



IMMEDIATE ACTIONS THE BIDEN ADMINISTRATION CAN TAKE FOR DLLs

America's families speak many languages. Nearly 7.5 million children between birth and age five in the United States (one-third of all children in this age range) are Dual Language Learners (DLLs)¹. The Biden Administration has an important opportunity to develop and extend essential and overdue supports for DLLs and their families.

Although extensive research evidence demonstrates children's capacity for multilingual development, misinformation is common, while systems and services are historically under-resourced. The recommendations outlined here were compiled by a group of DLL policy leaders (listed on page 4), reflecting their review of the research evidence and examples of successful policy and program implementation.

GOVERNANCE

1) The Health and Human Services Agency (HHS) and the Department of Education (DOE) should commit **to supporting DLLs across early childhood systems**, ensuring that new and existing federal policies meaningfully include DLLs with and without disabilities. This plan should address, at a minimum, articulation of how DLLs are included and prioritized in:

- a. funding,
- b. programmatic standards,
- c. monitoring and accountability,
- d. data reporting requirements,
- e. research,
- f. technical assistance, and
- g. professional development systems.

GOVERNANCE (CONT.)

2) With an explicit priority and focus on expanding dual language education, **HHS and DOE should issue formal guidance and update their joint policy statement on DLLs, focusing on expanding access to, and implementation of high-quality early childhood education for DLLs that fully recognizes children's home language as a resource.** This should include:

- a. Reiterating and updating, as necessary, a common, strengths-based definition for DLLs that is adopted across Departments;
- b. Specifying data that should be collected on DLLs through universal home language instruments (at minimum how many, what languages they speak, which communities, and any other helpful indicators) to improve and expand services for this population;
- c. Quality indicators for high-quality programs for DLLs (e.g. research informed curriculum; developmentally appropriate, culturally sustaining, play-based pedagogies that prioritize DLLs' oral language development; appropriately normed and relevant assessments in children's home language(s) and English; strong family partnerships with language access considerations; a qualified, fairly compensated, supported multilingual workforce; and full inclusion of DLLs with disabilities or delays).

DATA

3) **HHS and DOE should collect more consistent, higher quality data on DLLs and the programs that serve them.** Using the common definition referenced above, where they have authority, HHS and DOE should require home language instruments for all Early Learning programs that receive federal funding and, where they do not have authority, they should provide resources and recommendations to align with best practice; and require states and programs to describe how they will use the data to inform policies, services, resources, and supports for DLLs. **Home language instruments should be appropriate and specific to young children, and include questions that capture the full context of children's language exposure**—across their languages—in the home and in the community. In addition, HHS and DOE should **collect information on the language of instruction that programs serving DLLs are using.** This includes Office of Head Start (OHS) updating the Program Information Report to include classroom level data on teacher and child language backgrounds, the number of children who are DLLs with disabilities, teachers' role and their language of instruction, and the language(s) of instruction.

DLL CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

4) The Offices of Civil Rights at HHS and DOE should **double down on protecting the civil rights of young DLLs with and without disabilities.** The agencies should work collaboratively to ensure that DLLs have equal access to high-quality, bilingual learning opportunities, and that these children and families are not being discriminated against or being provided subpar, scientifically misaligned, or segregated education. The **Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) should also provide guidance for Early Intervention/Early Childhood Education systems** on Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and children with disabilities, current research, best practices for assessment, intervention, and family engagement, data collection, and technical assistance and professional development.

WORKFORCE

5) **Develop realistic pathways of entry and advancement** in the early childhood field for **immigrant workers** who reflect the linguistic and cultural backgrounds of children in their respective communities. HHS should explore and provide recommendations for how **accessible community-based pathways, apprenticeships, competency recognition, instruction in languages other than English, and other alternative opportunities for advancement** can be meaningfully incorporated into career ladders for the early childhood workforce.

ASSESSMENTS

6) Federal and state agencies that fund and regulate programs and services for DLLs and English Learners (ELs) in grades pre-K to 12 **should define which assessment methods and tools are valid for DLLs/ELs to all providers of services** working with children and youth (e.g., local Head Start and Early Head Start programs, community-based child care centers, state preschool and child development programs, and local education agencies). This guidance **should include guidelines for appropriate assessment usage**. They should also **offer guidance on research-supported strategies to implement when valid assessments are not available in children’s home language**. They should provide particular guidance for usage of these tools with DLLs/ELs with disabilities.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

7) Establish a **new DLL/EL Technical Assistance Center** and, in the meantime, allocate specific set aside funding and **require existing relevant HHS and DOE early childhood technical assistance centers to expand their work in support of DLLs**. Ensure technical assistance systems develop **targeted training and technical assistance and outreach for Family Child Care (FCC) and Family, Friend, and Neighbor (FFN) care**—particularly those who are linguistically diverse and share the home language(s) of children in their communities—to ensure that these service providers and the children they serve are reflected in funding decisions and professional learning opportunities.

SUPPORTING PRENATAL TO AGE THREE

8) Invest in **research, training and technical assistance, and issue policy guidance specifically focused on emerging bilingual infants and toddlers**, with an emphasis on promoting home language development and early bilingualism at this age span of critical language development. This should include policy analyses and new supports and funding in the major settings that serve infants and toddlers, including Early Head Start, the Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships, the Maternal and Infant Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) program, and the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG).

BUDGET REQUEST

President Biden should request the following in his upcoming budget and/or departments should reallocate funding to:

I. \$1 Billion for **Early Head Start and Head Start expansion**, including dedicated funding for Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships, prioritizing DLLs and providers who serve emerging bilingual children.

II. \$50 million for the Department of Health and Human Services for an annual competitive grants program that would allow early educators in Head Start and other federally-funded programs to **convert more settings from English-only to bilingual approaches**. This funding should support planning and implementation of new dual language or bilingual instructional models, bilingual family outreach efforts to ensure that DLLs' families are aware of these new early education opportunities, and local efforts to train and retain more linguistically diverse early educators.

III. \$50 million to **grow and strengthen the bilingual workforce**, including apprenticeship programs involving high school students who earn their State Seal of Biliteracy and prioritizing existing paraprofessionals and aides who are bilingual and have experience in early childhood.

IV. \$10 million for **new TA Center** described in Action Item 7.

V. **Protect and grow Title III** to account for population growth and the needs of young ELs in the K-12 system.

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¹ Dual Language Learners are children who have a home language other than English and are learning two or more languages at the same time, or learning a second language while continuing to develop their first language (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Education).