

## A National Portrait of Hispanic Children in Need: A Florida Perspective

*Educating on prominent children's issues throughout the state*

### Hispanic Families in Florida

Nationally and in Florida, Hispanics are the fastest growing population group. In Florida, while the overall population is expected to increase by 8.9% between 2014 and 2020, the Hispanic population is expected to increase 18.4%. The number of Florida's Hispanic children is growing commensurately and is expected to increase by 13.9% during the same time period, while the population growth of Florida's children overall is estimated to increase by 5.6%.

### Generational Poverty And Florida's Children: Continue the Cycle of Poverty or Seize Opportunities?

Experts agree that poverty has negative consequences on the well-being of children. Those who experience poverty generation after generation often see the most negative consequences from their financial circumstances. Children struggle with poverty at high levels, with 24% of Florida's children living in poverty (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2015). While the needs of all impoverished children need to be addressed, the impact of poverty on Florida's Hispanic and Latino children are magnified disproportionately due to their rising numbers and high concentration.

### Living In Poverty

Hispanic and Latino children are disproportionately affected by poverty relative to white children. This has implications for their welfare as well as for our state's economic well-being in the long run.

Nationally, almost two-thirds (62%) of Hispanic children live in families with incomes in or near poverty, that is within 200% of the federal poverty level. 30% are reported to live near poverty, 19% live in poverty and 13% live in deep poverty, which is 50% or less of the federal poverty level (National Research Center on Hispanic Children & Families, 2016).

Florida's Hispanic Children, 2014

	United States		Florida	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total Population Under Age 18	73,777,658		4,020,977	
Total Hispanic Population	53,070,096	16.9	4,517,191	23.3
Age 0-4	5,125,083	25.7	321,401	29.8
Age 5-9	4,994,302	24.4	318,762	29.0
Age 10-14	4,716,154	22.8	316,971	27.9
Age 15-17	2,726,120	21.6	192,960	27.3
Under Age 18	17,561,659	23.8	1,150,094	28.6

Source: U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey Tables B01001 and B01001I Provided by: Florida KIDS COUNT, 3/23/2016

### National Statistics

In the U.S., children constitute 23.5% of the total population. Hispanics comprise 16.9% of the total population, of which 33.1% are under the age of 18. In 2014, 23.3% of Florida residents were Hispanic of which 25.5% were children.

When looking at areas of deep or concentrated poverty, the call to action becomes more acute as the number of Hispanic children in Florida increases. Families living in areas of highly concentrated poverty have limited access to services and support within a reasonable distance of their homes (Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, 2011).

### Barriers to Opportunity

Families living in neighborhoods of concentrated poverty experience additional linguistic and cultural factors that may compound barriers to seeking services and public assistance. Nationally, more than one in five low-income Hispanic children live in linguistically isolated households. In Florida, 20.5% of the population speaks Spanish at home. Of these, 43.8% speak English "less than very well" (U.S. Census). These populations have a harder time receiving social supports in regions not equipped to serve the Spanish-speaking population.

The National Research Center on Hispanic Children and Families (2016) reports that Hispanic parents are much more likely to not apply for benefits because of perceived ineligibility related to immigration status. This

fear is often unfounded. Naturalized citizens face no eligibility restrictions that differ from U.S.-born citizens and, after five years, legal permanent residents' eligibility should not be affected by immigration status alone.

Children in deep poverty are at an increased risk of remaining poor as adults and often live with adults who struggle with addiction or homelessness, and/or who have another disability (National Research Center on Hispanic Children & Families, 2016). For this group of children, nearly 13% of Hispanic children nationwide, adult unemployment is clearly a very serious issue. Less than half of these children live with an employed adult, which creates barriers to social programs like Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, food stamps) and Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) that have work requirements in order to qualify.

### Low Participation in Services

Despite their high levels of economic need, Hispanic families have lower rates of participation in many government support programs when compared to other racial/ethnic minority groups. Twenty-nine percent of Hispanic children living in deep poverty do not receive SNAP or TANF

benefits. In addition, 39% of children living in poverty do not receive those services. In near poverty families, however, the service gap increases dramatically with 64% of children not receiving services.

Food programs like SNAP are associated with fewer low birthweight births, lower rates of childhood obesity and higher graduation rates (White House, 2015). There are also economic benefits as SNAP benefits have a multiplier effect on the economy when expended (USDA, ND). According to the US Department of Agriculture, SNAP has a multiplier of 1.79 for SNAP benefits, meaning that for every dollar invested in SNAP generates 1.79 dollars in economic activity. Such benefits are good for individuals and the economy, however, if families don't apply, they cannot gain access.

### Opportunities to Address Poverty

This growing population comes with increased pressure for communities and agencies at the local, state, and federal levels to meet the needs of Hispanics. To do this, a clear understanding of the populations that need to be served must be developed in order to initiate effective cross-cultural work.

### Did You Know?

In Florida, only 24.8% of Hispanic/Latino households received SNAP benefits in 2014.

#### Florida's Hispanic Children, 2014

	United States		Florida	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total Households	116,211,092		7,217,508	
Received Food Stamp/ SNAP Benefits	15,089,358	13.0	1,032,766	14.3
Total Hispanic Households	14,047,027		1,339,209	
Received Food Stamp/ SNAP Benefits	3,124,598	22.2	332,268	24.8

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, Tables B22005 and B22005I  
Provided by: Florida KIDS COUNT, 3/23/2016

### First Steps

The following are ways to better help low-income Hispanic families support themselves that require limited or no additional state resources:

- **Education and awareness about benefits, supports and eligibility** – Hispanic families may not be aware of benefits, know that they qualify or know where and how to apply for benefits, including SNAP, the Earned Income Tax Credit, and the Child and Dependent Care Credit. Latino/Hispanic children would also benefit from learning about and taking advantage of Summer Food Programs, and where those programs are available. Accessible quality child care facilities and Spanish-speaking

*“There’s a dramatic problem for some of our Floridians. They’re stuck in generational poverty – the persistent, year after year oppression and hopelessness that starts with grandparents, is passed on to parents and continues to their children.”*

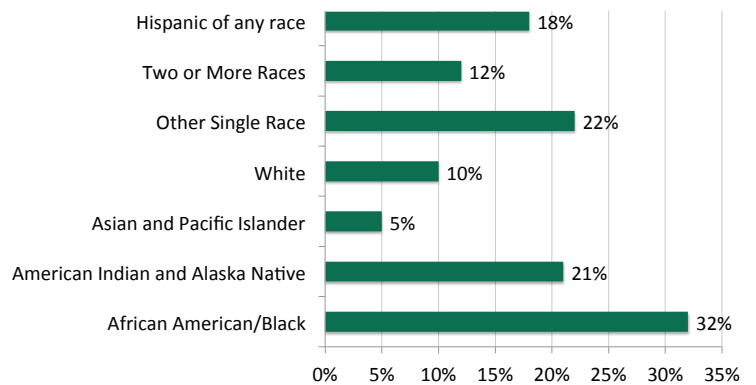
– Former Florida Speaker of The House, Will Weatherford.

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early learning programs would support childhood development and the ability of parents to work. All low-wage workers are eligible and in 2015, \$5.2 billion dollars were returned to Floridians (Florida Policy Institute, 2015). Still, 17.2% of those eligible did not apply.

- **Expanded accessibility to services** – Providing education and access outside of the traditional welfare office setting would improve access and provide greater sense of safety for families with historical apprehension of governmental agencies.
- **Cultural and linguistic support for families** – There are ways to help Hispanic families navigate and better support their children, such as language banks to assist families with linguistic supports including translation and ensuring access to community health workers sometimes known as promotoras (Callejas, Mayo, Monsalve-Serna & Hernandez, 2006); HRSA, 2011).

### Florida Children Age 0-17 Who Live In High Poverty Areas 2010-2014



Source: U.S. Census Bureau Provided by: FLORIDS KIDS COUNT, 3/33/16  
Note: Race categories represent respondents who identified as one race only and though could also identify as Hispanic origin.

### Long Term Steps

To continue this work, other ways to lift all families out of poverty include:

- **Increasing employment opportunities** generally, and increasing the minimum wage in particular,
- **Increasing parental capacity to work** and promote positive child development by providing affordable, high quality child care, including child care subsidies to families, and,
- **Ensuring families have affordable housing** so that there are stable environments in which their children can grow and thrive (Children's Defense Fund, 2015).