Understanding Latine Families' Experiences in Early Intervention

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*"It is **not** the **same process** [to have a child access early intervention] from a Latino family to an Anglo family."* — Parent

Background & Rationale

Part C Early Intervention systems have not fully addressed the complexity of family engagement and relationship building that may be needed to improve the experiences of the Latine community in accessing and receiving services.

In Minnesota, it estimated that thousands of children remain unscreened and disconnected from EI services (MDH, 2018), and assumed that many of these children have Latine heritage.

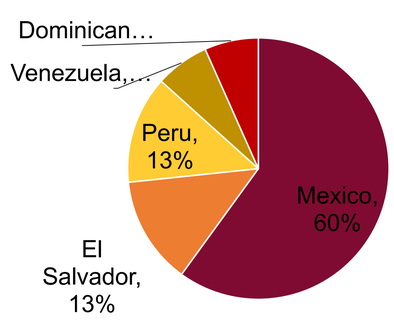
- Systems failing to provide comprehensive developmental evaluation and services for children of color (Magnusson et al., 2017) create missed opportunities for child and family support during a critical period of brain development.
- Black and Latino children are 78% less likely than white children to have their need for early intervention services met (Magnusson et al., 2016, 2017).

We used a community-driven approach to explore Latine families' experiences in Early Intervention across referral, evaluation, service, and transition.

Method

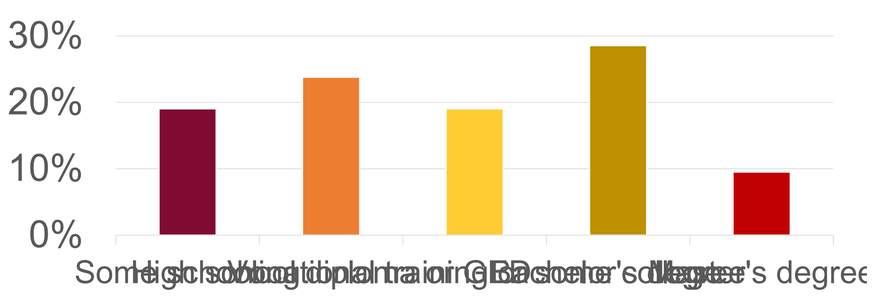
Participants

Families who self-identified as having Latine heritage shared information about their family's experience in Part C EI through a survey (*n* = 25) and in focus groups (*n* = 6). Five families (20%) reported being born in the U.S., 15 listed other countries of origin (60%; see Figure 1). Five did not respond (20%).



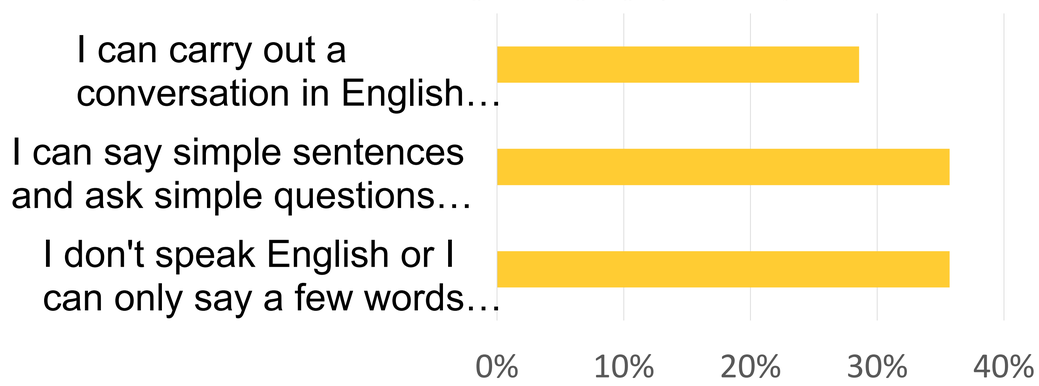
Education Level

Twenty-one families listed their education background, as follows:



Self-Reported Language Proficiency

Fourteen families described their English language proficiency, as follows:



Procedures & Analysis

Families were recruited by word of mouth, via social media, and through contacts with Early Intervention providers (i.e., school district contacts). They received electronic gift cards for their participation in the survey ($25) and focus group ($50).

All interviews and focus groups were recorded and transcribed in the language(s) used by families. Bilingual research team members and Community Connectors who identified as Latina analyzed transcripts to identify themes and identify vivid quotes and examples.

Results

Three major themes were identified as families described their experiences in Part C EI, including: *Navigating the EI System, Interacting with Providers,* and *Recommendations for Change*

Navigating the EI System

Latine families described challenges with access to culturally and linguistically specific resources in all phases of the early intervention (EI) process:

- Need to supplement translated materials with personalized guidance of culturally and linguistically responsive staff that provides clear steps on how to get started and answer questions about the EI system.
- Limited access to interpreters throughout the process.
- Acknowledgement of diversity of Spanish dialects used by families.
- Mismatch between typical EI practices and those that align with Latine social network of support, such as involvement with all family members.
- Formal support in early care and education settings for parents of children with a developmental delay or disability to increase opportunities for children to interact with peers with varying abilities.

*"The department's homepage already gives you the option in Spanish, that's very good, but…how do I get started? **This is the biggest problem for most families. In taking that first step [to act early on concerns]…**"*

— Parent

*"An important step for parents when they receive that diagnosis…is the **new quality of life** that you as a parent have to have and all the things that you have to adapt and that you have to **educate the family and your friends**."* — Parent

Interacting with Providers

- Navigating social events related to disclosing children's diagnosis and interpreting children's behavior in their family and community environment.
- Families shared a critical cultural component of emotional support in accepting children's development and how to navigate conversations in family/community.
- Need to describe benefits of coaching approach. Some families were expecting a more 'traditional' clinician-led approach.
- Issues of confusion when including interpreters in an intervention session and more than one person is interacting with the child.

*"At first I felt like I was just an **observer** because **I didn't understand** what it was about [or what was going to be done] and so on."* — Parent

*"It has always been like a **barrier** because the child does not understand them [practitioner] and if there is always an **interpreter** it is like 'who do I pay attention to,' because they [the practitioner and interpreter] both speak."* — Parent

Recommendations for Change

Families had many insights on how to improve early intervention systems:

- More supports during pregnancy (e.g. classes for all pregnant mothers).
- Culturally and linguistically responsive support groups for families with children who have a disability –intersectionality of disability and racial/ethnic identities.
- More hand-on practice in strategies for caregivers and information on the coaching model.
- Access to culturally and linguistically connectors for guidance in the process of entering the services.

Implications and Future Directions

Data from this project will be shared with Early Intervention administrators throughout the state, and used in the planning of Minnesota's Department of Children, Youth, and Families

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This project was supported with funding from the Minnesota Department of Education