

## SAFETY AND RISK SCREENING: CRITICAL CONSIDERATIONS WHEN WORKING WITH IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE FAMILIES

- Are conditions related to safety the result of poverty factors?
- Are there differences between culturally based parenting and maltreatment (e.g., neglect, medical neglect, nutrition or inadequate supervision)?
- Has a cultural conflict occurred because of different child-rearing beliefs and behaviors?
- What is the potential for harm of these cultural differences?
- Are there mental health or substance abuse issues that can affect parenting?
- Do children exhibit signs of having been exposed to violence or have other caregivers (such as schools or health providers) indicated that children may be impacted by exposure to violence?

Source: Cohen, Elena and Lyn Morland. 2015. *A Social Worker's Tool Kit for Working With Immigrant Families - Healing the Damage: Trauma and Immigrant Families in the Child Welfare System*. The Center on Immigration and Child Welfare.



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# CHALLENGES FACING IMMIGRANTS IN THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM

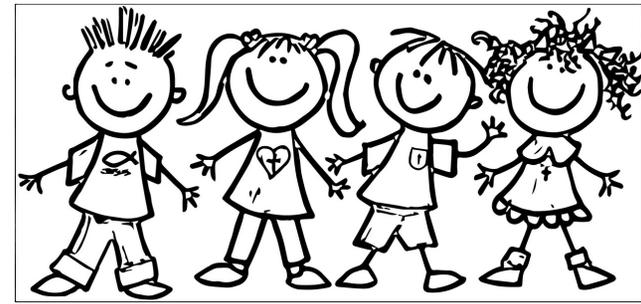
*Most immigrant families never come in contact with the child welfare system or child protection systems. But when they do, it becomes complicated depending on their country of origin, generational and legal status, reasons for migration, and immigration and resettlement experiences.*

1. Throughout the child welfare system, there are **not enough interpretation/translation services** or bilingual or bicultural staff members at all levels. Communication problems and lack of appropriate translation services can lead to inaccurate or insufficient information about a case.

Although some agencies rely on bilingual neighbors or family members as interpreters, this practice raises serious confidentiality issues and untrained interpreters may consciously or unconsciously filter or censor what is said or give inaccurate information.

2. Many immigrants **distrust government agencies**. They may have left countries with harsh authoritarian regimes or corrupt government agencies. As a result, they may not seek help or participate in services required for reunification.

3. **Cultural norms and child-rearing practices differ** from those in the United States. Many refugees and immigrants come from countries where corporal punishment is generally accepted and Western parenting styles appear too permissive.



4. **Lack of access to income supports and quality health care services.** Many immigrant parents do not understand state and federal subsidized child health insurance programs or fear that enrolling their child will threaten their own immigration status or naturalization application.

5. **Abused immigrant women are thought to be particularly vulnerable** due to lack of access to services, poverty, and fears related to their immigration status. In about half of all child maltreatment cases, a mother is also battered. Immigrant battered women are less likely to know what services exist and more likely to have transportation or interpretation problems.

Source: Lincroft, Yali, Jena Resner, and Ming Leung. 2006. *Undercounted, Underserved: Immigrant and Refugee Families in the Child Welfare System*. Baltimore, Maryland: The Annie E. Casey Foundation.