

These findings are summarized from four focus groups conducted with providers serving parents who are primarily monolingual in Farsi, Cantonese, Vietnamese, and Spanish.

## NEEDS AND ISSUES

Four major issues surfaced that affect monolingual parents/families:

1. **Language barriers are a major problem that limit access to services.** Examples cited included difficulty using transportation to get to available services; difficulty with written materials such as applications for Medi-Cal or food stamps; inability to understand written communication from the school/teacher.
2. **Monolingual families struggle with understanding life in the U.S. and do not feel connected to resources.** Several comments were made about the need for more education about living in the U.S. and greater access to information about services for newcomers and bilingual resources.
3. **Families have difficulty bridging cultural differences in child-rearing.** Providers noted that parents need help raising their kids in a country that is very different than the one where they were raised. Discipline was cited repeatedly an area of concern.
4. **There is a lack of providers and resources in languages other than English.** Examples included a lack of ethnic educational and play materials for the children in child care like books, videos, and toys that have faces familiar to the child's ethnicity; a lack of providers who speak their language and are within close proximity, including pediatricians, child care providers, and specialists such as speech therapists, physical therapists, occupational therapists, and nurses.

In addition, providers were asked to identify issues specific to the ethnic community they served that might be different than issues for the general population of families with 0 – 5 year olds. These included:

- **Afghan community:** coping with the trauma of war and adjusting to life in a new environment.
- **Chinese (Cantonese-speaking) community:** understanding the whole field of mental health since there is a taboo in the community about receiving mental health services.
- **Vietnamese community:** bridging the cultural gap between child rearing in home, in child care, and in school; and the need for recent immigrant parents to understand schools and quality child care.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

When providers were asked to prioritize one recommendation for improving service to the population they served, the primary theme that emerged was centralization or “one stop shopping.” For example, they envisioned:

- An “Afghan Center,” a one stop resource center with services to meet everyone’s needs such as computers, games, sports equipment, free classes, religious services, homework assistance. It would be a place where parents could earn and to be with their children.
- Centralized services in Chinatown with free classes for parents making sure that all of the services are accessible with bilingual staff.
- A child care center with excellent programs for children of all age groups, outdoor facilities, bilingual teachers, nutrition counseling, and workshops for parents and grandparents so they can adapt to the new culture.

Other services providers felt were missing in the county or still needed in greater quantity included:

### Parent education and support

Providers saw the need for classes and groups that would:

- Address the cultural gap between parents/grandparents and their children who are raised in this country
- Help parents discipline their children and work with the schools (e.g., how to partner with teachers, work with them to look at ways to better support the child).
- Support parents as they deal with challenges such as raising a child with special needs
- Educate parents about the importance of the first five years of life

Providers noted that parents need incentives to participate in this type of education because they are busy working all day and raising their kids. Some noted that home visiting is a very successful way to reach families who need services particularly for the 0 – 5 year old and their families.

### Interpretation

Providers felt that interpreters were needed for all services. They also noted the need for a liaison between the parent and teacher/school so they can communicate about the child’s needs and parents can interact with the school effectively. Parents, for example do not know what parent-teacher conferences are and may not show up.

### Information and Referral

Some of the recommendations for making information about services and resources more accessible to monolingual parents included:

- A centralized number where service providers or clients can call and get referred to any one of those services who speak their language.
- Greater outreach to the Asian community with bilingual providers and the Asian media to inform parents about resources and services available in their language.

- A survival kit for the Vietnamese community so they know what to do when they arrive in this country, for example how to call 911 in case of emergency.
- Informational materials written at a low literacy level.
- A case manager for the immigrant population who can speak Cantonese and make referrals to specific services they may need.

### **Additional Information**

Providers were asked what other services they referred clients to. Responses included: childcare services (such as Bananas, Childcare Links and Head Start), mental health services, social services, housing, WIC, Medi-Cal, translation and interpretation services, legal aid, and domestic violence assistance.

Providers were asked what they did to prepare kids for school. Responses included:

- Encourage parents to send their children to kindergarten to prepare their child for the challenges of school
- Encourage parents to spend time with their children, to talk to them and to read to them.
- Help parents put less stress on academic activities and work on children's behavior and discipline. Helping parents help their children cope more in group situations.
- Refer them to Head Start.
- Prepare the family to bridge the cultural gap between the family and the school system.
- Help families understand the difference between American and Asian values and help them find a happy medium. For example, helping the parents to understand that their children need to be able to feed themselves before they go to school.