

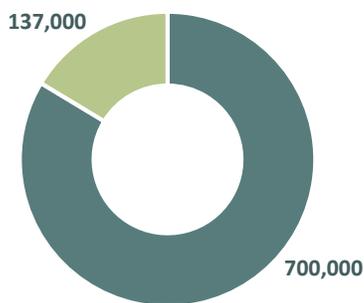
## Supporting Young Children of Undocumented Immigrant Parents in Early Care and Education

Recent actions of the federal government have created significant anxiety and fear among immigrant communities in Philadelphia, and many immigrants are worried about how new law enforcement and deportation priorities will affect their day-to-day lives.<sup>1</sup> <sup>2</sup> Research demonstrates that the stress, anxiety, and fear undocumented immigrant parents experience in their day-to-day lives can have direct and indirect negative effects on their children, whether or not children are themselves undocumented.<sup>3</sup> A recent [article by Child Trends](#) provides a succinct overview of the impact new deportation policies may have on children in the U.S.

Even prior to changes in immigration enforcement, young children in immigrant families faced significant barriers to their healthy development. Undocumented parents with young children may be unable to afford materials or the cost of tuition at a high-quality early care and education program, and may be unable to access (for example, due to lack of documentation or transportation barriers) the network of supportive services available to them, including ECE programming. These barriers help to explain why children of undocumented parents, in comparison to their peers whose parents are documented immigrants, as well as to the broader population of children in the U.S., have “lower preschool enrollment, reduced socioeconomic progress, and higher rates of linguistic isolation, limited English proficiency, and poverty.”<sup>4</sup>

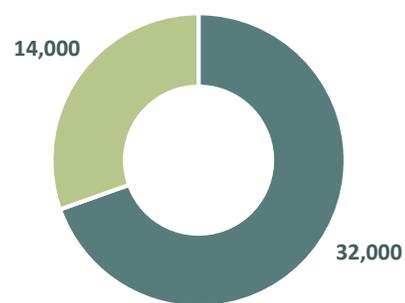
Both Pennsylvania and Philadelphia have substantial populations of foreign-born residents, including documented and undocumented immigrants and their children. According to data from the Migration Policy Institute (MPI), in 2015 over 800,000 foreign-born residents lived in Pennsylvania, constituting approximately 6.5% of the Commonwealth’s total population.<sup>5</sup> While the vast majority (~84%) of foreign-born Pennsylvanians are documented residents, an estimated

Foreign-born Residents by Residency Status, Pennsylvania



■ Documented residents   ■ Undocumented residents

Children of Undocumented Residents by Residency Status, Pennsylvania



■ Documented residents   ■ Undocumented residents

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.usnews.com/news/best-states/pennsylvania/articles/2017-03-17/philadelphias-carnaval-canceled-amid-immigration-concerns>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.scp.org/news/2016/12/27/67427/when-deportation-fears-trickle-down-to-preschool-a/>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/21/nyregion/illegal-immigrants-children-suffer-study-finds.html>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/profile-us-children-unauthorized-immigrant-parents>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/data/state-profiles/state/demographics/PA>

137,000 (~16%) are undocumented.<sup>6</sup> There is also a significant population of children born to undocumented immigrant parents, including approximately 32,000 children statewide who are documented residents and an additional 14,000 who are undocumented.<sup>7</sup> In Philadelphia, MPI estimates there are approximately 4,000 children and youth ages 3 to 17 who are undocumented immigrants;<sup>8</sup> this does not include the population of children and youth in the city who are documented residents, but whose parents are undocumented (this figure is not available).

In response to concerns expressed by immigrant families and by teachers serving these families, and given the scope of impacted communities in Philadelphia and Pennsylvania, we wished to address a number of questions related to young children from immigrant families and their rights and access to early care and education (ECE). Further, to assist staff at ECE programs in serving these students and families, we have created a flyer—available [here](#)—outlining a number of program- and teacher-level best practices, including a list of local resources available to support immigrants in Philadelphia.

### **Students’ Rights to Attend ECE Programs**

Programs subject to public educational standards, including Early Head Start/Head Start, Pre-K Counts, and municipal programs such as PHLpreK, are not required to verify citizenship and immigration status of applicant children. However, programs not subject to public educational standards, such as Child Care Assistance (CCA), are required to verify immigration status and citizenship of applicant children. No program may restrict eligibility based on the immigration status or citizenship of a child’s parents.

### **Sanctuary Policies**

Educational institutions and local, county, and state governments across the country have implemented a host of policies to support and protect immigrant families from federal immigration law enforcement agents; many of these policies have been introduced since the new presidential administration took office in January, 2017.<sup>9</sup> These policies are frequently referred to as “sanctuary” policies, meaning that they work to protect immigrants by creating sanctuaries from immigration law enforcement within their jurisdictions. Sanctuary policies typically lay out an organization’s or government’s non-cooperation with voluntary federal immigration enforcement; policies also often entail directives around collection (or non-collection) and protection of data relating to immigration status. While these regulatory and legislative approaches provide important protections, they also provide visible reassurance and support to immigrant communities and can help to reduce fears around accessing services and attending ECE classes.

For additional ideas about supporting and protecting young children in ECE programs, **review recommended practices and local resources** [here](#).

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/data/Unauthorized-immigrant-population/state/PA>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/sites/default/files/publications/ChildrenofUnauthorized-FactSheet-FINAL.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/data/Unauthorized-immigrant-population/county/42101>

<sup>9</sup> <http://cis.org/Sanctuary-Cities-Map>