



Florida Health Care Providers: Are Your Immigrant Patients Afraid to Seek Care?

Over the past two years, healthcare providers have witnessed their immigrant patients' reluctance to seek medical care due to fears of deportation. There is also a rising fear among immigrant families that receiving health care coverage—*even for United States citizens*-- will hurt the family's ability to stay in the country. These fears are linked to draft proposed changes to the “public charge” rule. (More information on the back of this flyer). If the proposed rule changes go forward, your patients, their families and our communities will suffer.

There is an urgent need to educate the public and decision makers. *Health care providers play a critical role in providing examples of how your patients' health is being hurt by the current anti-immigrant climate. Please share your anecdotal observations --not patient-protected health care information and join the national campaign to Protect Immigrant families.*

Here are some typical patient scenarios:

- Carlos and Anna are farmworkers who have been living in Homestead, for the past ten years. Their 5-year-old son, Jose a U.S. citizen, receives Medicaid. When Jose was three, he was diagnosed with autism and has been receiving speech and behavioral therapy. The therapies are helping but the parents are afraid to continue his treatments.
- Maria, a 19-year-old legal permanent resident, arrived in Miami from Cuba when she was five years old. She is currently working part-time, attending Miami-Dade College, and is married to a citizen. Neither Maria nor her husband have insurance through their jobs. They just got news that Maria is pregnant and are eager to begin prenatal care. Although Maria is now eligible for Medicaid, they are scared about enrolling because Maria wants to sponsor her mother, who is still in Cuba, to join the family in Miami.
- Pierre, a landscaper, moved to Miami from Haiti in 2002. He and his wife, a U.S. citizen, have two citizen children, ages 1 and 3, who were enrolled in Medicaid and have been receiving periodic health screenings and vaccinations through the program. When the children did not come for their regular health screens, you contacted Pierre and he told you that he and his wife dis-enrolled the children because they fear Medicaid enrollment will hurt his chances of staying with his family in the U.S.

If you have patients with similar stories, please contact Miriam Harmatz, Harmatz@floridahealthjustice.org, Michelle Adams, Adams@floridahealthjustice.org, 6.27.18



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What is a public charge?

The “public charge” test is designed to identify people who may depend on government benefits as their main source of support. If someone is determined likely to become a “public charge,” the government can deny admission to the U.S. or refuse an application for lawful permanent residency. The Department of Homeland Security has drafted a proposal that would significantly expand long-standing “public charge” policy —forcing immigrant families to make an impossible choice between meeting basic needs and keeping their families together in this country. We anticipate that the draft regulation will be posted for public comment soon.

How is the “public charge” test applied today?

The only benefits currently considered are cash assistance (SSI or TANF) or government funded long-term care in an institution (e.g. Medicaid for a nursing home patient).

What would the proposed “public charge” rule change?

Draft proposed changes would allow the federal government to consider whether immigrants, or their family members including U.S. citizen children, have either applied for or received virtually any public benefit. Many programs designed to help low-income individuals and families meet basic needs could be considered, including: Medicaid, Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP), subsidies provided through the Affordable Care Act, earned income tax credits, supplemental nutritional assistance (SNAP or food stamps); nutritional assistance for pregnant women, infants and children (WIC), housing assistance, including Section 8 vouchers and comparable state and local programs.

What are some potential impacts of the proposed rule change?

Lawfully present immigrants are already far more likely to be uninsured than U.S. citizens. The proposed rule would make that disparity even worse. If the proposed rule is finalized, pregnant women and parents of citizen children may choose to forego critical health care benefits for themselves or their families out of fear that receipt of coverage will adversely impact their ability to stay in the country with their families.

Once the proposed rule is published in the Federal Register, the public will have an opportunity to submit comments before it's finalized. Policymakers need to hear stories about how proposed policies will harm families and communities. **We need your help to connect with individuals and families to help them share their experience.**

For more information, please visit the national Protecting Immigrant Families website at www.clasp.org/protecting-immigrant-families-campaign-resources, please consider joining the national campaign. If you have any questions, please contact Miriam Harmatz, harmatz@floridahealthjustice.org