



Immigrant Rights and Health Access: MEDIA MESSAGES AND TALKING POINTS

As a voice for its member community health centers and its immigrant patient populations, AAPCHO believes that all individuals have a right to purchase and receive health care services. In order for safety net of health care providers to continue to deliver comprehensive health care to these populations and remain sustainable, we must grant greater access to health care services for immigrant populations.

Access to Care for Immigrants

- Common-sense immigration reform should increase access to health care without long waiting periods or restrictions for lawfully present immigrants. AAPCHO believes giving everyone equal access to health care, makes America a stronger and healthier nation.
- AAPCHO believes everyone, whether citizen or immigrant, has the right to quality, affordable health care. That's why our community health centers serve over 350,000 patients, many of which are limited English proficient and uninsured.
- The President promised that immigration reform would ensure that, "folks who are here legally have access to affordable, quality health insurance... just like everybody else." We think he should stick to that promise.
- AAPCHO community health centers, as part of its mission, already serve all patients that come through its doors, regardless of their immigration status or ability to pay. It's the right thing to do and it helps keep everyone healthy. America should do the same.

Ending the 5-Year Bar

- It is morally wrong to prevent lawfully present immigrants who have earned their right to be here, from accessing the services that they've paid taxes to support, for five years. In one Northern California community health center alone, an estimated 5,000 patients would gain access to health coverage by eliminating this arbitrary rule.
- America shouldn't be in the business of denying lawfully present immigrants the ability to live healthy lives and provide quality health care for their families. A five-year waiting period just doesn't make sense.
- Immigrants, including the undocumented, paid \$11.2 billion in state and local taxes in 2010 alone. Everyone who works hard, pays taxes, and earns their right to stay here lawfully, should not be denied the ability to see a doctor or purchase health insurance.

Restoring Medicaid to COFA Migrants

- Migrants from the COFA states of the Federated States of Micronesia, Republic of Palau and Republic of the Marshall Islands, were excluded from Medicaid due to an oversight in 1996.¹ It's time for the federal government to correct that mistake.
- COFA migrants are in this country legally, pay taxes, work hard, and play by the rules. They should be granted access to Medicaid to ensure that they and their families have the health coverage they need, just like everyone else.

Public Health and Safety

- Denying anyone the ability to see a doctor is the wrong way to protect America's public health. Making sure that immigrants can get the primary and preventive care they need at community health centers ensures that everyone, including our children, stays healthy.
- We should make it sustainable for community health centers and other safety net hospitals to provide cost-effective preventive health care, which saves billions in uncompensated emergency room care and lowers costs for everyone. Allowing immigrants to access primary and preventive health care is a necessary step.

Messaging Do's & Don'ts!

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| DO: | Say "new American", "aspiring American" to describe all immigrants. Say "unauthorized" or "undocumented" to describe immigrants living in the U.S. without government authorization. |
| DON'T: | Never say "illegal" to describe a person or immigration status. No human being is "illegal" and this word dehumanizes immigrants, making it easier for opponents to demonize them. |
| DO: | Use words like "roadmap" or "earned right" to describe the process for individuals to obtain citizenship. Think: "paths" are used by animals, "roads" are used by people. |
| DON'T: | Never use language that blames immigrants for their place in society or ability to participate in the health care system. Take care to identify misguided policies as the culprit instead. |
| DO: | Describe shared values like "health equity" and "creating opportunities", which is our unassailable moral high ground. Creating policies that offer citizenship for "new Americans" and "aspiring citizens" is a winner for most Americans. |

¹ Migrants living in the US under the terms of the Compact of Free Association (COFA) were erroneously left off the list of "eligible immigrants" for federal programs, including Medicaid, during passage of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act in 1996.