



# How To Help California's Indigenous Migrant Families

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*Program Design Issues for California First 5*

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# Program Design Options

- Distribution point for standardized “goods”
- Needs assessment leading to design of intervention to achieve responsive but externally-determined outcomes
- Transfer to “community” responsibility for design of own intervention (with T/A)
- Directly transfer resources to households or individuals—voucher strategy
- The most effective interventions are likely to involve elements from the 2nd and 3rd options

# Program Design Constraints

- Statutory or regulatory guidelines
- Level and types of resources (financial, “technical”, in-kind)
- “Theory of change” and vision of success
- Understanding of target population
- Political forces, competing visions, theories, stakeholders

# Insights from Community Development Theory

- Communities have inherent resources (Kretzmann and McKnight 2005).
- Human, cultural, social, and civic capitals are particularly important in communities with scarce economic resources (Flora and Flora 2007)
- Interventions change well-being by mobilizing and “translating” capitals
- Social capital in village/migration networks is eroded by conditions of U.S. life (Menjivar 2000; Kissam et al 2000; Portes and Rumbaut 2001)

# Insights from Research on Family Life and Children's Outcomes

- Children's outcomes are closely linked to family resilience, which, in turn, is linked to community resilience (Kalil 2003; Black and Lobo 2008)
- Fostering family and community resilience is cost-effective because it avoids pitfalls of dependency
- The combination of conflicting social/cultural contexts, eroded network resources, workplace stressors, communication barriers threaten indigenous Mexican migrant families' resiliency
- Well-meaning but culturally uninformed interventions can threaten family well-being.

# Basics-- Indigenous Mexican Migrant Families in California

- CIRS found indigenous migrants in 100 California communities in 24 counties by 1993
- Indigenous migration has increased rapidly since the 1980' s. Now at least 15% of California FW' s
- Many indigenous migrants also travel to urban centers—e.g. Yucatec Maya in S.F., Guatemalan Maya in Oakland, Zapotec and Maya in Los Angeles
- Diversity of indigenous population is increasing, e.g. Amuzgo, Chatino, Mixe
- CRLA/Mines Indigenous Survey will provide crucial empirical data for future program planning

# Key Challenge: Couple Cultural Maintenance with Integration

- Under pressure world-wide but especially in Mexico's indigenous communities (Patrinos 2008)
- Significant minority of indigenous HH's with internal language barriers impeding mother-child communication. Strive in early childhood interventions to maintain multi-lingualism.
- Key service responsiveness issue is not total lack of Spanish but effective communication in constrained 2nd language (Spanish)
- Children will acculturate to U.S. life—but dissonant acculturation is a serious risk. Strive for selective acculturation (Portes and Rumbaut 2001)

# 12 Things California First 5 Network Can Do

1. Invest in indigenous community-based groups' cultural maintenance activities e.g. Se' E' Savi parent/youth Mixtec dance group, CBDIO support for traditional medicinal plant gardens.
2. Support hometown associations' current California community festivals (e.g. San Juan Mixtepec, San Miguel Cuevas), also pilot roles for them in peer family counseling/support, child care exchange networks and provider training
3. Support community-based development of early childhood reading materials in native languages—eg. Using Centro Editorial de Lenguas Indigenas (CELIAC) model.



# 12 Things California First 5 Network Can Do (continued)

4. Support activities to strengthen transnational family networking and create “community agora” for geographically dispersed communities—e.g. Radio Bilingue’s Hora Mixteca programming
5. Pilot “career academy” programs in high schools to prepare indigenous teenagers to enter careers as trilingual interpreters or service providers (e.g. in health promotion, health care, child care, family counseling)
6. Pilot community-based programs to assist newly-arrived indigenous families in adjusting to life in California (orientation+problem-solving)

# 12 Things California First 5 Network Can Do (continued)

7. Engage individual indigenous community members and organizations in presentations to mainstream service providers re migrants' experiences, perspectives, problems, aspirations for their families and their children
8. Initiate multi-stranded in-depth assessment of challenges indigenous families' face in child-rearing, informal solutions, along with review of extant research. Goal=responsive interventions!
9. Support community-based groups in programs to prepare indigenous parents' to participate actively and meaningfully in their children's schools

# 12 Things California First 5 Network Can Do (continued)

10. Shift M&E focus from monitoring to formative+ summative evaluation including parents re First Five program responsiveness and impacts
11. Involve indigenous parents in advisory roles for local strategic planning, grantmaking and program review
12. Actively advocate for family-friendly immigration reform. Bottom line: no bar to adjustment for unauthorized family members living in U.S., no return to home country for application, no English-language requirements but with federal support for family ESL/civics.