

STRATEGIES AND POLICIES FOR EDUCATORS WORKING WITH YOUNG CHILDREN OF UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANT PARENTS

BACKGROUND

Recent actions and rhetoric from the federal government have created **anxiety and fear among immigrant communities in Philadelphia** about a renewed emphasis on deportation and immigration law enforcement. 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**. In fact, children of undocumented immigrants have “**lower preschool enrollment, reduced socioeconomic progress, and higher rates of linguistic isolation, limited English proficiency, and poverty**,” as compared to their peers. As local and state governments work to implement sanctuary policies to protect immigrant communities, you can **revise and update your program’s practices to better serve children of undocumented immigrants**. Below is a set of strategies and policies you can implement in your program to ensure that all your students are safe and thriving.

STEP 1

Unless required by law, **do not collect any information that identifies students’ or their families’ immigration status**. If documentation must be provided for any services provided by or at your program, request identification that is not related to citizenship (e.g., utility bills, doctors’ records).

STEP 2

Work with your director to **create a policy that identifies the steps staff will take if Immigrations and Customs Enforcement (ICE) or other law enforcement agents come to your program** or request information, formally or informally, about any of your students or their families. Programs may deny some requests for information (for example, if there is not a warrant); program staff may also temporarily deny other requests while they are reviewed internally by an identified staff person, such as the program director. Programs may also choose to **restrict or forbid immigration law enforcement access to students during the course of program hours** in order to maintain a positive educational environment for all students and teachers.

STEP 3

Post and have copies available of resources for immigrant families, including materials delineating individuals’ rights should they be stopped by law enforcement; local, state, and federal programs available to families; organizations that serve immigrant families; and steps to prepare for and undertake in the event of an emergency, such as the detention of a family member. Ensure these materials are provided in all of the languages spoken by families of your program.

STEP 4

Determine whether it may be beneficial to **plan a discussion with some or all of your students’ families about precautions and proactive preparations relating to immigration**. If you or other program staff do engage with families, make sure that your conversations are not alarming; clarify that your program is there to support all of its children and their families, and present clear, actionable advice and resources.

RESOURCES FOR EDUCATORS AND PARENTS

SUPPORTING YOUNG CHILDREN OF UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANT PARENTS

In recent months the federal government has begun to expand its efforts to detain and deport undocumented immigrants. It is important that immigrants, their families, and those who work with them—including early care and education staff—know about and can access supports. Listed below are organizations and other resources that provide information and/or assistance that may be of help to immigrants in Philadelphia and to the teachers that work with them and their families.

Esperanza | 215.324.0746 ext. 298

Provides direct legal services to low-income U.S. citizen and foreign-born individuals and their families needing assistance with immigration matters. Services include: family reunification, green card applications, citizenship and naturalization, and assistance for victims of domestic violence, human trafficking, or other crimes. Esperanza also offers workshops on immigrant rights and immigration law.

Community Legal Services of Philadelphia | 215.981.3700

Provides advice and representation for civil legal problems relating to employment, access to health care, public benefits, Social Security, debt and consumer problems, housing, utilities, criminal and child abuse records, long-term care, services for senior citizens, home ownership, DHS (parents only), language access, and other issues.

Welcoming Center for New Pennsylvanians | 215.557.2626

Provides job placement and employment assistance, social services information and referrals, free monthly legal clinics, and supports for small business owners.

Friends of Farmworkers, Inc. | 215.733.0878

Provides legal services for eligible low income immigrants on matters related to employment and runs a twice-weekly legal clinic at the Puentes de Salud medical clinic in South Philadelphia.

HIAS Pennsylvania | 215.832.0900

Provides legal, resettlement, citizenship, and supportive services to immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers from all backgrounds in order to ensure their fair treatment and full integration into American society.

Catholic Social Services | 215.854.7019 | (Spanish) 215.854.7018

Provides low-cost legal services to immigrants in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. Services include assistance with asylum and citizenship applications and court representation in matters involving immigration.

Congreso de Latinos Unidos | 215.763.8870

Provides education, job training and employment services, housing and debt counseling, HIV prevention and support programs, drug and alcohol counseling, and children and youth initiatives including leadership and conflict-resolution.

Nationalities Service Center | 215.893.8400

Provides legal, social, and educational services to immigrants, refugees, and other non-English-speaking people. Services include legal assistance, refugee resettlement, economic self-sufficiency programs, employment preparation, English classes, interpretation, and programs for the elderly.

IMMIGRATION EMERGENCY PHONE NUMBERS

Community Legal Services of Philadelphia: 215-981-3700

New Sanctuary Movement (for immigration raids): 267-333-9530