

Immigrant Issues and Child Welfare

Developing a Best Practices Approach

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Family Immigration Assessment

- Critical Prerequisite: Trust
- Protocols: Confidentiality, Guidelines for Practice, MOUs
- Familiarity with immigration terms
- Immigration status assessment
- Cultural competence – stages of migration framework for family assessment
- Family system response vs. individual relief
 - Domestic violence – VAWA
 - Permanency for the child - SIJS

Differential Response Strategies

- Moving away from the 'one size fits all' model
- Allows for a holistic approach to solving family problems
- Takes into consideration cultural diversity
- Involves community as stakeholders in family well-being
- Encourages advocacy

Developing Differential Response Strategies with Immigrant Populations in Child Welfare

- First Factor: Community-Based Organizations
 - If you are making a referral; what purpose?
 - How will immigration services impact the child welfare service plan?
 - Current immigration status assessment – who needs to know what?
 - How will child welfare coordinate with immigration services?
 - What if voluntary services fail?

Differential Response Strategies – cont'd.

- Second Factor: Voluntary Child Welfare Services (Preventive)
 - Are they accessible/responsive to immigrant families?
 - Services for immigration-related issues may be referred out to community-based agencies - need for collaboration with child welfare services continues
 - Feedback loops, safety assessments – who is responsible?
 - Additional assessments of family supports, strengths, barriers – how does that information get developed and used?

Differential Response Strategies – cont'd.

- Third Factor: Court Involvement
 - Is immigration relief focused on the family or the child?
 - Is a foreign government involved?
 - Status updates of relative support systems for children locally, nationally, internationally
 - Services to provide family reunification or permanency for child outside of family
 - VAWA, U or T visas?

Differential Response Strategies – cont'd.

- Fourth Factor: Aftercare and Permanency Planning Support
 - Follow up and tracking of SIJS, U or T visa applications
 - Impact of immigration status on guardianship, adoption and independent living
 - If possible – no minor should 'age out' as undocumented – necessitates collaboration between court, child welfare and immigration
 - Continued support and involvement with families – what if immigration status remains an issue?

Self Inventory:

- What trainings do you provide your staff on immigration and immigrant issues?
- Do you have a handbook? Guidelines? Regulations? Confidentiality protocols? Language access?
- How do you interface with and collaborate with community-based organizations that serve immigrant communities? What about foreign consulates?
- Have you integrated immigration legal services into the overall child welfare services delivery system?
- How would you do an international home study?

Promising Practices

- BRYCS: Services to refugee families and children involved with child welfare; community training; technical assistance; guidelines and best practices information
- New York City – ACS: Office of Immigrant Services – training, community liaison, trouble-shooting, handbook, advisory committee; grants to cbos
- Santa Clara County, CA: Handbook, staff training, focus on special populations
- Los Angeles County, CA: SIJS unit within child welfare system
