



The NYS Office for New Americans Ramirez June Initiative Final Report One-Pager



“The ONA Ramirez June Initiative is a unique project targeted to immigrants with developmental disabilities in the United States. I think it's wonderful. I have not heard of any other state having anything like this. And this gives us lots of encouragement. Because we know that on the government level, we have people who notice us, we have people who care about us and support us.”

- Bin Feng, Family Peer Advocate

What is the ONA Ramirez June Initiative?

The New York State Office for New Americans (ONA) Ramirez June Initiative increases access to resources, information, and services for new Americans with developmental disabilities and their families. The Initiative is the first of its kind in the nation. It is named after two new American families, the Ramírez family and the family of Siewling (June) Lum. Both families shared their stories of how they overcame barriers to access developmental disability services. The Initiative was created in 2019 as a pilot through a 5-year grant funded by NYS Council on Developmental Disabilities (CDD). The CDD is a key strategic and technical partner supporting the successful outcomes of the program. The ONA Ramirez June Initiative hosts workshops for new Americans and service providers across New York State, creates and shares multilingual disability resources, collects data about barriers new Americans in New York are facing, and shares its findings and recommendations with key stakeholders at the local, state, and national level.



Why was the ONA Ramirez June Initiative created?

New Americans with developmental disabilities (DD) face barriers accessing disability services in New York State. New Americans are people who were born outside the United States who live in the United States and their families. There is limited outreach to inform new Americans about available disability services. Some new Americans with DD face barriers based on language and their immigration status. New Americans have reported facing long wait times to access services. Disability services often lack quality interpretation or document translation. These barriers have led to challenges for new Americans to access DD services in New York. The ONA Ramirez June Initiative helps new Americans with DD have better access to developmental disability services. We recommend other states adopt this model to help new Americans with DD.

“The most significant challenge is probably the lack of understanding regarding the sources of information and the structure of various institutions. When seeking services, I often don't know where to begin or how to navigate the process effectively.”

– Parent of a child with a disability

Key Take Aways:

- The Initiative has engaged 3,523 people through its 115 outreach events from November 2019 through July 2023.
- Participants of the grant reported positive feedback in the Initiative’s survey which was shared after outreach events. Out of 777 survey respondents, 98.9% reported being satisfied with the Initiative’s outreach efforts. As a result of grant participation, out of 645 survey respondents, 95.7% reported that they feel better able to support individuals with developmental disabilities.
- Over 4,164 free copies of Voyage, a multilingual illustrated resource book the Initiative created on the early identification of disabilities, have been mailed along with 4,439 informational materials from the CDC’s “Learn the Signs. Act Early” (LTSAE) campaign to 128 recipients including new American families, community-based organizations, and pediatric practices.
- The majority of the Initiative’s grant participants are women.
- 46% of participants who are parents and care givers of individuals with developmental disabilities identified as Asian. Asian Americans make up 9.6% of the New York State population but only 3.8%¹ of those using Medicaid Home and Community Based Services for individuals with developmental disabilities.

Next Steps

New York State is a beacon of welcoming for all new Americans, and the ONA Ramirez June Initiative is a shining example of the types of innovative programming the state has launched since the NYS Office for New Americans (ONA) was created in 2012. Due to these efforts, systemic change is advancing to increase access for new Americans with developmental disabilities. However, continued support is needed at both the state and local level to increase access to services for new Americans with DD. Statewide programming and increased collaboration is needed to bridge gaps and offer new Americans enhanced support that is linguistically and culturally responsive, to navigate and access vital developmental disability services.

