



Statement on DACA

Dear Early Learning Partner,

On behalf of the Early Learning Division, I write to express my deep concern about the consequences of the Trump Administration's choice to end the Deferred Action Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program. This is not just an immigration issue - it's an early childhood issue. This decision works against our shared goals of ensuring that all of Oregon's children are raised in healthy, stable and attached families so that they can begin school ready to learn, and succeed in school and life.

DACA provided temporary relief from deportation and the right to work for unauthorized immigrants who had been brought to the United States as children. Many are now grown, and approximately one-fourth are now parents themselves. The Administration's decision to end DACA means their children – about 200,000 nationwide¹ – now live with the fear of losing their parents.

Research shows that these traumatic separations, and the fear of that trauma, have enduring harmful consequences for children, including for very young children. At just 24 months of age, the children of undocumented immigrants exhibit lower levels of cognitive development than children in families with authorized parents.² Looking at Oregon, another study focused on children's mental health status found that "Mothers' DACA eligibility significantly decreased adjustment and anxiety disorder diagnoses among their children. Parents' unauthorized status is thus a substantial barrier to normal child development and perpetuates health inequalities through the inter-generational transmission of disadvantage."³

Additionally, a Migration Policy Institute report indicates that about 4,000 early childhood educators in our state are immigrants themselves, representing a four-fold increase in the share of immigrant early childhood educators between 1990 and 2013.⁴ These providers are on the front lines, supporting families in their communities who live in fear daily. These providers potentially could experience stress themselves related to fearing their own removal from the U.S., or that of a loved one. This impact on providers' mental health can have a subsequent impact on the children in their care.

We have arrived at a defining moment in our field. Research demonstrates that immigration policy is inextricably linked to our work to support providers, deliver quality services, and build equitable systems that improve family well-being and children's learning and development.

Families that experience separation due to deportation do not walk through a specific door or program to get support; they seek out the most trusted door and, in this time of crisis and uncertainty, they need the comprehensive early learning and family supports that we provide.

So what can we do? As early childhood professionals, there are many steps we can take to be prepared to respond to meet the needs of individuals and families facing the potential of deportation, such as identifying resources and partners to:

- *Train staff to have informed conversations with families regarding how to create safe space for families to disclose immigration fears/problems and link families to resources*
- *Support families and providers in talking to children about these issues in a developmentally appropriate manner and accessing linguistically and culturally responsive mental health services when needed*
- *Provide access to Know Your Rights training for families and providers*
- *Support families to develop family safety plans*
- *Share information about state and local policies*
- *Foster partnerships with community organizations serving immigrant populations*

In the coming weeks, we will develop and provide resources and guidance for early childhood professionals to implement these strategies and others. We also welcome your feedback and ideas on what would be helpful in your role within your community.

Thank you for your steadfast commitment to young children and families in our state.

Miriam Calderon
Oregon Early Learning System Director
Early.Learning@state.or.us

1 Tom K. Wong¹ et al., 2017 National DACA Study

2 Roberto Suro, Marcelo M. Suárez- Orozco & Stephanie L. Canizales, "Removing Insecurity,"

3 J. Hainmueller et al., Science 10.1126

4 Maki Park [et.al.](#), Immigrant and Refugee Workers in the Early Childhood Field,"