

Guide: Addressing Legal Concerns Around Immigration-Related Vaccine Hesitancy

The information presented here is for educational purposes only and is not legal advice. Laws and policies can change rapidly. Consult with a legal professional for the most up-to-date information.

Immigrants may have concerns about government authorities' access to personal information provided at vaccine clinics. For some immigrants, even the notion of confidentiality in government processes is novel. Immigrants may be afraid that:

- Their information will be recorded on government lists or electronic registries that will be accessible to immigration authorities.
- Health departments or vaccine sites may routinely report immigrants to authorities.
- Healthcare professionals or health department staff who are hostile to immigrants may report them to immigration authorities – especially if these staff have a negative interaction with them at the event.
- Records indicating that they used a public health service, including vaccination, will jeopardize future immigration petitions based on the USCIS [public charge rule](#).

Health departments and providers have as much of an interest in data protection as the community members they serve. The success of public health efforts depends on community trust.

Confidentiality concerns can vary based on the nature of information requested. For example:

- Providing home addresses may be especially concerning for immigrants who fear immigration raids.
- Disclosing health conditions during vaccination pre-screening may be concerning; immigrants may fear that disclosing health conditions will make them appear less desirable as US residents or potential burdens on government resources.

Building Partnerships

Before a vaccination event, trusted sources such as community and faith-based organizations should reach out to their communities to understand and respond to immigration concerns.

Key messages should include:

- No one can be denied a vaccine if they are unable to pay. Immigrants are eligible for vaccination services whether or not they have medical insurance.
- Once vaccines are widely available, anyone will be able to get vaccinated, regardless of immigration status.
- US public health systems serve the public, including immigrants, because healthy communities benefit everyone (provide familiar examples of public health services such as WIC or community health screenings to provide a frame of reference).
- Personal data collected during vaccination are only used for public health purposes (list what specific data is collected and how it is used).
- Personal data are not transferred or stored outside of public health systems or used for immigration purposes. Public health professionals have long, successful track records with data protection.
- Health departments and health care providers do not support immigration or law enforcement efforts. The inappropriate release of data can have severe consequences.
- The use of free COVID-19 vaccination services will not be considered in USCIS public charge determinations.
- Immigration enforcement activities are unlikely to be conducted near vaccination sites or routes commonly used to travel to them – this is [according to](#) the Department of Homeland Security.

Consider asking an attorney from the community to be a speaker at any outreach effort. Attorneys are respected sources of immigration information and can be important allies in efforts to address immigration concerns.

Note that any outreach events should be conducted virtually or in-person with [appropriate safety protocols](#).

Creating Affirming Vaccine Events

- **Do not require state identification or a social security number** for COVID-19 vaccination – alternate forms of identification such as passports or consulate or municipal IDs should be accepted.
- **Choose a neutral location for vaccine events** – consider a location that is already familiar to the community and that is not in close proximity to police stations or other places that could be intimidating.
- **Solicit another perspective** – enlist community members to give feedback on how vaccination processes, documents, and settings may appear to people who have immigration-based vaccine hesitancy.
- **Reduce the risk of immigrants being cited for driving without a license** when traveling to and from vaccination appointments. Facilitate the use of ride shares (Lift/Uber) or use mobile testing and vaccination units. Support carpooling by providing drop-in appointments or allowing groups to schedule appointments together. Promote ways to carpool while following [COVID-19 safety guidelines](#).
- **Consider anonymous vaccination programs to reach immigrants that are most hesitant.** Anonymous vaccination may be especially attractive to immigrants who are concerned that because they do not have a state ID, people will assume they are undocumented.
- **Use throwaway email accounts to identify patients.** For immigrants who are concerned about the government knowing their name, birthday, or other identifying information, health departments can help them set up a “throwaway” email account. Throwaway accounts are only used for a specific purpose and are discarded when they are no longer needed. Choosing a single domain, like gmail.com, allows the health department to ensure that each email address is unique to the patient. This way, the patient can receive the vaccine anonymously, and as an added benefit, the health department has a means of communicating with the patient about side effects or a second dose, when appropriate.