

Family Outreach Series

Strategies for Outreach to Families with Limited English Proficiency



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Parent, Family and Community Engagement

Acknowledgments

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ADMINISTRATION FOR
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NATIONAL CENTER ON
Parent, Family and Community Engagement



Family Outreach Series **Strategies for Outreach to Families with Limited English Proficiency**

Effective outreach promotes families' awareness of, access to, and use of early childhood care and education and comprehensive services. States and their partners can use this resource to enhance their outreach efforts.

In this resource, you will find:

- A definition of outreach (page 4)
- Specific examples of outreach to families who have limited English proficiency (LEP) (page 4)
- Research-informed strategies (pages 7–13)

As you review the strategies in this resource, consider your agency's approach to meeting Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) requirements. Some of the strategies described in this resource can be applied by State administrators. Others can be used or adapted for use by leadership and staff working in agencies and programs that have direct contact with families.

Family Outreach Series

Use this resource along with others in the Family Outreach Series. The series is available on the Child Care Technical Assistance (CCTA) website: <https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov>.

Titles include:

- **Strategies for Outreach to All Families: Overview**
- **Strategies for Outreach to Families Experiencing Homelessness**
- **Strategies for Outreach to Families Living in Remote or Rural Areas**

How This Resource Is Organized

This resource is organized into two sections:

- **Building a Shared Understanding of Outreach**
Offers a definition of outreach. Provides examples of outreach at the family, program, community, and State levels.
- **Creating an Effective Approach to Outreach**
Highlights research-informed strategies and examples that can enhance your approach to outreach to families with limited English proficiency.



You will also find related resources, including

- **Foundational Strategies for Outreach to All Families**
- **CCDF Requirements Related to Outreach to Improve Access for Children and Families with Limited English Proficiency**

Research-informed Strategies

The six strategies described in this resource support and strengthen outreach efforts to families with limited English proficiency. Related resources and examples from CCDF State Plans are also included.

1. Compile community data to inform your outreach plan and to guide policy.
2. Create or enhance and use a Language Access Plan to share relevant policies and procedures with staff.
3. Translate program information into families' preferred languages, including eligibility applications, informational materials, and your website.
4. Provide outreach in the community—where families gather and live.
5. Minimize or avoid requests for social security numbers.
6. Promote program-eligibility policies that support parents' efforts to learn English.

Resource Terms

Limited English Proficiency or LEP. People who do not speak English as their primary language and who have a limited ability to read, speak, write, or understand English can be limited English proficient, or “LEP” (U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division, 2004).

Professionals and Programs. In this resource, “professional” refers to all early childhood and school-age care and education professionals working at the systems or program level. “Program” refers to all early childhood and school-age care and education programs.

A Word About Terms

Families who are proficient in languages other than English often face challenges when interacting with early childhood systems that primarily use English. As professionals, we have an opportunity to focus on families’ strengths. One way we can focus on families’ strengths is to honor families’ home languages.

Use of home language promotes:

- Parents’ role as their children’s first and most important teachers
- Opportunities for families to teach and learn together
- Linkages to heritage and cultural traditions
- Connections with family members, friends, and neighbors who speak the same language (U. S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head Start, National Center on Cultural and Linguistic Responsiveness, n.d.)

CCDF requirements use the term “limited English proficiency” (see page 15). Where possible we use phrases such as the ones below that recognize families’ strengths and system limitations:

- “Families who speak languages other than English”
- “When families are proficient in languages other than English”
- “Families who are proficient in languages other than those that staff speak”
- “Staff who do not speak the language (or home language) of the child or the family”
- “Children or families who do not speak the same language as the staff”
- “When families and staff do not speak the same language”

By shifting our perspective and terms, we can have more and better opportunities to engage families and support a parent’s right and ability to choose what’s best for his or her child. We also can work to create approaches to outreach that value and demonstrate our respect for all families.

Building a Shared Understanding of Outreach

What Do We Mean by Outreach?

In early childhood and school-age care and education systems, outreach typically focuses on increasing the awareness among families of available services and promoting their use. Early childhood and school-age professionals do this by intentionally seeking out families and ensuring that all families are included in outreach efforts.

Effective outreach is data informed and culturally and linguistically responsive. The purpose of outreach is to identify families who are not being reached and to share relevant information with families, within your organization, and with community partners. Collecting, analyzing, using, and sharing data are central to ensuring effective outreach.

Outreach also involves promoting culturally and linguistically responsive activities that raise families' awareness of:

- High-quality early childhood and school-age care and education services
- Comprehensive supports for family well-being
- Research-based practices to support child development and learning

Examples of outreach to families with limited English proficiency:

Family level	Family members experience outreach when they receive a flyer sent home by their children's school with information about summer care and education programs. The information is written in plain language and has been translated into their preferred language. Family members can support outreach by sharing the information with other family members, friends, and coworkers.
Program level	A family child care provider participates in outreach by using a bulletin board to promote family awareness of events and services available through local organizations such as health departments, hospitals, public libraries, and children's museums. The provider shares information in the languages spoken by families.
Community level	A child care resource and referral (CCR&R) agency works with community partners to review local data about enrollment in early childhood care and education programs among families with limited English proficiency. Together, they create a plan to increase awareness among families with LEP of the importance of high-quality early childhood care and education and the availability of financial assistance.
State	A State conducts outreach by sponsoring a media campaign (in multiple languages) designed to inform families with limited English proficiency about the State's quality rating and improvement system (QRIS).

Creating an Effective Approach to Outreach

Cultural and linguistic responsiveness is key to effective outreach. Practices are culturally and linguistically responsive when they recognize, affirm, and showcase all families' cultures, knowledge, and experiences.

Culturally and linguistically responsive interactions with families are:

Respectful. We recognize and regard identities—those of families and our own—as multidimensional. We are all individuals and members of multiple social and cultural communities.

Reciprocal. We acknowledge that families have much to contribute. We work with families to find, share, and use information in support of families' well-being.

Responsive. We focus on connections between the experiences, perspectives, and behaviors of families and those of our own (Barrera & Kramer, 2007).

Families who have LEP may have varied languages, cultures, and values. At the same time, they may share common experiences related to finding child care and supporting their children's growth and development.



What the Research Says

Children whose parents have limited English proficiency are often U.S. citizens. More than 90 percent are born in the United States (Batalova & Zong, 2016). They tend to live in two-parent households and reside in homes where multiple families or multiple generations live together (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services & U.S. Department of Education, 2016).

Children whose parents have LEP are more likely to be enrolled in family child care than in center-based care settings (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Child Care, National Center on Early Childhood Quality Assurance, 2017). They also are less likely to participate in CCDF-funded child care (Firgens & Matthews, 2012).

Families with limited English proficiency also often share certain experiences and perceptions:

- Families may think that they are not eligible for CCDF services (Firgens & Matthews, 2012).
- Families may find the application and enrollment processes for accessing child care subsidy too complicated, especially when they face language barriers (Firgens & Matthews, 2012).
- Families may believe that they will need to pay back any assistance they receive. For example, mothers with limited English proficiency participating in a focus group heard rumors that recipients of child care assistance would be required to pay back the assistance in the form of military service of their children as adults (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2006).
- Some families may be concerned that information, such as social security numbers, shared on an application will be disclosed to other governmental agencies. Families who have family members with mixed citizenship status may not apply for assistance for an eligible child out of fear of exposing a family member through the application process (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2006).
- Families who have LEP may worry that they will be unable to understand their child care provider if their provider does not speak their primary language (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2006).
- Cultural traditions also may impact families' use of services. For example, family cultures may dictate that children should be cared for by family members at home rather than by outside caregivers (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2016).

Strategies for Linguistically Responsive Outreach

Many States have taken important steps to support access to early childhood care and education services for children whose parents have limited English proficiency. Some of these steps include:

- Hiring bilingual staff who can provide oral interpretation or written translation, or providing access to interpreters through a phone language service
- Providing translated materials such as subsidy applications and websites pages
- Leading efforts to increase the supply of bilingual child care providers by providing trainings in languages spoken in the community
- Hiring bilingual technical assistance staff to assist providers who themselves have LEP, with the goal of improving the quality of care
- Using CCDF Quality Funds to train providers to work with families with limited English proficiency or to offset the cost of translations (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2006)

Related Resource

Strategies for Outreach to All Families: Overview describes ten foundational strategies for effective outreach. Use those foundational strategies along with the strategies in this resource to enhance your outreach to families experiencing homelessness. Find a list of the foundational strategies on page 14. Find the full resource on CCTA.

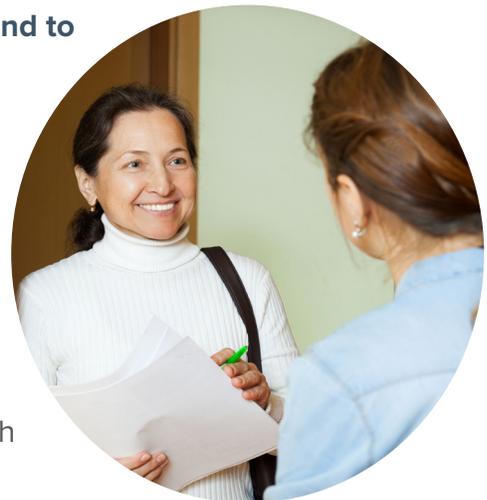
<https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/resource/strategies-outreach-all-families-overview>

Consider the following six strategies to enhance your approach to outreach. How might any one of these build on the successful strategies you already have in place?

1. Compile community data to inform your outreach plan and to guide policy.

Identify reliable data on the number of families with young children in your community who primarily speak languages other than English. Use census and other data that you may already collect (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services & U.S. Department of Education, 2016). Work with community partners to identify, collect, and analyze data. Consider questions such as:

- How many families with LEP are being served by CCDF? How many families who are eligible are not being served (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services & U.S. Department of Education, 2016)?



- Are there areas in your State where families are more likely to speak languages other than English?
- Has the number of families with LEP in your State increased or decreased over time?

Plan to collect data to track the progress of your outreach efforts over time. Use data to identify which strategies are more or less effective. Also use data to inform how you:

- Allocate resources for translation and interpretations services, outreach staff, and other related considerations.
- Design recruitment strategies for identifying providers in communities where families live.
- Guide professional development efforts and technical assistance
(U.S. Department of Health and Human Services & U.S. Department of Education, 2016).

While collecting reliable data is important, consider that some families may be uncomfortable with sharing personal information about their home language or ethnic background. Assess the cultural appropriateness of the use of surveys and survey questions for the group you are seeking to survey.

Explore data-sharing agreements with agencies and programs that serve families with LEP. Consider sharing participant data, mutual referrals, and enrollment (nonduplicative) enrollment paperwork. Consider developing a policy about surveying families about home languages spoken to encourage early childhood care and education programs to note the home language of children at the time of enrollment (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services & U.S. Department of Education, 2016). Partner with parents involved with these agencies and programs to get their input, and co-plan outreach to other families and stakeholders. Provide stipends to parents to compensate them for their efforts. Follow agency protocol for data sharing.

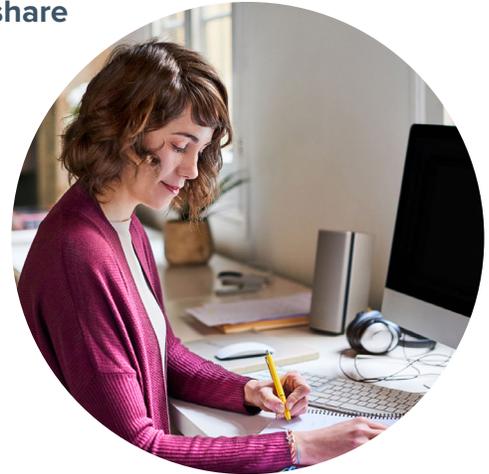
Related Resources

- **Average Monthly Percent of Children in Care by Race and Ethnicity** is a national comparison of the number of children funded by CCDF across race and ethnicity. Use it to identify demographics trends and to understand how rates in your State compare to the national average.
<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/occ/resource/fy-2016-final-data-table-12a>
- **Limited English Proficient (LEP) Maps—Language Map App** is an interactive mapping tool to identify the number or percentage of people within a geographic area with LEP and the languages they primarily speak. The data is sourced from the U.S. Census 2011–2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimate.
<https://www.lep.gov/maps/>
- **Sample Inter-Agency Data Sharing Memorandum of Understanding** reflects an inter-agency agreement between two separate government agencies regarding household eligibility verification. It is not specific to language access, but you may find it useful as a general template for a data-sharing agreement.
https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/public/data_sharing_mou_sample_brief_final_508_0.pdf

2. Create or enhance and use a Language Access Plan to share relevant policies and procedures with staff.

A Language Access Plan typically includes guidance about:

- Assessment of families' needs for language assistance
- Assessment of the agency's capacity to meet families' language assistance needs
- Oral interpretations
- Written translations
- Policies and procedures
- Availability of language assistance at no cost
- Staff training
- Stakeholder consultations
- Digital information
- Quality assurance and compliance



As you build your plan, consider system-level barriers in your State that may influence your ability to implement the plan. What strategies or resources do you need to address those barriers (e.g., enhanced policies/ procedures, staff recruitment and/or development, shifts in resource allocation, new partnerships)?

For example, the cost of having materials translated can be a barrier for agencies with tight budgets, especially if the agency serves families who speak many different languages (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2006). A lack of available, qualified bilingual program and system-level staff who are trained in culturally and linguistically responsiveness and relationship building can also be barrier (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2006). A third common barrier is a limited availability of culturally and linguistically responsive information about licensing and subsidy for providers with limited English proficiency (Firgens & Matthews, 2012).

Related Resources

LEP.gov is a clearinghouse with links to information, tools, and technical assistance regarding limited English proficiency and language services for federal agencies, recipients of federal funds, users of federal programs and federally assisted programs, and other stakeholders.

- Consult the **Language Access Plan 2013** as an example.
<https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/open/pres-actions/2013-hhs-language-access-plan.pdf>
- Refer to **Language Access Program Planning Tools** for answers to frequently asked questions, tips, and additional information.
<https://www.lep.gov/resources/resources.html#LAP>

CCDF State Plan Example

Some states have developed procedures and training for providing services to families with LEP. Staff receive training on:

- Cultural competency
- Effective communication
- Effective use of interpreters and translators
- Policies and procedures for supporting services at no cost and without unreasonable delay to families and/or providers with limited English proficiency

3. Translate program information into families' preferred languages, including eligibility applications, informational materials, and your website.

Many States are increasing their efforts to make information available in languages other than English. Opportunities remain, however, for expanding access and outreach to families with limited English proficiency.

Often agencies rely on volunteers for translations. Or they rely on bilingual staff to translate materials. The quality of these translations, however, may be less than desired. And for staff with other full-time responsibilities, the responsibility for translations can burden productivity (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2006).

Automatic website translation plugins (e.g., Google Translate) are often used to translate websites. While the use of these kinds of tools may be a place to start, they often aren't accurate. In addition, the popular Google Translate Widget is no longer being supported or updated by Google and cannot be added to new websites (Google, 2019).

When automatic machine translation is the only viable option, use the native webpage translations that are available within internet browsers. The best option, if resources allow, is to use trained linguists to translate website content.

Offer alternatives to a written application. For example, provide the application in the family's preferred language:

- Over the phone
- In person at an agency office with the help of an interpreter or bilingual staff
- Online through a voice-translation feature
(Gennetian, Mendez, & Hill, 2019).

As you translate program materials, use plain language translations to support a range of reading levels. Always consider how you will reach families with low literacy and reading levels.

Related Resources

- **Plainlanuage.gov** offers guidelines, tips, and examples to promote plain language within your agency.
<https://plainlanguage.gov/>
- **Top 10 Best Practices for Multilingual Websites**, available on Digital.gov, describes features and strategies to help ensure your website is linguistically responsive.
<https://digital.gov/resources/top-10-best-practices-for-multilingual-websites/>
- **Best Practices for Consumer Education Websites: Translation**, available on CCTA, offers best practices, strategies, and examples for States and Territories to consider as they work to provide translated materials on their consumer education websites.
<https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/resource/best-practices-consumer-education-websites-translation>

4. Provide outreach in the community—where families gather and live.

Partner with local community-based organizations.

Faith-based organizations, libraries, social service agencies, community programs, and local cultural programs and associations often have relationships with families. Consider how you might work with these organizations on common goals.

Partner with family leaders. Family leaders can give voice to the unique needs of a community and share important details about how cultural backgrounds can affect parents' experiences. Identify family leaders by connecting with parent leadership groups or reaching out to community partner organizations that have relationships with families.



Equip partners with information and materials about your program. A number of States allow local community-based organizations to accept subsidy applications. These partners can provide families with applications and help them complete the paperwork in their preferred language.

Partner with community or neighborhood ambassadors or leaders. For example, find out if a lay community health program exists. The medical community has modeled successful partnerships with Latinx community health workers, called “promotores de salud” (Cupertino, Saint-Elin, Bravo de los Rios, Engelman, Greiner, Ellerbeck, Napoles, 2015; Infante, Knudson, & Brown, 2011). These community leaders are respected and trusted. They relay important health information to their fellow community members.

Tips for Partnering with Family Leaders

- Engage families in culturally and community-responsive approaches; see families’ culture and history as assets (Nava, 2016).
- Provide opportunities to communicate openly with parents and validate their concerns
- Express your appreciation to parents individually. Avoid thanking them in groups (BUILD Initiative, n.d.).
- Provide the logistical supports that family leaders need to participate in meetings and events, including stipends, transportation, child care, food, the use of computers, and reimbursement for time and travel as policies allow.

Find more information in the resource **Families as Advocates and Leaders:**
<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/rtp-advocates-leaders.pdf>

CCDF State Plan Examples

State CCDF Plans describe a variety of approaches used to provide outreach in communities where families live including:

- Employing outreach staff who provide outreach to people who are proficient in languages other than English and partner with community organizations to provide consumer education and child care assistance
- Partnering with home visiting agencies, faith-based organizations, local health departments, and other stakeholders to identify families who may be interested in and eligible for subsidies
- Housing the Bureau of Refugee Services within the Lead Agency and employing staff who speak the languages that families speak
- Contracting with child care resource and referral agencies to coordinate work with other agencies that serve families with LEP, e.g., agencies who work with families who are refugees or immigrants

5. Minimize or avoid requests for social security numbers.

If you are requesting a Social Security Number, consider providing a clear explanation for why the information is being collected and how it will be used. Or offer other options, such as unique identifying numbers (Gennetian, Mendez, & Hill, 2019).

On an eligibility application, States may choose to ask for the Social Security Numbers (SSN) of an applicant and of other household members. Federal policy, however, does not require a SSN in order for families to receive CCDF child care assistance (CCDF Final Rule). In fact, Lead Agencies cannot require families to disclose SSNs as a condition of receiving CCDF services (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, for Children and Families, Office of Child Care, 2000).

A review of online State CCDF applications found that a number of States still request SSNs for one or more family members—even though in some cases the question is marked as “optional” (Gennetian, Mendez, & Hill, 2019). It’s important to remember that requests for a SSN without an explanation, even if marked as optional, may discourage eligible families from applying for subsidy. Families may have concerns about how their information will be used or shared with other government agencies (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Child Care, 2000).

6. Promote eligibility policies that support parents’ efforts to learn English.

Consider including in program eligibility requirements a family member’s participation in English as a second language classes (ESL). Approximately half of States and Territories already count participation in ESL classes as a qualifying activity for subsidy eligibility in 2017 (Tran, Minton, Haldar, & Dwyer, 2018). Also consider paying particular attention to families who have been living in the United States for a short period of time (Gennetian, Mendez, & Hill, 2019).

Appendix A

Foundational Strategies for Outreach to Families

1. Prioritize outreach, and work to build a shared understanding of outreach and its importance among staff and partners.
2. Allocate resources and funding for outreach.
3. Create a data-informed outreach plan, and embed it into your agency’s overall communication plan.
4. Find out what service features are important to families you are trying to reach, and promote matching strengths in your services.
5. Develop or enhance “no wrong door” and “one-stop shop” policies, procedures, and processes.
6. Dedicate staff or hire (or otherwise engage) family liaisons or parent ambassadors. Ensure that they are skilled in listening and building relationships and that, ideally, they speak the languages spoken by the families in your program.
7. Explore families’ cultural perspectives that may influence when, where, and how outreach occurs. Shape your outreach efforts in light of these perspectives. Encourage staff to reflect on how their own cultural values and beliefs may influence outreach. Consider how your current approach to outreach aligns with the approach that families need.
8. Create outreach messages that are positive and strengths-based.
9. Use consistent, plain language in outreach messages.
10. Use a variety of communication channels and media based on family preferences.

Note: Use these foundational strategies along with the strategies in this resource to enhance your outreach to families experiencing homelessness. Find the full resource, *Strategies for Outreach to All Families: Overview*, on CCTA: <https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/resource/strategies-outreach-all-families-overview>

Appendix B

CCDF Requirements Related to Outreach to Families with Limited English Proficiency

§ 98.16(dd) Plan provisions.

Lead Agencies must include in their CCDF Plans a description of how the Lead Agency will provide outreach and services to eligible families with limited English proficiency and facilitate participation of child care providers with limited English proficiency and disabilities in the subsidy system.

§ 98.33 Consumer and provider education.

The Lead Agency shall certify that it will collect and disseminate consumer education information to parents of eligible children, the general public, and providers through a consumer-friendly and easily accessible Web site that ensures the widest possible access to services for families who speak languages other than English and persons with disabilities.

§ 98.53(a)(1)(iv) Activities to improve the quality of child care.

Lead Agencies must expend funds from each fiscal year's allotment on quality activities (§ 98.53 [a]). One of ten options presented is to support the training, professional development, and postsecondary education of the child care workforce (§ 98.53[a][1]) including providing training and outreach on engaging parents and families in culturally and linguistically appropriate ways to expand their knowledge, skills, and capacity to become meaningful partners in supporting their children's positive development (§ 98.53[a][1][iv]). (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services & U.S. Department of Education, 2016)



Appendix C

Related Resources

Average Monthly Percent of Children in Care by Race and Ethnicity

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/occ/resource/fy-2016-final-data-table-12a>

Best Practices for Consumer Education Websites: Translation

<https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/resource/best-practices-consumer-education-websites-translation>

Families as Advocates and Leaders

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/rtp-advocates-leaders.pdf>

Language Access Plan 2013

<https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/open/pres-actions/2013-hhs-language-access-plan.pdf>

Language Access Program Planning Tools

<https://www.lep.gov/resources/resources.html#LAP>

Limited English Proficient (LEP) Maps—Language Map App

<https://www.lep.gov/maps/>

Plainlanguage.gov

<https://plainlanguage.gov/>

Sample Inter-Agency Data Sharing Memorandum of Understanding

https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/public/data_sharing_mou_sample_brief_final_508_0.pdf

Strategies for Outreach to All Families: Overview

<https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/resource/strategies-outreach-all-families-overview>

Top 10 Best Practices for Multilingual Websites

<https://digital.gov/resources/top-10-best-practices-for-multilingual-websites/>

Additional Resources

Federal Plain Language Guidelines

<https://plainlanguage.gov/media/FederalPLGuidelines.pdf>

Plain Language Makes It Easier for the Public to Read, Understand, and Use Government Communications

<https://plainlanguage.gov/>

Policy Statement on Supporting the Development of Children Who Are Dual Language Learners in Early Childhood Programs

https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/eecd/dll_policy_statement_final.pdf

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