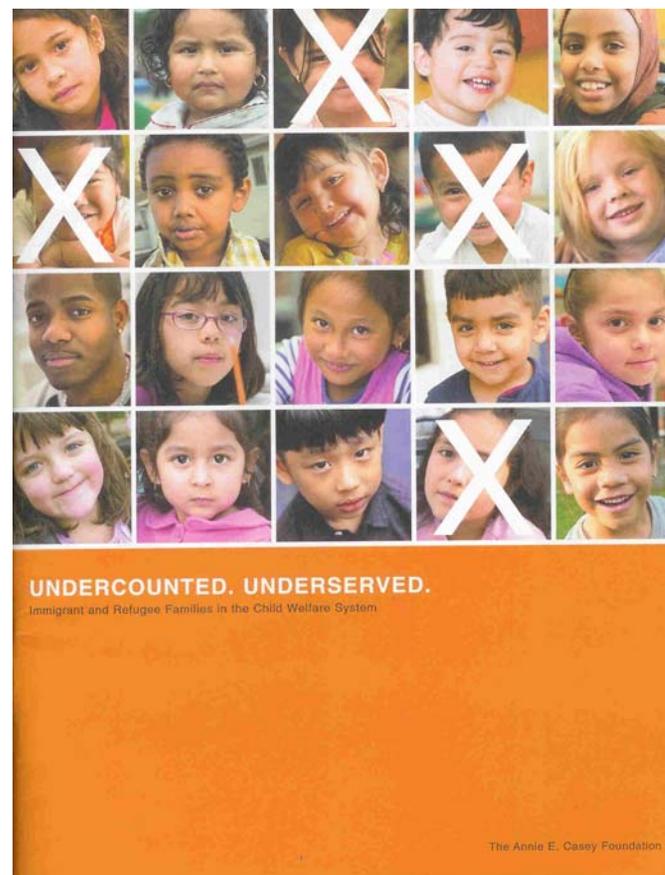


## Undercounted, Underserved: Immigrants and Refugees in the Child Welfare System

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## About the Annie E Casey Foundation

- Annie E Casey Foundation is one of the largest private foundations in the United States, with assets over \$3 billion. It provides over \$190m in grants each year. Founded in 1948 by Jim Casey, UPS founder, the philanthropy primary mission is to foster public policies, human services and community supports that more effectively meet the needs of vulnerable children and families. Grants are by invitation only and are limited to initiatives in the United States that have significant potential to demonstrative innovative policy, service delivery and community supports.
- In the 1960's, two additional foundations were launched by the Annie E Casey Foundation – Casey Family Programs (Seattle) and Casey Family Service (Baltimore), which are operating foundation that provides long-term foster care and other children/family serving programs.

## About “Undercounted, Underserved”

- The board of the Annie E Casey Foundation commissioned a report on issues surrounding immigrant families within the child welfare system in 2006. The report is result of research including a literature review; interviews with child welfare workers, immigration attorneys, adoptive parents, foster youth, advocates, staff of community-based agencies, researchers, and policymakers.
- Recommendations were developed from a consultative session with national experts and child welfare practitioners. By collecting anecdotes about immigrant families, along with any existing research, we were able to gain insights into current practice and policy.
- The report illustrated the need for thoughtful dialogue at the local, state, and national level about how to serve this vulnerable and growing population within the U.S. child welfare system.

## Interviews from “Undercounted, Underserved”

*“I was 6 when I was removed from my mother’s house for substantiated abuse. My mother, a refugee from Afghanistan, was 14 when she had me. When I was removed, no one explained to my mother and grandmother what was going on. They were given documents in English they didn’t understand. For the next 12 years of my life, I went to over 20 foster homes, a couple of detention halls, and four group homes. While I was a ward of the state, my mother and two younger siblings became American citizens but I remained an undocumented immigrant. Throughout my child welfare experience, I kept asking about my papers – birth certificate, Social Security number, anything. I asked probation officers, foster parents, child welfare workers, anyone but no one knew or cared. Finally, fed up with it all, I got legal resident status myself after dealing with lots of bureaucracy and insecurities. I’m 24 now and it’s still haunting me. I can’t vote, have to notify Homeland Security within two weeks of moving, have to explain to the university why I shouldn’t be charged foreign resident tuition rate. I have no cultural identity – I didn’t grow up in a Persian household, yet I am not considered an American citizen.”*

- Interview with Hemal Sharifzada, former foster youth and staff of California Youth Connection

*“I try to catch all the immigrant cases if they come into my unit but they may be sent to other units where there are no Spanish speakers. The children are pulled out of the home because they want to err on the side of caution, which is fine where these are clearly cases of abuse and neglect. But most of these kids go home eventually and they aren’t the same kids anymore. They threatened their parents with 911 calls, some of the young ones forget their Spanish, and all of them have been traumatized. I get calls all the time from foster care parents asking me to translate for an immigrant child placed in their home. Why doesn’t the kid eat, they ask me? I talk to the child and they say they want rice and beans, so why does this lady keep giving them hot dogs?”*

- Interview with a California Child Welfare Supervisor

*Selma , an 8-year-old girl from Kosovo, came to the United States with her mother. Her father was killed during the war, as were many of the men in her village. On the night of her father's death, Selma was awakened in the middle of the night by her mother and told to go quickly to her cousin's house in the next village. Several days later, her mother joined her, with visible bruises on her face, and Selma was told her father was dead. Nothing more was discussed about that night. In the United States, Selma adapted to her new school and learned English quickly. She often interpreted for her mother and sometimes missed school as a result. Her mother, Ilina, experienced great difficulty finding steady employment and grew increasingly isolated. She had a few acquaintances at the factory, but the work there was never steady. Local English classes were not offered in the evening, and the only class on Saturday did not offer child care. Ilina grew more and more aware of how dependent she had become on her daughter. One evening, Selma went over to a friend's house and stayed much later than usual. She returned home to her mother, who was extremely worried about her daughter's safety and in anger smacked Selma several times in the face and back. The next day at school, Selma's teacher noticed the marks; when asked what happened, Selma said that her mother was upset and hit her. The teacher called Child Protective Services, and an investigation was initiated.*

- *Bridges Refugee Youth & Children's Services (2003), Building Bridges: A Guide to Planning and Implementing Cross Services Training, <http://www.brvc.org/documents/XSVCTEIN.pdf>*

## Growing Number of Immigrant Children and Families

- Almost one in four children in the US are now either an immigrant or children of immigrants.
- The new immigrant groups come from non-European countries and are culturally more diverse. Latin Americans are half of all immigrants living in the United States, and Mexico alone accounts for 31 percent. Many of the new immigrant groups are Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs and do not share the same Judeo-Christian background of earlier generations of immigrants.
- Poverty rates are generally higher among children of immigrants than among children of natives and are highest for young children of immigrants. Over a quarter of young children of immigrant are poor, compared with a fifth in native-born families.
- Young children of immigrants are also less likely to receive public benefits, such as income support, child care and food stamp.
- Children in immigrant families are considerably more likely to be uninsured, to be reported in fair or poor health, and to lack a usual place where they can get preventive health care.

## Mixed Status Immigrant Families

*"A growing challenge to service providers is what are now called 'mixed status' families – i.e., typically where one or more parent is a non-citizen and one or more children, especially the youngest ones, are citizens. In a world where the provision of most services is based on the assumption that you are a citizen, not being one within a family can be problematic. Think of the scenario where one sibling is born in the U.S. and therefore a citizen, while the rest of the family, including the parents and other siblings are undocumented. One sibling can pursue a higher education, get a job, get health insurance while the other cannot."*

*-- Ilze Earner, Assistant Professor/Hunter College, "Brighter Future for Migrating Children: An Overview of Current Trends" (CWLA Discussion Session, February 2006)*

Almost 30% of young children of immigrants live in families with one or more undocumented parents

Almost all (93%) children of immigrants under 6 are U.S. citizens and 77% of children ages 6-17 in immigrant families are citizens

## What research is available on immigrants in the child welfare system?

Currently, the number of immigrant children involved in the child welfare system is unknown, since this information is **not collected** uniformly at the local, state, or national level.

Several factors contribute to the lack of reliable data:

- Fear of reporting immigration status
- Confusion regarding mixed statuses within family
- Inadequate reporting systems that are not designed to capture this information

In addition, little empirical information is available on the unique needs and experience of immigrants in the child welfare system.

## From the Urban Institute Study in TX

In 2007 (via funding from AECF), Urban Institute study of immigrant children in the TX child welfare system, using child welfare data matched to birth records, (March 2006) found:

- **Under-representation** of both children born in Latin American countries and US born children with Latin American parents compared with general population (1% vs 7%).
- **Over-representation** of Latino children with US born parents (33% vs 22%).
- Children of immigrants were **less likely** than US born parents to be placed with relatives or to have case goals associated with relatives. Immigrant children also tend to enter care when they are **older**, more likely to be **female**, and removed due to **sexual abuse** compared with other groups of children.

## Disproportionality in Child Welfare

*“Data from the 2006 ACS shown below indicate that black children were 26 percent of the foster care children identified in the ACS, but blacks make up only 15 percent of all children (under age 18) in the ACS. Table 10 also shows Hispanic children were 28 percent of the children in foster care although Hispanics are only 20 percent of all children.”*

-- *“Data on Children in Foster Care from the Census Bureau” by Dr. William P. O’Hare, Annie E Casey Foundation/Kids Count, June 2008*

Table 10. All Children (under 18) and Foster Children by Race and Hispanic Origin

	Foster Children		All Children	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Non-Hispanic White	117,385	40%	42,252,386	57%
<b>Non-Hispanic Black</b>	<b>77,051</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>10,698,274</b>	<b>15%</b>
Non-Hispanic Asian or Pacific Islander	4,026	1%	2,954,536	4%
Non-Hispanic American Indian and Alaska Native	4,824	2%	583,240	1%
Non-Hispanic other race and 2+ race	11,306	5%	2,331,637	3%
<b>Hispanic</b>	<b>81,952</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>14,965,045</b>	<b>20%</b>
Total	296,544	100%	73,785,118	100%

-- SOURCE: IPUMS analysis of 2006 ACS. From "Data on Children in Foster Care from the Census Bureau" by Dr. William P. O'Hare, Annie E Casey Foundation/Kids Count, June 2008

*“ Officially my database says only 2% of our kids in care are immigrants, which I think is grossly undercounted. My database also says that 50-70% of the kids in care are Latino/Hispanic, depending on the county. I know that the majority of these US citizen Latino kids in our caseload come from immigrant families, many have undocumented parents or relatives, and have families living across the border.”*

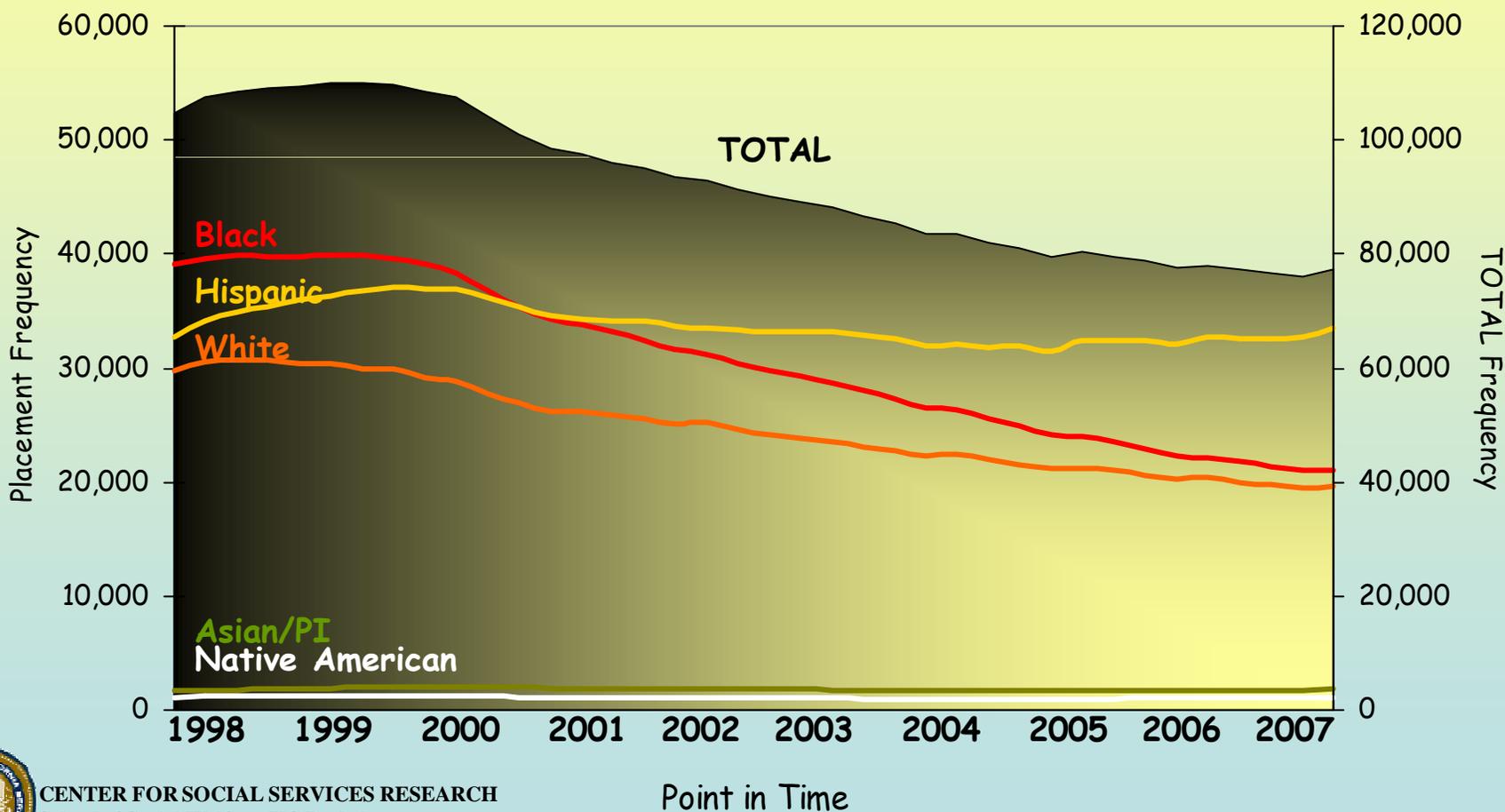
*--- Interview by Yali Lincroft with public policy analyst in New Mexico, July 2008*

## Trends from California child welfare statistic

- A comparison of CA foster care caseload from 1998 to 2007 shows Hispanics have remain the same while caseloads for Blacks and White have gone dramatically lower.
- A comparison of CA first time entries for Hispanics is also increasing while first time entries for Blacks and White are decreasing.
- No research have been conducted yet on why this is occurring

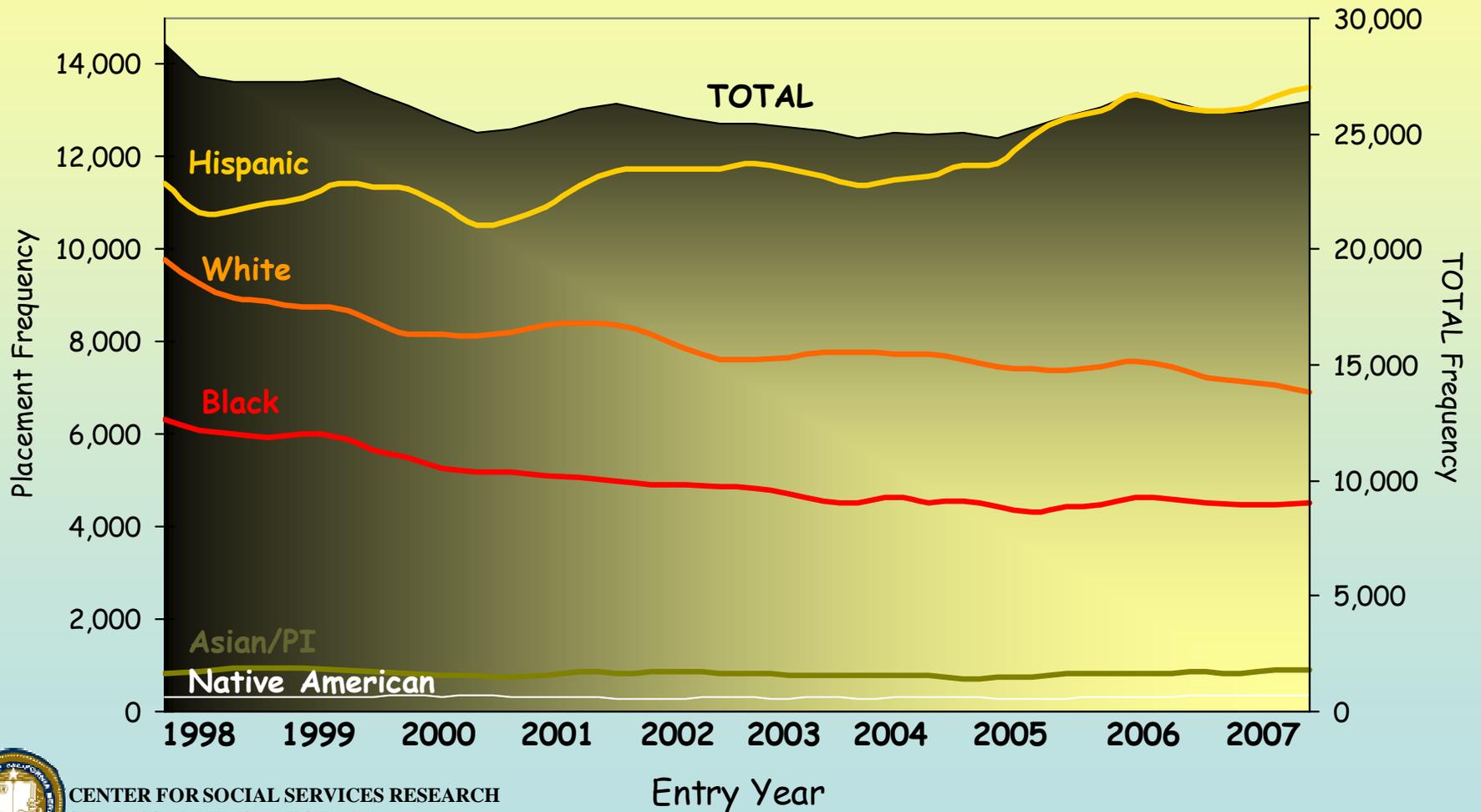


# 1998 to 2007 California: Foster Care Caseload by Race/Ethnicity





1998 to 2007  
California:  
First Entries by Race/Ethnicity  
(children in care for 8 or more days)



**From the Justice Dept Bureau of Statistics (released Aug 26, 2008)**

- Black and Hispanic children were about eight and three times, respectively, more likely than white children to have a parent in prison. Among minor children in the U.S. resident population, 6.7 percent of black children, 2.4 percent of Hispanic children, and 0.9 percent of white children had a parent in prison.
- Hispanic (57 percent) and black (54 percent) state inmates were more likely to report being a parent than white (46 percent) inmates. Findings were similar among men held in state prison, while the likelihood of being a parent did not vary by race among women.

From, "Parents in Prison and Their Minor Children (NCJ 222984)" from the Bureau of Justice Statistics by BJS statisticians Lauren E. Glaze and Laura M. Maruschak.

## Differing Cultural Norms and Language Difficulties

Immigrant parents may be reported for abuse and neglect because they fail to understand and follow regulations concerning their children.

Immigrant families often come from countries with different cultural norms than the U.S. regards to child rearing.

They may not be able to understand or meet the requirements for termination of parents rights, particularly if the hearings, forms or services are not available in their native languages.

Child welfare agencies may disapprove of multiple and extended families living together.

## **Distrust of Government**

Immigrants are often fearful of accepting any government support which may jeopardize their application for citizenship.

Documented immigrants are fearful of any interaction with government which may expose undocumented family members living in their household to potential deportation, or jeopardize their legal permanent status.

Undocumented women may be less likely to report domestic violence because they fear their abusive spouse will report them to immigration authorities.

Immigrant families may not want to become foster or kinship parents because they fear contact with government agencies or the requirements of licensing. They may come from countries with repressive regimes and are fearful of governments.

## Immigration Relief Options

- Many undocumented children involved with the child welfare system may be eligible for special forms of immigration relief options. In addition, some family members of children involved in the child welfare system may be eligible for immigration relief as well.
- In 1990, Congress created the Special Immigrant Juvenile Status. An undocumented child who is eligible for long-term foster care can be granted this status and become immediately eligible to file for permanent residency in the United States. There is about 1,000 children in the US child welfare system who receive this relief option.
- Other immigration relief options are available for undocumented immigrant children and their family including asylum, VAWA, and the new T-Visa and U-Visa.

*"The era of extended family members residing in the same home town or even the same state is over. Child welfare cases increasingly involve interstate and international placement options."*

*~ Judge J. Dean Lewis, Editor – Special Issue on Transnational Issues in Child Welfare, The Judges Newsletter/CASA (February 2008)*

*"Today's challenges are to develop and build effective service models to this population, and avoid the tragic implications of 'service drift.' And key to developing relevant child welfare services to this population rest upon the integration of immigration services and assessment within a basic child welfare infrastructure."*

*~ Ken Borelli, Testimony before the California Blue Ribbon Commission on Children in Foster Foster (December 2007)*

## Call for Papers: Special Issue on the Intersection of Immigration and Child Welfare

- The international journal *Evaluation and Program Planning* invites submissions for a special issue on the intersection of immigration and child welfare. Co-editors, Yali Lincroft (AECF) and Dr Alan Dettlaff (Univ of Illinois) invite submissions on this topic from a national, transnational and interdisciplinary perspective
- The co-editors are seeking articles which discuss fiscal, legislative, legal, ethical and practice issues affecting evaluation or planning with immigrant children and families, and the implications for public and private service providers and policymakers who work with this population.
- It is the difficult task of a child welfare evaluator in answering the questions “did it work?” and “how did it work?” It is important to define exactly what is the “it” in the evaluation and how these definitions may be vastly different when working with immigration populations.
- DEADLINE for short abstract: Sept 19, 2008

## Questions to Consider

- How does the impact of language, culture and religion impact the treatment and services an immigrant family receives? Is there bias in the evaluation of service outcomes?
- Do different cultures define child well being different from the U.S. norms and if so, how will this impact the parent's engagement and success in the reunification plan?
- How does the immigration status of the child and family, the "fear factor" of deportation, impact the family's engagement in accessing needed social services?
- What are the potential risks and benefits of an international placement in a permanency decision?
- Is it better for a child to be reunified with a parent or relative outside of the U.S. or to be placed with non-relatives in the United States?