

# COVID-19 HEALTH CARE: FACT SHEET FOR IMMIGRANTS



***SEEK TREATMENT! IF YOU ARE FEELING SICK, INCLUDING EXPERIENCING COVID-19 SYMPTOMS, FEVER, COUGH, SHORTNESS OF BREATH, IT IS IMPORTANT TO SEEK TREATMENT.***

- There is no federal, state, or local law that prevents immigrants, including those who are not lawfully present (or undocumented) from accessing healthcare services. Nor is there any law that prevents healthcare providers from treating individuals without lawful immigration status or prevents health insurance companies from selling health coverage to individuals without immigration status.
- Immigrants and their families, regardless of immigration status, can seek medical treatment at community health centers at a reduced cost or free of charge, depending on their income: [findahealthcenter.hrsa.gov](http://findahealthcenter.hrsa.gov)



***THE PUBLIC CHARGE RULE DOES NOT APPLY TO TESTING, SCREENING, OR TREATMENT OF COMMUNICABLE DISEASES LIKE COVID-19.***

- On March 14, 2020, the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) issued an alert encouraging all individuals, regardless of immigration status, with symptoms that resemble Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) (fever, cough, shortness of breath) to seek necessary medical treatment or preventive services.
- A recent report shows that very few people are both eligible for public benefits and subject to the public charge rule.
- A free tool from Boundless can help green card applicants assess the risk of denial under the public charge rule: [www.boundless.com/public-charge-estimator](http://www.boundless.com/public-charge-estimator)
- Know Your Rights resources concerning the public charge rule can be found at [iAmerica.org/protectfamilies](http://iAmerica.org/protectfamilies) and materials from our allies can be found at [protectingimmigrantfamilies.org/know-your-rights](http://protectingimmigrantfamilies.org/know-your-rights)

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## ***IMMIGRANTS AND MIXED-STATUS FAMILIES SHOULD NOT FOREGO MEDICAL TREATMENT FOR FEAR OF DISCLOSURE OF IMMIGRATION STATUS.***

- Health care providers are not required to inquire about immigration status.
- The Healthcare Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) prohibits the disclosure of protected health information (PHI) or patient information without the patient's consent.
- Know Your Rights Materials regarding immigrants' access to health care from our allies at NILC and Protecting Immigrant Families: [www.nilc.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Protecting-Access-to-Health-Care-2017-04-17.pdf](http://www.nilc.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Protecting-Access-to-Health-Care-2017-04-17.pdf) and [ProtectingImmigrantFamilies.org](http://ProtectingImmigrantFamilies.org).
- Updated access to healthcare materials from our allies at NILC can be found at [www.nilc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/immigrant-access-to-health-care-update.pdf](http://www.nilc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/immigrant-access-to-health-care-update.pdf)



## ***IMMIGRANTS AND MIXED-STATUS FAMILIES SHOULD NOT AVOID GOING TO THE DOCTOR FOR FEAR OF IMMIGRATION ENFORCEMENT.***

- On March 18, 2020, Department of Homeland Security (DHS), U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), announced that it was suspending enforcement operations due to the COVID-19 outbreak. ICE's announcement encourages all individuals to seek medical treatment and not to forego doing so due to fear of civil immigration enforcement. ICE also confirmed that it is complying with its "sensitive locations" policy.
- The ICE "sensitive locations" guidance states that absent exigent circumstances, immigration enforcement should not take place at "sensitive locations" which include: Medical treatment and health care facilities, such as hospitals, doctors' offices, accredited health clinics, and emergent or urgent care facilities. The ICE Sensitive Locations Memo can be found at <https://www.ice.gov/doclib/ero-outreach/pdf/10029.2-policy.pdf>.
- The U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) agency has similar guidance that attempts to limit enforcement at hospitals.
- On March 16, 2020, ICE issued guidance related to COVID-19 restating that ICE does not conduct enforcement operations at medical facilities, "except under extraordinary circumstances." The ICE guidance provides additional information about COVID-19 and enforcement, check-ins, detention, removal, and other issues. This guidance, however, has not yet been updated to include the March 18 announcement temporarily halting immigration enforcement.