

*“We have a baby boomer population that is retiring, and your prime workforce population is more diverse. Just from the simple demographics, they’re an important part of the population, and they’re an important part of the future workforce. Investing in their health and education and well-being seems to be a no-brainer.”*

Ruby Takanishi  
President, Foundation  
for Child Development



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## Children, Youth, and Families Creating Pathways to Support Potential

As the fastest-growing segment of the U.S. child population, children of immigrants are the future of our country. To realize their potential, they must overcome a host of challenges exacerbated by their immigrant background, from poverty to lack of English proficiency.

In collaborations with other affinity groups—including Grantmakers for Children, Youth and Families and Grantmakers for Education—GCIR has reported on the impact of demographic trends and helped funders understand how considering the needs of immigrant children and families is crucial to effective grantmaking.

In educating funders and making recommendations, GCIR has focused on the following:

- The need to increase immigrant participation in early childhood programs and expand support services to help English language learners succeed.
- The importance of addressing the English-language needs of parents to combat poverty, improve employment prospects, and increase engagement in their children’s education.
- The use of education and family issues as touch points to forge alliances between immigrant and native-born groups to build stronger communities.
- The burdens borne by citizen children as a result of policies targeting non-citizens, such as ICE raids, which have split families and chilled the access of children to health care, education, and other services.



### Foundation for Child Development

The 2000 Census clearly showed that immigrant children mattered. But in the world of research, these young Americans didn’t exist. Studies on immigrants focused on adults, and research on children didn’t pay much attention to those with foreign-born parents.

The Foundation for Child Development (FCD) realized that this knowledge gap wasn’t merely academic. It could lead to real deficiencies in how immigrant children received education, health care, and other services.

To help connect public policy to reliable research, FCD launched the Young Scholars Program in 2002. A growing cohort of scholars, now totaling 28, is creating a fuller portrait of the lives of immigrant children: How long does it take for a young English learner to become proficient? What factors contribute to the higher obesity rates in children of immigrants? And how did welfare reform affect children’s access to health services?

Although research studies develop slowly, the work has already generated interest from policymakers, advocates, and the media. A few scholars are partnering with community groups to put theories into practice; others have been quoted in national news stories. FCD investment of \$4.5 million has led to the researchers securing more than \$3.7 million in government grants.

As these young scholars win tenure, they are mentoring the next generation of thinkers and ensuring that the issues stay on research agendas. With their work, public policy affecting immigrant children will not simply rely on conjecture or anecdotes—or nothing at all. For the youngest Americans, the scholars are building a base of knowledge and power.

*“GCIR’s emerging focus on family economic opportunity is really critical given that there’s a significant portion of children in poverty who live in immigrant households. We need to ensure that adult parents and caregivers have financial security, and they’re able to grow their assets. That creates pathways for their children as they’ll have better choices for schools, housing, and education.”*

Irene Lee  
Successful Working Families director, Annie E. Casey Foundation

### FAST FACTS

1 in 5

One in five children has a parent who is foreign-born. Between 1990 and 2007, the number of children in immigrant families nearly doubled, compared to a 3% rise among native-born families.

50%

In 2007, almost half of immigrant children lived in low-income households, where the annual income was less than 200 percent of the poverty threshold (\$41,300 for a family of four). By comparison, about a third of children with U.S.-born parents lived in low-income households.

1 in 5

In 2007, one in five children had difficulty speaking English. Of those who did speak English well, 47 percent lived in a linguistically isolated household.

25%

In a quarter of immigrant households, no parent had a high school diploma, compared to 7% in native-born families in 2007.



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