dialogue around young children.

15 out of the 16 participants in the two groups were mothers of young children, with one father present. The questions were designed to understand how families manage early care needs, and what characteristics they seek to support their families' needs (see Appendix D, p. 55). Key themes that emerged were:

- Families are interested in early learning opportunities but language is a primary barrier that keeps them from fully investigating and enrolling in early learning centers.

  "One of the barriers is language. Language is very important, as not knowing the language is challenging to communicate with daycare personnel."

- Friends, family, and neighbors play a critical role in supporting parents in need of care for their little ones.

  "Before the pandemic, I was keeping children in my home. And you are right to say (indicating a participant) that lots of people just babysit. I focused so much on the children. We painted, we learned numbers and letters. Parents still tell me thank you. Those parents told me that when their children went to kindergarten, they knew so much."

- Trust is a critical element for families to feel comfortable enrolling in formal early learning opportunities.

  "I have one daughter. She is 16 months old. I don't leave her with anyone. I'm the only one who takes care of her. For a special occasion, I may leave her with a friend. But I don't leave her with anyone. Just my husband and me take care of her. It's not that I'm uncomfortable with it."

- Safety was also a term that was used frequently in both groups. This term could be conceptualized in a number of ways but several kinds of safety were indicated during the conversations including environmental (organized, clean), physical (free from germs/pandemic, not injured) or interpersonal (not abused or exposed to negative examples).

"I would look for a trusting space. I need to be comfortable, because my child is 6 months old. (I want) a person, or a place, where I have the confidence that they aren't going to mistreat her, hurt her, or ignore her."

- Cost was also mentioned, but seemed secondary to trust and safety concerns.

"Cost (is a barrier) because they only want to pay us $7/an hour. And many of these places are $35 a day minimum. Quality is also important. I would like it if there were many more quality places so that you can be a success and move ahead. With help, you can move ahead more quickly in life."

The conversations also surfaced how families seeking asylum may have children who are unable to receive services. One particular family shared:

"My son is 4 years old and has autism. He has a high range of social skills but he doesn't communicate well. I don't have any support. We just got here. I struggle with him because he can sometimes be reactive and physical so it's hard. My other child is one year old. I have been knocking on doors to find therapies and help with him. Because we are seeking asylum, we cannot receive anything of value from the government so I don't believe we can enroll in day care."

This particular example demonstrates the vulnerability and resilience of families, seeking a better future for their children, while possibly not being fully able to participate in community resources. Promotional materials that categorize early learning opportunities by citizenship status will help families navigate the options that are available to them.

Families participating in the focus groups were interested in receiving information and applications for available subsidies. Before the family can enroll in a center, they must be able to access information in their home language. Jefferson Ready Start Network has a number of supports available in Spanish, including a webpage that can be viewed in several languages, bilingual individuals at the network office, including a CCAP application navigator, and marketing and application information in multiple languages. However, generally speaking, there is not a full awareness of

what early learning services may be available to them outside of Head Start. Head Start, Early Head Start, and school-based Pre-K are available to all children, or in categorical eligibility such as the example above – that mother can access CCAP subsidies despite her status because of her child's needs.

As the LDOE rolls out a new family engagement strategy, information regarding outreach to Latino families was sought, and validated much of the information that surfaced during the focus groups. The LDOE Family Engagement Manager[lxvii] cited one of the largest issues government agencies face in engaging Spanish-speaking families is a gap in trust. The LDOE is focusing family engagement efforts on building relationships with trusted community leaders and organizations, who can disseminate information to community members. Bringing an interpreter is recognized as not being enough - information must be shared by trusted community leaders, commonly faith-based leaders. Additionally, the LDOE is focused on holding enrollment and other events in trusted places unaffiliated with government systems (for example holding meetings in civic centers, libraries, or churches as opposed to public schools).

As JRSN cultivates relationships with Latino-serving organizations, more focus groups in specific neighborhoods and/or with specific employers can help better understand the needs to design supports that benefit families.

Structures of Family Child Care Related to Immigrants

Certified and registered family homes are also potentially available to families, but there did not appear to be an understanding of these as formal (licensed) networks, and current policy prohibits subsidies from being used for unregistered family child care. It is possible that family child care presents an affordable option for Latino families to access child care.

In many states, CCDF subsidies may be applied to a provider of the family's choice. However, currently in Louisiana, a family may not be able to apply CCAP funding to an informal family provider who does not have an SSN or employer tax identification number, and would be forced to remove the child from the care of a culturally appropriate and trusted provider[lxviii] to take advantage of the subsidy funding. The LDOE could consider how removing this barrier could improve access

to culturally responsive and trusted care, while still ensuring providers meet licensing requirements.

Louisiana's current system presents structural barriers. Undocumented workers are not allowed to work as U.S. employees, but can work as self-employed family child care providers by obtaining an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN).[lxix] This does not authorize providers to work in the U.S., but does allow compliance with tax laws, which allows families to claim the child care tax credit. However, providers cannot get the earned income tax credit if they are not documented citizens.[lxx]

The LDOE licensing process does not require a Social Security Number (SSN), per se, but does require a federal EIN (Employer ID number, which requires an SSN), as opposed to requiring only an ITIN. Additionally, the Criminal Child Care Background process, managed by the LDOE, requires an SSN.

Recommendations:

- Consider family child care and two-generation workforce development strategies that provide parents with an opportunity to work, while their young children have the opportunity to participate in high-quality early learning programs.

- Leverage federal workforce funding, like the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA, linked in Appendix E on p. 58).

- Gather data on the Spanish-speaking early childhood workforce.

- Continue gathering data from families on their interests and needs relative to early learning opportunities for their children.

- Offer targeted initiatives for Spanish speaking individuals to become licensed, registered family child care centers.

- Because B-3 and Head Start are the least restrictive with regards to citizenship status, continue efforts to expand awareness of opportunities in those programs.

- Assess the need for centers offering non-traditional hours and schedules to support the needs of particular types of employment, such as the hospitality and health care fields.

Colorado Workforce Pilots and 2G Approach

Colorado has built a "2 Generation" model into state agency and community early childhood systems.[lxxi] This approach is family-based and provides wrap-around services and educational services to improve child and family outcomes and decrease poverty. The longer 2G Report dives into details on the various state systems that embedded a 2G model to improve outcomes.

Additionally, the Transforming the Early Childhood Workforce in Colorado Initiative has included funding Early Childhood Workforce Innovation Grants awarded to partners statewide for developing innovations for the workforce.[lxxii]

Five grantees were awarded funding, one of which was Valley Settlement – "a project of the Manaus Fund, a social justice organization serving the Roaring Fork Valley, in 2011. The project was started in response to a challenge to identify and address the needs of the fast-growing, low-wage immigrant community in the Roaring Fork Valley."[lxxiii] Only one percent of the Latinx families in the region had preschool children actually enrolled in preschool.[lxxiv] The pilot project for which they were awarded funds, called Creating Pathways to Early Childhood Training for Rural Latinx Caregivers, "will pilot a Spanish-taught Child Development Associate for high school juniors and seniors and informal caregivers seeking a viable career in early childhood."[lxxv]

Pilot outcomes: per the Grantee Summary,[lxxvi] Valley Settlement achieved the following outcomes during the 2020-2021 grant year:

- "Valley Settlement in addition to another project (Pamoja) focused on supporting refugee students approached their projects with similar methods, and support workforce development with Child Development Associate degree (C.D.A.) scholarships, apprenticeships, and concurrent enrollment as alternate pathways into the field. These programs were particularly beneficial for women of color, dual-language learners, and first-generation college students. Each grantee provided wrap-around supports to help candidates navigate the complex higher education system. Pamoja identified system-level barriers for dual-language learners and candidates who were educated outside the United States. Advocacy from Pamoja

led to an amendment of C.D.A. testing rules and new resources to support dual-language learners."

- "Valley Settlement...focused on recruiting diverse candidates. Valley Settlement maintained a Spanish-language C.D.A. program with more targeted recruitment, utilizing high school counselors and one-on-one interviews to identify students excited about early childhood. A former student served as a mentor to help retain candidates, a difficult task as the COVID-19 pandemic delayed classroom hours and internships."

Regional Considerations for the Future

In addition to the limits on federally-funded "public benefit" programs (CCDF and TANF), some regionally-managed programs may include stipulations that limit the participation of immigrant families in early childhood programming. For example, the New Orleans City Seats program requires proof of residency, which could be in the form of bills.[lxxvii] This could be prohibitive in instances where a child's guardians or parents are not legally listed on any bills at the residence. This may be the case where there are multiple families under one roof. Adding the bill-payer or lease-holder to the application could be impossible or problematic for eligibility.

San Francisco's city seats program FAQ for undocumented immigrants notes that most programs will not ask for immigration status, aside from their CalWORKS program.[lxxviii] It stipulates that immigration status, when collected, will not be shared outside of the agency unless a criminal violation is involved, in which case it could lead to deportation. Vague language like this could also be prohibitive to families seeking services, but it is also important to be clear about the risks. JRSN should consider the creation of a document outlining what is available to immigrant families.

While both Louisiana's CCAP and San Francisco's seat programs, however, follow best practices of allowing for employer letters to verify income in the event the applicant does not have a social security number and do not require address verification in order to apply or determine eligibility,[lxxix] these strategies are not enough to meaningfully increase access to programming.

In the Greater New Orleans area, the Child Care Resource & Referral (CCR&R), Agenda for Children, noticed many Latino children popping up in K-12 counts, compared to relatively few in early childhood counts. This could point to both inaccurate data and more kids under 5 receiving care in informal settings. Five percent of children in publicly-funded early childhood programs in New Orleans are Latino, whereas in PreK-12 these numbers are much higher. Additionally, Agenda found that only four percent of LA 4 kids in Pre-K are identified as Latino, whereas this number is ten percent in Kindergarten programs in schools that also have LA 4 classrooms.[lxxx] There may be several reasons for this disparity. Families may be uncomfortable reporting their ethnic background, be unaware of educational opportunities at the Pre-K level, or unsure of the protections they have as immigrant families.

Conclusion

Jefferson Ready Start Network has the opportunity to provide Latino families in the community with early learning services that could be transformational. JRSN can build upon its past efforts, leverage JP Schools' structures, and advocate for statewide change to increase access to Latino families.

Appendix A

National Organizations that provide resources related to DLL						
Organization Name	Brief Summary	Support for DLL	Culturally Responsive Practices for DLL	Family Engagement	Training EC Workforce in Other Languages	Immersion Practices
National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)	Focus on EC practice, policy, and research. Includes policy and classroom recommendations, guidance and resources.	✓	✓	✓		
Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)	Anti-poverty advocacy organization with policy briefs and resources.	✓		✓		
BUILD	Equity-oriented advocates for children with tools and resources.	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Migration Policy Institute	Conducts research to provide strong policy recommendations related to migration. Extensive early childhood resources.	✓	✓	✓	✓	

National Organizations that provide resources related to DLL						
Zero to Three	Provides re-search-based practical re-sources for families and the workforce as well as policy briefs and rec-ommendations.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Colorin Colorado	A bilingual, publicly-funded national organization providing tools and resources for educators and families of English language learners.	✓	✓	✓		✓
Bridging Refugee Youth and Children's Services	Includes trauma-informed, resettlement related resources and helpful guides for providers on supporting children from immigrant families and resources for families.	✓	✓	✓		

Appendix B

East Bank and West Bank Hispanic Counts in JCampus as of 1.11.22

	City	Zip	Total Children identifying as Hispanic	% of Total Hispanic population in JP Schools
	JP Schools PreK-12 enrollment data			
EASTBANK	METAIRIE	70001	1,378	13.26%
	METAIRIE	70002	793	7.63%
	METAIRIE	70003	1,575	15.15%
	METAIRIE	70005	699	6.72%
	METAIRIE	70006	1,007	9.69%
	KENNER	70058	1	0.01%
	KENNER	70062	1,260	12.12%
	METAIRIE	70062	1	0.01%
	JEFFERSON	70065	1	0.01%
	KENNER	70065	3,204	30.82%
	METAIRIE	70065	1	0.01%
	JEFFERSON	70121	235	2.26%
	NEW ORLEANS	70121	25	0.24%
	ELMWOOD	70123	5	0.05%
	HARAHAN	70123	64	0.62%
	NEW ORLEANS	70123	21	0.20%
	RIVER RIDGE	70123	126	1.21%
TOTAL			**10,396**	**65.79%**

	City	Zip	Total Children identifying as Hispanic	% of Total Hispanic population in JP Schools
			JP Schools PreK-12 enrollment data	
WESTBANK	BARATARIA	70036	4	0.07%
	GRETNA	70053	762	14.10%
	GRETNA	70056	1,126	20.83%
	TERRYTOWN	70056	802	14.84%
	HARVEY	70058	1,014	18.76%
	JEAN LAFITTE	70067	1	0.02%
	LAFITTE	70067	26	0.48%
	CROWN POINT	70072	8	0.15%
	LAFITTE	70072	1	0.02%
	MARRERO	70072	1,026	18.98%
	AVONDALE	70094	92	1.70%
	BRIDGE CITY	70094	171	3.16%
	WAGGAMAN	70094	19	0.35%
	WESTWEGO	70094	353	6.53%
TOTAL			**5,405**	**34.21%**
Total of all students in JP as of 1.11.22			**43,571**	
Total of all Hispanic Students			**15,801**	**36.26%**

Three programs were identified in the region that do or could offer ECAC in Spanish.

- **ProSolutions** offers a full online CDA program in Spanish, and in the past offered a BESE-approved ECAC program in Louisiana (though not in Spanish). **Contact:** Cindy Davis; cindydavis@caresolutions.com

  » The Louisiana ECAC Program is currently suspended due to the impact of the pandemic on program operations and costs, leading the Louisiana-based coach to find other employment.

  » The ECAC program has historically not been offered in Spanish and the ECAC coursework was organized a bit differently than the "regular" online CDA coursework, which is offered in English and Spanish and bears the CDA Council Gold Standard designation.

  » To restart the program, ProSolutions would need to partner with a Louisiana-based program that would provide and supervise the coaching and assessment components and given the program change would need to seek approval from the LDOE and BESE.

- **Franklinton Child** purports to offer training and coaching in Spanish.

  » The organization contracts with a sole coach who does Spanish and English and was formerly employed by Agenda for Children. This was disputed by the coach, however.

  » The training takes place over 5-6 months on Zoom.

  » The organizer purchased materials and resources needed for training in Spanish - these resources are widely available in Spanish.

  » Conducting CLASS® observations (for PD) in Spanish would require contracting with an observer fluent in Spanish.

  » Coaching would then be conducted in Spanish over Zoom.

  » Anita Redding, the organizer, provides support on building a portfolio

and provides books and all other materials, as well as giving assistance on applying for the Pathways scholarship and scheduling the CDA exam.

» **Contact:** Anita Redding; fceccda@yahoo.com

- **Frog Street Press** provides approved ECAC training, and has the resources and capabilities to do so in Spanish.

» **Contact:** Glenda Allen-Jones; Gallenjones@frogstreet.com

Focus Group protocol and questions
Setting the Purpose and Intent:

- Thank you for giving us your time and insights today. We are going to ask you some questions about who helps you care for your young children. We will not connect your names to any information you share. I will share with you my contact information after the meeting and you can contact me with additional thoughts that you wanted to share.

- The Jefferson Parish Early Childhood Network is working to better understand how families make decisions about who helps care for your children- we want to understand what you are looking for in those who help you care for your children, how you make decisions about different options, and any challenges you might have faced in finding or accessing childcare. We appreciate the chance to learn directly from families as we seek to identify ways to improve our system and family access.

- The purpose of this focus group is to get your honest opinion, so there are no right or wrong answers. Our questions will be focused on your own experiences, impressions, and knowledge. We would like your consent to record the conversations we are having so that we can review them later and with our team. Please give me a "thumbs up" if this is alright with you. We'll summarize this conversation to help the Network strengthen how it supports families across Jefferson Parish, but your answers will not be attributed to you individually.

(Pause and ask for any clarifying questions/comments)

I want to go over a few guidelines before I start:

- As I mentioned, there are no right or wrong answers, just different perspectives.

- You can disagree, but please do so respectfully.

- Only one person should speak at a time.

- We ask you to put your phone away, aside from emergencies.

- My role as moderator will be to ask questions and guide the discussion, but I encourage you to talk to each other.

Let's get started!

Questions:

Facilitated round-robin style.

1. Please share your name and tell us about yourself and your children.

2. Do you have someone who helps you with your children when you have something to do? Who? Survey only

3. What challenges do you face in finding care for your children?

   » Probe: schedule

   » Probe: location examples (Metairie, Kenner)

   » Probe: administrative barriers (state subsidy, program applications)

   » Probe: other challenges (such as language)?

4. Does anyone care for children in your neighborhood? Are you comfortable bringing your child to a neighbor?

5. Have you ever considered bringing your children to a school for young children? Why or why not? Survey only

6. (conditional on 5) What would make you interested in a school for young children?

   » Probe cost (What is affordable - examples?)

   » Probe location provide examples

   » Probe quality

7. What is important to you about the individuals taking care of your children?

    » Probe characteristics

    » Probe connections

8. What early learning experiences do you believe are most important in an early learning setting? Survey only

9. What is the most important factor for you in selecting child care?

10. What unique challenges do you face as a parent of a young child in Jefferson Parish?

    » Probe language

    » Probe other issues

11.   Would you ever consider working in an early learning setting? Why or why not? Survey only

12. What community organizations are most helpful to you and your family?

13. Who else should we reach out to for additional perspectives that might be missing here today?

14. What else do you want us to know about your experience with childcare with Jefferson Parish?

Background Information about Workforce Opportunities

A. Workforce Innovation Opportunities Act (WIOA)

a. Qualifying individuals can leverage Louisiana Workforce funds

i. Adults (18+) with a household income of $12k/annum or less (with $4800 for each other adult in the household)

ii. Dislocated workers (unemployed for 6 months) have no income requirement

iii. Youth (in school, aged 14-21 OR out of school, aged 16-24)

b. Supports

i. Individual training accounts

1. For state designated organizations and proprietary organizations, tuition is paid once they are deemed eligible.

ii. Supportive services

1. Child care, uniforms, and transportation were just approved by the Louisiana Workforce board

iii. Needs-related payments

1. If not eligible for unemployment, and they are in school, they can get a weekly check for up to $245/week

c. Programs

i. On-the-job-training

1. Full time (32 hrs/week at $12/hour)

2. 50-75% of wages are paid by WIOA

3. Handled by local workforce development board

4. Employer signs agreement and invoices board monthly for reimbursement

5. 6 months long

ii. For youth

1. Worksites sign up (must be approved)

2. Youth placed based on their interests

3. Must work 30/hrs week at $10-12/hour

4. 100% is paid

5. 52 weeks long

d. Controls

i. Local workforce boards track participants to ensure that they are systematically fired once programs run out

ii. Expectation that employers invest in them, and build their skills (particularly for youth, for whom this may be a first job)

e. Examples

i. Two-generation approach in Baton Rouge, they worked with the Department of Human Services. Baton Rouge Community College had an Early Childhood Ancillary Certificate Curriculum [an Eligible Trained Provider (ETP)]. Found families who were interested in working in the ECE industry through Head Start and enrolled them in the program.

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