



NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE

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Acting Commissioner

Health

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Message to Providers Regarding Immigrant Parents'/Caregivers' Concerns

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Dear Colleague,

In recent months, many New York City (NYC) families have experienced heightened anxiety and other mental health concerns regarding increased immigration enforcement activity. In particular, concerns are related to the potential detention or deportation of parents and caregivers and the consequences for their children.

These immigration enforcement concerns are felt by a large number of residents, both citizens and noncitizens. In addition to NYC's large number of noncitizen residents, as many as one in six children in NYC live with an undocumented immigrant household member. **More than half of those children are U.S. citizens.**

These concerns can manifest in a range of symptoms and behaviors, including avoidance of primary and emergency care, difficulty managing prescribed medications, anxiety, depression, social isolation, panic disorder, suicidal ideation, substance use, cardiac conditions, and gastrointestinal conditions. Given the possible effects associated with avoidance of care, conducting affirmative outreach to patients who could benefit from support is a bridge toward maintaining health and preventing morbidity and mortality.

Resources to Address Family Separation Concerns

To support your patients who may have concerns about the possible detention or deportation of parents and caregivers and potential separation from their children, particularly children with medical needs, consider sharing information about the following options available in New York:

- Parents or legal guardians may elect to designate a "person in parental relationship" to delegate certain limited authority over medical and educational decisions. A "person in parental relationship" can be authorized to make medical and educational decisions for children if their parents or guardians are unavailable.
- Parents or legal guardians may also elect to appoint a "standby guardian." A "standby guardian" assumes full legal guardianship if a child's parents or guardians are unable to take care of their child because of a triggering event, such as the parent being incapacitated by an illness, detained by immigration authorities, or deported.

For more information about designating a "person in parental relationship" or appointing a "standby guardian," visit the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs (MOIA) [Family Separation](#) webpage at nyc.gov/familyseparation.

Anyone concerned about being separated from their child due to immigration enforcement should contact an attorney to discuss options to plan for their child's care. For help finding trusted immigration legal help in the five boroughs, you can refer people to the [MOIA Immigration Legal Support Hotline](#) at 800-354-0365, available Monday to Friday from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., or tell them to call [311](#) and say, "immigration legal."

Confidentiality Concerns

In discussing these issues with your patients, you should keep in mind the sensitivity of immigration status information, the imperative to build and maintain trust, and relevant privacy laws. Consult with your hospital, clinic, or colleagues to discuss appropriate practices related to questions about immigration status information and about the recording of such information in your medical records.

More Resources

For more information related to immigrant health—including printable "[Every New Yorker, Without Exception](#)" posters available in 15 languages for your office's waiting and exam rooms—visit the NYC Health Department's [Immigrant Health Care](#) webpage at nyc.gov/immigranthealth.

Sincerely,



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