

## *Migration: A Critical Issue for Child Welfare*

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**and Robert Mindell, BA**

This volume of *Protecting Children* addresses child welfare concerns related to a topic that is complex and controversial—and which is dominating the headlines of our national media. *Migration: A Critical Issue for Child Welfare* represents important emerging concerns about child and family well-being from national, transnational, and interdisciplinary perspectives. It offers responses to the challenges posed to child safety, permanency, and well-being in the often-difficult personal experience of migration to the United States by individuals and families.

The American Humane Association and the Loyola University Chicago Graduate School of Social Work collaborated to produce this issue of *Protecting Children* with the idea of promoting a national discussion on the intersect of migration and child welfare. It is worthwhile to recall that the history of the development of social work with children and families in America is inextricably linked with the history of immigration to the United States. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as immigration swelled, concerns about child well-being were increasingly focused on European immigrant populations, in

particular urban concentrations of poor Irish, Italian, Jewish, and Eastern European families. The classrooms and clinics of settlement houses, the beds in orphanages, and the seats in orphan trains were largely occupied by children from those communities. Now, more than a century later, the United States is in the midst of a second period of peak immigration, with nearly one-fourth of all children and youth residing in the United States either foreign born or first generation.

The organizational histories of American Humane and Loyola University Chicago, both founded in the 1870s, span the same historical period marked by intensive immigration and public policy development. Together, we are examining how migration will impact child welfare policy, practice, research, funding, and professional development over coming decades, and we are calling for a national dialogue on the issue. We know that vulnerabilities of children and families increase as a result of migratory patterns, economic stresses on families, and social conditions that disrupt family unity. Together, we hope to partner with other organizations and individuals to shed light on emerging issues that will impact child and family well-being and the systems of protection and care which have been established to promote well-being.



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While there is currently no reliable data regarding immigrant children and families in the child welfare system, it is clear that these families present unique system challenges. As a group, immigrant families present a number of characteristics that increase their economic and social insecurity and are associated with negative child outcomes. Furthermore, in addition to linguistic and cultural factors, there are complex legal issues related to immigration, social welfare, and civil rights that should be considered in child welfare practice with immigrant children and families. The articles in this issue provide a window into some of those practice, program, and policy issues with the goal of supporting child welfare professionals in their work with immigrant children and families.

In the first article, *The Impact of Migration and Acculturation on Latino Children and Families: Implications for Child Welfare Practice*, Alan Dettlaff, from the University of Illinois at Chicago, and Joan Rycraft, from the University of Texas at Arlington, discuss issues experienced by Latino immigrant children and families, as well as implications for child welfare policy, practice, research, and social work education.

Next, *Risk of Affective Disorders in the Migration and Acculturation Experience of Mexican Migrants* defines stress and trauma resulting from negative immigration experiences, and their effect on family life, mental health, and child and family well-being. The article, written by Megan Finno, Maria Vidal de Haymes, and Robert Mindell, all from Loyola University Chicago, presents implications of migratory and acculturative stress for child welfare practice and systems.

The third article, *A Model of Collaboration Between Schools of Social Work and Immigrant-Serving Community-Based Organizations to Ensure Child Well-Being*, was written by Hilda Rivera and Ilze Earner, from the National Resource Center for Family-Centered Practice and Permanency Planning at the Hunter College School of Social Work. The authors describe an innovative, collaborative model that brings together university-based social work resources with immigrant-serving community-based organizations, and discuss the model's implementation and evaluation, as well as implications for social work education and practice.

*Latino Parenting Expectations and Styles: A Literature Review*, authored by Alejandro Olayo Méndez, provides a synthesis of professional literature on Latino parenting ordered around the themes of cultural norms regarding parenting, changes in the context of parenting resulting from migration, and immigrant parent-child cultural conflicts. The elaboration of these themes includes research findings regarding Latino immigrant parents' cultural expectations of children and parenting practices, including variations in gender roles and child care responsibilities, challenges of power or role reversal between immigrant parent and child, and intergenerational conflicts associated with varied levels of acculturation and assimilation within families.

The final article, *Communities of Courage: Caring for Immigrant Children and Families Through Creative Multicultural Counseling Interventions*, written by Bogusia Molina, of Fairfield University, Michael Tlanusta Garrett, from the University of Florida, and Julieta



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Monteiro-Leitner, from Southeastern Missouri State University, describes examples of multicultural group counseling interventions drawn on the wisdom of spiritual perspectives embedded in the Native American and Ignatian practices. The discussion of multicultural creative expressions is described with implications for services focusing on protecting and caring for immigrant children and families.

The guest editors of this volume would like to acknowledge those participating in this initiative as authors and reviewers of this journal, and the supporters, presenters, discussion chairs, and participants in *Migration, A Critical Issue for Child Welfare: A Transnational Research and Policy Forum*, occurring in Chicago in the summer of 2006.

### **About our guest editors**

Sonia C. Velazquez, CSS, is vice president of the Children's Services Division at American Humane, where she provides program leadership and oversees professionals working in research and evaluation, systems improvement and practice advancement, child welfare training, policy and communications, and child abuse prevention and community support programs. Her 26 years of experience include working throughout the United States and internationally with some of the largest child-focused development organizations serving millions of families and children. A native of Colombia, Ms. Velazquez worked for impoverished communities in Latin America before assuming leadership positions in the headquarters of international child-focused organizations in the United States and England. She was the director of the federally funded National Resource Center for Community Based Child Abuse Prevention and has worked for many of the world's most

respected child welfare organizations, including Save the Children, Christian Children's Fund, Plan International, and Family Support America.

Maria Vidal de Haymes, PhD, joined the faculty of Loyola University Chicago in 1992. As a professor in the School of Social Work, she teaches courses in areas of social welfare policy, community organizing, and race and ethnicity. She has published research concerning the economic and political incorporation of Latino immigrants in the United States, child welfare, and social work education, and she has been the primary investigator on a number of national and state grants focused on child welfare practice with children and families of color. Dr. Vidal de Haymes serves as a consultant to numerous local and state agencies and serves on the board of several Latino community-based organizations and the editorial board of the *Journal of Poverty*.

Robert Mindell, BA, is a coordinator for the Latino Child Welfare Training Initiative, Loyola University Chicago School of Social Work. He has been a human service professional since 1967, working exclusively in the field of child welfare since 1980 at all levels of the child welfare system, including caseworker, investigator, and supervisor. From 1994 to 1996, he served as an executive assistant for child welfare services in the office of the governor of Illinois. He also served as a special assistant to the director and as senior public service administrator at the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services, where he was involved in Latino and Native American child welfare issues. In addition, he was director of planning for the Jane Addams Hull House Association.

