



NEW AMERICANS: FACTORS INFLUENCING CHILD CARE DECISION MAKING OF REFUGEE PARENTS IN PORTLAND, MAINE

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Project Overview

- In-depth, exploratory study of the child care choices of parents of English language learners in two sites which reflect the varied experience with immigration across the country:

- **Denver, Colorado**
 - Mexican immigrants



- **Portland, Maine**
 - Cambodian refugees
 - Somalian refugees
 - Sudanese refugees



Background

- Portland, Maine is a refugee resettlement site. Portland has a surprising amount of diversity with over 60 languages spoken in the high school.
- Despite the significant benefits quality ECE programs offer to immigrant and refugee children, their rates of enrollment are significantly lower than for comparable children of U.S.-born parents.
- To better address the needs of these families, providers and state policymakers need more knowledge about the perceptions of these families and the factors that influence their choice of care.

Methods

- Focus groups with parents in Portland (Sudanese, Somali, Cambodian)
- Background interviews with community leaders of study populations.
- In-depth interviews with ECE, social service key players, and teachers
- Surveys of ECE providers and kindergarten-2nd grade teachers

Research Questions



- **What factors influence the child care choices of low income refugee families of English Language Learners?**

- In the full study, we examined
 - ▣ work characteristics, family characteristics, language, and transportation factors.
 - ▣ beliefs about child rearing, early education, and quality of care.
 - ▣ How broader cultural views affect parental choice of care and satisfaction with care.
 - ▣ How the practices of ECE and other agency service providers influenced parental access to and choice of care.
 - ▣ The perspectives of child care and other service providers about the immigrants' choice of, access to and satisfaction with child care.

- In this presentation, we **focus in on how cultural beliefs affect perception of child care choice as well as the utilization of child care.**

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