



Supporting Immigrant Children: Resources for Ohio Child Providers and Practitioners

Introduction:

Current Climate & the Harmful Impact on Children & Families

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Immigrant families across the United States—particularly those of mixed immigration status—have often overcome many difficult circumstances to survive and thrive in the United States.

While resilient, they face growing vulnerability to policy changes that compromise their safety, well-being, and access to fundamental rights. Children in these families, many of whom are U.S. citizens, are disproportionately harmed by federal rollbacks and expanded enforcement measures that instill fear within essential institutions such as schools, hospitals, and childcare centers (Muñoz & McLean, 2025).

Recent federal actions—such as the termination of the Department of Homeland Security’s “sensitive locations” policy in early 2025, which had previously limited immigration enforcement in places like schools, hospitals, and places of worship—have heightened fear within essential community institutions (McTiernan, 2025) and the termination of deferred action for children under special immigrant juvenile status (SIJS) (Costa, 2025) have intensified confusion and uncertainty. Increased immigration enforcement and deportation through U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and U.S. Customs and Border

Protection (CBP) amplifies the current climate of distrust and fear. Institutions once regarded as safe spaces for education, healthcare, and social services now carry the threat of surveillance and disruption.

Children are increasingly targeted by federal and local authorities. According to government data, ICE has placed roughly 600 immigrant children in federal shelters since the start of 2025—more than the previous four years combined (ProPublica, Nov. 2025). A ProPublica investigation found that in most of the cases reviewed, children were taken to shelters under circumstances that former government officials say would never have happened in the past, such as after routine immigration court hearings or check-in appointments, or because they happened to be in a home or business when immigration authorities arrived to arrest someone else. The government is also making it more difficult for relatives or other adult sponsors to get them back, with kids staying on average six months versus one month just a year ago.

This policy shift has produced a chilling effect: families increasingly withdraw from services, avoid public systems, and experience heightened anxiety—placing children’s physical, psychological, and socioeconomic well-being at risk (Haley, 2021). These resources are intended to support child-serving professionals dedicated to ensuring that children of immigrants have the same opportunities for a decent quality of life as their peers.

Interior immigration enforcement policies have undermined the well-being of millions of U.S. children with an undocumented parent, impeding the 5.2 million affected children’s ability to subsist and thrive (Chavez, 2023). Deportation and restrictive border policies leading to parental separation cause long-term trauma and adversity for children (SRCD, 2025).

Evidence shows that these enforcement practices exact a serious toll on school attendance and academic performance as well as children’s mental health, with documented spikes in anxiety-related disorders, self-harm behaviors, and even suicide attempts among children in impacted families – effects that carry long-term developmental consequences (Chavez, 2023; Borbon, 2021).

Parents and pediatricians reported in focus groups conducted by the Kaiser Family Foundation (Pillai, 2025) behavioral changes due to increased fears among their children, including problems sleeping and eating, headaches and stomachaches, and depression and anxiety. The unrelenting stress of potential family separation also undermines physical health: even the threat of a parent’s detention or deportation leads many families to avoid preventive healthcare and social services, leaving children’s medical and developmental needs unmet (Haley, 2020). Pediatricians note significant long-term health consequences due to these persistent fears, including the damaging effects of toxic stress on children’s health over the lifespan, negative effects on children’s growth and development, and compounding social and environmental challenges (Pillai, 2025). Public health experts have accordingly characterized the climate of aggressive immigration enforcement as a form of severe psychological harm to children and argue that such experiences—from witnessing a parent’s arrest to living in constant fear of deportation—qualify as Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) with profound and lasting impacts on both mental and physical health (Barajas-Gonzalez, 2021).

Nationally, nearly 1 in 4 children in the United States has at least one immigrant parent (Haley, 2025) and roughly 86% of those children are U.S.-born citizens. Yet, they can encounter significant service gaps and exclusionary obstacles, particularly depending on their parents’ status (27% of all immigrants in the U.S. are undocumented) (Batalova, 2025). An estimated 850,000 undocumented children live in the U.S. (Passel, 2024). Regardless of immigration statuses, restrictive immigration policies and increased enforcement activity in general increase fear across the broader immigrant community, with detrimental effects on the health and wellness and daily life of immigrant children and their families (Pillai, 2025).

In Ohio, that number is approximately 1 in 9, with over 250,000 children living in immigrant families across the state (Vera Institute of Justice, 2025). More than 600,000 immigrants live in Ohio—roughly 5.1% of the state’s population. Federal actions significantly impact Ohio immigrants, who may also face additional pressure from proposed state legislation¹ that, if enacted, would

“Deportation and restrictive border policies leading to parental separation cause long-term trauma and adversity for children.”
— (SRCD 2025)

risk transforming supportive community spaces into perceived extensions of immigration enforcement, thereby threatening public trust and child well-being across the state. Children in immigrant families are disproportionately likely to live in low-income households. Nationally, 42% of these children live below 200% of the federal poverty level, compared to 33% of children with U.S.-born parents (Batalova, 2025). Among foreign-born households in Ohio, 23.2% of noncitizen families live below the poverty line, and nearly 20% fall between 100% and 199% of the federal poverty threshold. These figures highlight the economic precarity that shapes childhood experiences in immigrant communities (Batalova, 2025). Child-serving professionals, including pediatricians, teachers, social workers, early educators and childcare workers, are increasingly on the frontlines of these challenges. This document offers an overview of the most current and reliable national and Ohio-specific guidance and resources to support practitioners and providers working with immigrant children. It is organized in the following child and youth-specific settings:

1. **Early Childhood & Child Care**
2. **Education in K-12 Schools**
3. **Health Care & Mental Health in Pediatric Settings**
4. **Child Welfare & Family Court Supports**

Each section provides practical tools, current resources, and key considerations to help providers safeguard children’s access to care, safety, and developmental supports. Although not a legal document, this guide is designed to serve as a trusted resource for navigating a complex and evolving environment with accuracy, clarity and compassion. Please note, however, that given the rapidly changing nature of the U.S. immigration and refugee policy landscape, the information and sources cited in this publication may change and require frequent review to ensure the information is up to date (see regularly refreshed resources like the Children Thrive Action Network’s [“Protecting Immigrant Families Toolkit”](#) for information updated in real time).

I. Early Childhood & Child Care

Providers in Ohio’s early childhood systems—including daycare centers, Head Start programs, family-based care, and home visiting services—play a vital role in supporting immigrant families during critical stages of early child development. Yet, **young children in immigrant and refugee households frequently encounter systemic barriers to enrolling in early learning programs**, accessing developmental screenings, and securing stable care environments. Concerns about immigration enforcement and limited language access in public-facing systems compound these challenges.

Immigrants also represent a vital share of the early childhood workforce, which struggles to attract and maintain childcare workers given the low wages typical of this profession. One in five early childhood professionals identifies as foreign-born (Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, 2025). These providers bring bilingual skills and cultural knowledge that strengthen program inclusivity and responsiveness. At the same time, immigrant family caregivers and children frequently struggle to access linguistically and culturally appropriate services, particularly in communities with limited formal supports. Eligibility for publicly funded childcare in Ohio is determined by the child’s immigration status—not the parents’—as clarified in the [Cuyahoga County Department of Health and Human Services’ Child Care Assistance Program FAQ \(2025\)](#). Equitable access to early learning environments requires more than legal awareness and adherence to developmental standards; it also depends on trauma-informed practices, meaningful language access, and trust-building with immigrant families. **Creating safe spaces for play, rest, and learning is essential for all children in childcare settings.** As defined by CLASP, a “safe space” policy establishes protocols to mitigate the harm of potential immigration enforcement actions at or near early childhood programs and to protect families’ safety and privacy. The resources below are intended to guide childcare providers, administrators, and early intervention professionals in serving immigrant children with dignity and care, ensuring that they thrive in enriching, responsive, and inclusive environments.

Ensuring a “Safe Space” in Child Care Settings

[A Guide to Creating ‘Safe Space’ Policies for Early Childhood Programs, 2025](#)

This guide by CLASP, available in both Spanish and English, provides early childhood professionals with tools to design and implement “safe space” policies that

protect immigrant families from immigration enforcement at or near childcare settings. Safe spaces policies matter because immigration enforcement fears discourage immigrant families from enrolling in childcare and early education. Programs can provide stability and trust by making safety and privacy protections explicit.

This guide reviews the history of “sensitive locations” protection, outlines key components of effective policies, and offers a step-by-step template for programs to adapt. Staff training, confidentiality, and communication protocols to safeguard children’s safety, uphold family privacy, and build trust in early learning environments are essential features, as highlighted below:

- **Core Elements of a Safe Space**
 - a. Limit the collection of personal information to only what is necessary for enrollment or education.
 - b. Do not disclose family or child information without parental consent, a subpoena, or a judicial court order.
 - c. Document all interactions with immigration agents.
 - d. Clearly designate staff responsible for interacting with immigration agents.
- **Child Care Staff Training and Preparedness**
 - a. Train all staff on policies, roles, and scripts for interacting with agents.
 - b. Prioritize staff and child safety; staff should never physically interfere with enforcement.
- **Family and Community Communication**
 - a. Share policies with families to reassure them that programs are safe and welcoming.
 - b. Establish emergency contacts and connect families with trusted legal/community resources.
 - i. Build relationships with local immigrant rights organizations and legal service providers. Have their information handy so that you can contact them in the event of enforcement actions.
 - ii. Provide families with safety planning resources on what they can do to prepare in case they or another family member is detained by ICE (i.e., creating a care plan for their children, storage of legal documents, making a plan to transfer finances to a beneficiary, etc.).

Rights and Protections in Early Childhood Settings

Immigration Resources for Child Care Professionals, 2025

This guide by Action for Children compiles national and Ohio-specific resources to help child care providers support immigrant families in early childhood programs. It includes practical tools on creating safe spaces, responding to immigration enforcement, protecting sensitive information, and offering trauma-informed care. The document also highlights legal rights, family preparedness planning, and strategies for educators, healthcare providers, and caregivers to ensure children's safety, stability, and inclusion.

Supporting Immigrant and Refugee Families through Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Services, 2024

This issue brief by the Migration Policy Institute examines how infant and early childhood mental health (IECMH) services can support immigrant and refugee families, who often face heightened risks from trauma, acculturation stress, and systemic barriers to care. It highlights gaps in access to prevention, screening, and treatment, particularly for families with limited language and cultural resources. The brief outlines policy and practice recommendations—including standardized screenings, culturally responsive interventions, tailored home visiting programs and workforce diversification—to strengthen mental health supports for young children in immigrant households.

Addressing Health Inequities for Children in Immigrant Families: Psychologists as Leaders and Links Across Systems, 2024

This article reviews the health and developmental risks immigrant children face, including barriers to healthcare, poverty, and discrimination, which increase vulnerability to poor mental health outcomes. It emphasizes the need for trauma-informed, culturally responsive public health strategies that integrate education, healthcare, and social services. The authors highlight opportunities to improve systems of care through early intervention, family-centered supports, and policies that reduce structural inequities affecting children in immigrant families.

Know Your Rights: Immigrant Students and Schools, 2025

This fact sheet, described in more detail below in the K-12 section, is especially helpful to early care providers working in school-based pre-K programs.

II. Education - K-12 Schools

Educators, school administrators, and other school-based professionals across Ohio are increasingly navigating the complexities of immigration-related concerns in their daily interactions with students and families. While immigration policies have shifted at the federal level, the foundational educational rights of children—regardless of immigration status—remain intact. The U.S. Supreme Court case Plyler v. Doe (1982) affirmed that **all children, regardless of immigration status, have constitutionally protected access to free public K-12 education**—a principle that remains binding law and continues to protect students today. These protections are not only legal obligations but ethical imperatives, especially in times of uncertainty and fear within immigrant communities. Some students also qualify for protections under the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act of 1987 (AFT, 2025). Under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), schools may not disclose personally identifiable information in education records without the written consent of the parent or student, except under certain conditions. These privacy protections also apply to undocumented students (USDOE, 2025).



Every child, no matter their background, deserves a safe place to learn and belong.

Growing use of technology, and particularly artificial intelligence (AI), in educational settings presents additional emerging risks that impact immigrant students as well (Laird E. et al, 2025). **The Public Interest Privacy Center (PIPC) offers the following recommendations for strengthening student privacy protections through school policies and practices by promoting a data minimization framework (2025):**

- **Identify all student information and data collected by your school;** remove unnecessary information fields from enrollment forms and program applications.
- **Ascertain whether the data/information is necessary to achieve a specific purpose** or if there is a less invasive way to achieve that purpose; differentiate between required and optional data collection and train staff on limitations of data collection.
- **Assess whether the school must retain the data at all** and, if so, for how long; create clear data retention schedules and build privacy protections into technology procurement.
- **Foster a culture of student privacy** at school.

Ensuring school districts are safe zones for immigrant children includes making clear that the district is a welcoming place for all students, prohibiting the collection of student immigrant information, and establishing procedures for responding to immigrant enforcement in school settings (NEA, 2025). **The Century Foundation (2025) urges the following five actions for school leaders to protect the learning environment and the school community from fear and unnecessary immigration enforcement:**

- **Establish a clear protocol** for responding to visitors, including law enforcement, at your school.
- **Require all visitors, including law enforcement, to check in** at the front desk or your school's administrative office and present identification and documentation.
- **Define and mark private areas in your school site** to protect students' Fourth Amendment rights against unreasonable search and seizures.
- **Limit the information that your school collects** from students and their families.
- **Provide "Know Your Rights" materials** to students and families.

On the next column is a curated collection of additive tools, guidance, and Ohio-specific resources that educators and school staff can use to ensure that schools remain welcoming places for learning while protecting newcomer² students' rights and connecting families to critical support systems.

“Ensuring school districts are safe zones for immigrant children includes making clear that the district is a welcoming place for all students.”

— NEA 2025

Rights & Protections in Educational Settings

Specific rights of “newcomer” immigrant students and the limitations placed on schools regarding information gathering and disclosure include the following:

Ohio Department of Education & Workforce (ODEW) – “Your Education Rights, 2025

This ODEW resource directly affirms that all children in Ohio have the right to a free public education regardless of immigration status. It explains that **schools cannot require a Social Security number, U.S. birth certificate, or visa as a condition of enrollment** and explains the rights of English learners and immigrant families in Ohio public schools. It covers communication rights, access to interpretation and translation services, English language learning supports, and protections during enrollment. The resource emphasizes that all students, regardless of background or language, have the right to attend school, participate fully in programs, and maintain family privacy.

Know Your Rights: Immigrant Students and Schools, 2025

This fact sheet from the National Immigrant Law Center outlines the legal rights of immigrant students in U.S. public schools. It explains protections under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), which generally prohibits schools from disclosing a student's education records to immigration authorities without a parent's written consent or a court order. The resource also provides guidance for families if ICE agents come to their homes and emphasizes the role of schools as safe, inclusive learning environments.

NEA Immigration Guidance Booklet, 2025

Student Privacy: The NEA guidance outlines that schools cannot release student immigration information to federal agents without a judicial warrant or subpoena. It distinguishes between judicial warrants, which require compliance, and administrative warrants or subpoenas from ICE, which do not compel schools to disclose records.



Children need to learn in a space where they are all welcomed and protected, no matter where they come from.

Know Your Rights: Immigrant Students and Schools, 2025

This fact sheet from the National Immigrant Law Center outlines the legal rights of immigrant students in U.S. public schools. It explains protections under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), which generally **prohibits schools from disclosing a student's education records to immigration authorities without a parent's written consent or a court order**. The resource also provides guidance if ICE agents come to their homes and emphasizes the role of schools as safe, inclusive learning environments.

Immigrant and Refugee Children: A Guide for Educators and School Support Staff (AFT 2025)

This guide was created by the American Federation of Teachers and partners for educators, school support staff and service providers who teach, mentor and help open the doors of opportunity for immigrant students and families. Educators, school support staff and service providers are often the first individuals to whom students and families disclose their undocumented status. They also witness firsthand the profound impact of heightened immigration enforcement measures on students' well-being, mental health, academic success and sense of security.

A District Guide to Data Minimization in the Age of AI (PIPC, 2025)

This report from the Public Interest Privacy Center (PIPC) and the School Superintendents Association contains recommendations for school districts to protect student data and minimize data breaches. PIPC's blog post also lays out the threats to student data due to the use of AI, making the case for data minimization.

Enrollment, Displacement, and Language Support Tools for Ohio Newcomers

School personnel serving immigrant, refugee, and displaced students can draw on a variety of multilingual and culturally responsive materials to ensure proper enrollment and engagement. ODEW offers the following guidance:

Supporting Displaced and Newcomer Students (2025)

This ODEW resource outlines how Ohio schools should enroll and support students displaced by conflict, disaster, or other crises. It emphasizes **immediate enrollment regardless of missing documents, access to language assistance at registration**, and protections under the McKinney-Vento Act. The resource also highlights best practices for orientation, nutrition services, Title I supports, wellness considerations, and family engagement to ensure newcomer students transition successfully into Ohio schools.

Safety and School Preparedness

Schools are not obligated nor trained to assist with immigration enforcement; therefore, **understanding how to recognize and respond to legal documents, such as warrants and subpoenas, is essential**. For instance, judicial court orders and warrants carry the substantive weight of law, unlike administrative warrants, and require a distinct response. The resources below offer clarity and protocols:

National Immigration Law Center, 2025

This fact sheet explains the key differences between judicial warrants and subpoenas and administrative immigration warrants and subpoenas issued by ICE, CBP, or USCIS. It clarifies which documents require compliance, which do not, and the constitutional protections individuals and institutions retain under the Fourth Amendment. The guide also provides step-by-step instructions on how to respond if immigration agents present these documents and includes a case study from Liberty High School that illustrates how schools can legally resist improper immigration subpoenas.

Letter to School Officials: Rights & Responsibilities (ACLU Ohio, 2025)

This template letter is designed for school administrators and educators to understand their legal obligations to protect immigrant students. It outlines the constitutional right of all children to a free public education, clarifies that schools should not inquire into or disclose immigration status, and highlights privacy protections under federal law. The document also provides guidance on responding to immigration enforcement requests, reinforcing the role of schools as safe and supportive environments for immigrant families.

III. Health Care & Mental Health in Pediatric Settings

Pediatricians, mental health providers, and other child-serving healthcare professionals across Ohio play a critical role in safeguarding the physical and emotional well-being of immigrant children. For many families, these providers are the first trusted point of contact when navigating healthcare systems while facing legal uncertainty, systemic barriers, and the fear of family separation. **Compared to their U.S.-born peers, immigrant children are more likely to experience significant barriers to care, including higher uninsured rates and lower use of mental health services** (Danaher, 2022). Despite the prevalence of traumatic events, immigrant families demonstrate strong levels of resilience; mental health supports should incorporate a strength-based approach with culturally responsive interventions that build upon the broader ecological contexts in which immigrant families live (Gillen, 2024).



A doctor offering care and support can help to minimize trauma and ensure security.

Children in immigrant families **encounter compounded barriers, including lack of health insurance, limited language access, misinformation, and pervasive fear of immigration enforcement** (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2025). These obstacles discourage families from seeking both preventive and acute medical care, as well as essential mental health services. Research links the toxic stress of deportation fears and instability to higher risks of anxiety, depression, PTSD, and developmental delays among children (National Child Traumatic Stress Network, 2021). These gaps in care place children at risk for long-term harm to their physical health and emotional development.

Patient information, including immigration status, is protected under the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), which prohibits the use or disclosure of personally identifiable health information

(PHI) without the patient's consent, except under limited circumstances required by law. HIPAA protections extend to everyone in the United States, including those in CBP or ICE custody. Guidance provided by the Physicians for Human Rights and the National Immigration Law Center (2025) notes that health care professionals have no affirmative legal obligation to inquire into or report to federal immigration authorities a patient's immigration status; it further urges that PHI should not be disclosed to law enforcement unless required by a judicial warrant, subpoena, or other legally mandated order and clinicians should consult legal counsel or institutional policies before responding to requests.

Patients should not face discrimination or denial of medically necessary treatment based on immigration status, although eligibility rules may affect access to certain public insurance programs. Under federal law (the Emergency Medical Treatment and Labor Act or "EMTALA"), patients may not be denied emergency medical treatment regardless of immigration status, and providers are not required to inquire about or report a patient's immigration status when delivering care.

The guidance and resources below are designed to help pediatricians and child and adolescent mental health professionals provide trauma-informed, culturally responsive care that upholds the legal rights of immigrant families, fosters safe and inclusive clinical environments, and connects children to the services they need to heal and thrive.

Rights and Responsibilities in Hospital, Pediatric and Mental Health Settings

Health Care Providers and Immigration Enforcement: Know Your Rights, Know Your Patients' Rights (NILC, 2025)

This NILC fact sheet provides hospitals, clinics, and community health centers with guidance on how to prepare for and respond to immigration enforcement actions. It explains HIPAA protections, limits on disclosing patient information, and the difference between judicial warrants and administrative documents from ICE or CBP. The resource also outlines protocols for designating "authorized persons," restricting access to private areas, and safeguarding immigrant patients' rights while ensuring safe, compliant healthcare environments. Highlights include:

- **Preparedness steps in healthcare settings**

Prepare a response plan and train clinical and administrative staff on how to respond to immigration enforcement actions; designate specific staff to interact with enforcement agents; and inform patients and families of their rights in multiple languages and through accessible materials.

- **Patient Rights**

Patients have the right to remain silent and not disclose their immigration status; ICE agents must present a valid judicial warrant to access private, non-public areas of a facility or obtain patient information.

- **Provider Responsibilities**

Protect patient privacy by not disclosing immigration status or other personal information without consent or court order; know the difference between **judicial warrants** (signed by a judge and legally enforceable) and **administrative warrants** (issued by DHS, not sufficient to compel compliance).

- **Confidentiality Protections**

Health care providers must comply with HIPAA and cannot share patient records or immigration information unless required by law.

- **Access to Care**

While the formal federal “sensitive locations” policy protecting hospitals and clinics from immigration enforcement was rescinded in 2025, enforcement in medical settings remains rare and discouraged, and providers should strive to preserve healthcare spaces as safe and private environments for all patients.

immigrant children and families facing stress, trauma, and barriers to care. It provides practical tools on mental and emotional health, communication strategies with children, family preparedness for immigration enforcement, and access to legal and community resources. The guide also outlines advocacy opportunities for pediatricians, emphasizing their role in creating safe clinical environments, connecting families to services, and advancing immigrant child health policy.

[Responding to ICE in Emergency Departments \(ED\): Protecting Patients and Navigating Legal Obligations, 2025](#)

This article provides guidance for emergency medicine professionals on how to respond if immigration agents appear in emergency departments (McAmis, 2025). It reviews patient privacy protections under HIPAA and EMTALA, explains the distinction between judicial and administrative warrants, stresses that providers should consult hospital legal teams before interacting with immigration officials and offers a sample institutional policy.

[Select NCTSN Resources Related to Traumatic Separation and Refugee & Immigrant Trauma, 2021](#)

This tip sheet, provided by the National Child Traumatic Stress Network, outlines what immigrant children and young people of different ages may be experiencing and how caregivers can help. The resource includes links to numerous videos, podcasts, webinars, web content and organizations with tools and interventions to assist refugee and immigrant children. Further information for professionals serving children who have experienced traumatic separation is [available here](#).

[Mental Health of Newcomer Children & Adolescents: Pediatric Mental Health Minute Series \(AAP\)](#)

This 10-minute video with Dr. Lisa Fortuna, MD, MPH, provides guidance to pediatric health care workers in helping to identify and collaborate in addressing trauma and providing mental health and social services for immigrant children and their caregivers.

Ohio Specific Health Care Resources

[Neighborhood Family Practice – Refugee Services Collaborative \(Cleveland\)](#)

Neighborhood Family Practice (NFP) serves as the primary healthcare provider for Cleveland’s three refugee resettlement agencies. Newly arrived refugees receive comprehensive health screenings at NFP’s Ridge Community Health Center, including medical exams, lab work, vaccinations, and mental health assessments. In addition to refugee intake services, NFP offers behavioral health, case management, and wellness programs tailored to the needs of immigrant, refugee, and asylum-seeking families.



Families should find safety, support and culturally responsive care in a child-caring system committed to protecting their rights and well-being.

[Supporting the Health and Well-Being of Immigrant Children: Resources for Pediatricians \(AAP, 2025\)](#)

This AAP resource guide equips pediatricians to support

Child Advocacy Project (Columbus) – Health Services for Immigrants

This web-based resource includes practical information and best practices for pediatricians, including Nationwide Children’s Hospital contacts, Medicaid and state resources and local organizations for specific immigrant populations in central Ohio.

Immigration and Healthcare Resources (Cincinnati Children’s Hospital)

This resource hub provides immigrant families and healthcare providers with links to local and national supports, including Alien Emergency Medical Assistance (AEMA), Catholic Social Services, Community Refugee and Immigration Services (CRIS), and legal advocacy organizations. It highlights access to free interpreter services at Cincinnati Children’s and connects families to guidance from the National Immigration Law Center, the National Immigration Project, and USCIS.

Guidance for Nurses and Health Professionals: Responding to ICE Agents Entering the Hospital (Ohio Nurses Association)

This guidance equips nurses and healthcare professionals with protocols to follow if immigration agents appear in a hospital or request patient information. It emphasizes referring agents to legal or compliance officers, verifying judicial warrants, and protecting patient confidentiality in accordance with HIPAA. The resource also stresses documenting incidents, safeguarding patient safety, and reassuring families, ensuring hospitals remain safe and supportive spaces for all patients, noting: *“as healthcare professionals, our primary duty is to provide safe and compassionate care to all patients, regardless of their immigration status.”*

Refugee & Immigrant Mental Health Coalition of Ohio (RIMHCO)

RIMHCO connects refugee and immigrant communities with culturally responsive and accessible mental health and counseling services across Ohio. The coalition brings together service providers, healthcare professionals, and community organizations to address trauma, resilience, and barriers to care. It also offers trainings, provider directories, and toolkits that help families and professionals navigate the emotional impact of displacement, war, migration, and cultural adjustment.

“Immigration-related fears may deter families from reporting abuse, increasing the risk of harm to children.”

— Society for Research in Child Development, 2025

IV. Child Welfare & Legal Supports for Children

Child welfare agencies, child protection workers, juvenile and family courts and social service professionals across Ohio play a critical role in ensuring the safety and stability of immigrant children. These agencies often serve as the first line of protection when families face crises related to abuse, neglect, housing insecurity, or immigration-related stressors.

ICE has a [“Detained Parent Directive”](#) which is intended to protect parental rights during detention and deportation by ensuring parents can communicate with their children, participate in court proceedings, and plan for their care. If a parent of an immigrant child is detained by ICE, child welfare professionals may be relied upon for temporary child placement and/or other supportive services. [“Preserving Parental Rights in the Face of Deportation”](#) provides an overview of ICE’s 2025 Detained Parent Directive, its implications for immigrant families and ways practitioners can use the directive as a tool for advocacy and accountability in family-serving systems (Cervantes, 2025).

Research shows that immigration-related fears may deter families from reporting abuse or neglect, increasing the risk of harm to children (Society for Research in Child Development, 2025). Immigrant children who do enter the child welfare system face unique vulnerabilities, including the risk of separation from siblings, loss of cultural identity, and increased exposure to trauma if culturally competent safeguards are not in place (Young et al., 2024). National experts emphasize that trauma-informed, culturally responsive practices – along with cross-sector collaboration between schools, healthcare providers, and community organizations – are essential to ensuring that immigrant children are both protected and connected to resources that foster resilience and long-term well-being (APHSA 2025)

On the next page is a curated collection of guidance, tools, and Ohio-specific resources that child welfare professionals, social workers, and community-based organizations can use to strengthen protections for immigrant children, uphold their rights, and connect families with critical support systems during times of separation or other kinds of instability.

Protecting Immigrant Families Toolkit (Children Thrive Action Network, 2025)

This **toolkit is updated on an ongoing basis** to equip service providers, educators, parents and community members with resources to protect immigrant families from deportation and aggressive enforcement. It includes guidance on supporting children when parents face removal, preparing communities for workplace raids, and connecting families to legal aid and “Know Your Rights” materials in multiple languages. The toolkit also provides advocacy tools to educate policymakers and emphasizes the trauma-informed care and stability children need when families are threatened by separation.

Detained or Deported: What About My Children? (Women’s Refugee Commission, revised 2025)

This toolkit helps detained or deported parents understand and protect their parental rights in the U.S. child welfare system. Parents in immigration detention or removal proceedings retain their legal parental rights. Step-by-step guidance on making care arrangements, navigating the family court system, complying with case plans, and seeking legal representation is provided. The resource also addresses reunification after detention, child support obligations, and what happens if children enter foster care, offering practical tools such as sample letters, affidavits, and contact logs. **Guidance on protecting parent rights during detention or deportation includes:**

1. Parents should inform ICE officers that they have children and request release or access to court and family proceedings. Request a phone call to confirm their safety.
2. Parents should seek legal help. Consular officials can assist with custody and legal coordination. Contact lawyers or organizations familiar with both immigration and child welfare systems.
3. Parents should be persistent and document every effort to communicate and participate in decisions about their children’s care. Communication, letters, and visitation (where allowed) are evidence of continued parental involvement.

The 2025 ICE Detained Parents Directive: Practice Advisory for Child Welfare Agency Administrators & Practitioners, 2025

This advisory by the Center on Immigration and Child Welfare Initiative summarizes federal guidance on how ICE should handle the detention and deportation of noncitizen parents of minor children. It offers child welfare agencies' practical steps to support parent-child communication, ensure participation in court proceedings, and plan for children’s care during a parent’s detention or removal. Tools include guidance on designating agency points of contact, coordinating with ICE and legal counsel, and facilitating visitation. While still a critical resource, the 2025 version narrows protections compared to 2022, eliminating coverage for incapacitated adults and limiting pathways for deported parents to reunite with children.

The ICE Detained Parents Directive: How Child Welfare Agencies Can Advocate with ICE to Ensure Fair Treatment of Detained or Deported Parents (ILRC Practice Advisory, 2025):

This advisory explains how child welfare agencies can use ICE’s Detained Parents Directive to advocate for the rights and well-being of children with detained or deported parents. It offers practical strategies for maintaining parent-child communication, supporting participation in court proceedings, and planning for custody or reunification. The resource includes guidance on engaging with ICE contacts, requesting accommodations, and documenting advocacy efforts. Designed for child welfare professionals, the directive strengthens alignment between family-serving agencies and federal immigration protocols to protect children affected by enforcement.

CARE Intervention Toolkit (Kids in Need of Defense, 2025)

The C.A.R.E. Intervention Toolkit—Connect, Assess, Respond, Educate—offers a trauma-informed, evidence-based approach to supporting unaccompanied children at risk of labor exploitation. Adapted from Psychological First Aid, it equips service providers with practical strategies for identifying exploitation, building trust, and responding effectively to children’s immediate needs. The toolkit also provides guidance on connecting children with legal, health, and community resources, while incorporating self-care practices for professionals working in high-stress contexts.

The C.A.R.E. framework to reduce child labor exploitation is briefly described here:

- **Connect** by: creating a welcoming, child-friendly space to foster trust; using interpreters when necessary and ensuring direct communication with the child; and recognizing signs of anxiety or hypervigilance and helping the child regulate with grounding techniques, breaks, and validation.
- **Assess** by: exploring the child’s work situation, school attendance, and motivations for employment; identifying vulnerabilities like financial pressure, lack of adult support, or trauma symptoms; using age-appropriate language and avoiding leading questions; determining whether safety risks (e.g., self-harm, abuse, homelessness) exist, and partnering with others to ensure child safety and support.
- **Respond** by: helping a youth create a “safety and support plan” that includes trusted contacts and coping strategies; linking them to legal aid, community services, schools, food banks, shelters, or faith-based supports; addressing underlying needs through referrals to trusted providers; and encouraging positive social engagement to foster belonging.
- **Educate** by: discussing basic labor rights, safe work standards, and protections from retaliation; promoting mental health resources and normalizing therapy as a strength; and encouraging healthy recreational and educational outlets and coping skills (mindfulness, art, sports, trusted mentors).

Juvenile & Family Court Resources

The Gault Center released two resources aimed at equipping family and juvenile court judges, probation officers and other child-serving providers and stakeholders with practical guidance to ensure immigrant youth and their families have safe, equitable access to court proceedings. The information provided prioritizes safety, family unity, and equal justice in order to better protect immigrant children and families.

Judicial Immigration Tip Sheet (The Gault Center, 2025):

This tip sheet outlines steps for judges to uphold due process and family participation – from enforcing ICE’s policy that generally bars immigration enforcement in family and juvenile courts to offering virtual hearings that alleviate young people’s and caregivers’ fear of coming to court. Key recommendations urge judges to avoid harmful practices like unnecessary warrants or detention that could expose youth to ICE, and instead focus on fair, individualized outcomes. It also discusses the use of a predicate order for “Special Immigrant Juvenile Status” if applicable.

Juvenile Probation Officer Immigration Tip Sheet (The Gault Center, 2025)

This tip sheet urges juvenile probation officers and youth and child-serving providers working alongside juvenile probation to use culturally responsive, trauma-informed, family-centered practices and promote cross-system collaboration. Key recommendations include holding trauma-informed meetings, offering safe check-ins via virtual or community-based meetings, avoiding detention referrals or punitive actions for missed check-ins, and implementing family-sensitive probation conditions tailored to each youth’s circumstances. Throughout, the guide emphasizes an individualized, strengths-based approach for immigrant children and youth, encouraging officers to recognize each young person’s unique context and build on their strengths to foster positive youth development. A 2-page probation officer checklist is included for ease of reference at: <https://tinyurl.com/y78jhw3n>

Additional Ohio-Specific Agencies & Resources

The following list of Ohio-specific resources and organizations is not comprehensive but is offered here for ease of reference.

ABLE: Preparing Your Family for Immigration Enforcement: Know Your Rights (Advocates for Basic Legal Equality, Inc., 2025)

ABLE provides this go-to comprehensive guide for families to prepare for potential immigration raids. It offers step-by-step directions for creating an emergency response plan as well as “know your rights” information. It also includes legal forms (i.e. limited power of attorney, family medical information, emergency care for pets, etc.); important phone numbers (i.e. ICE Online detainee locator system, government offices in Ohio, detention facilities in Ohio, etc.).

Americans Making Immigrants Safe,

Based in Cleveland Heights, Ohio, this organization strives to inspire hope and contribute to the well-being of immigrants and their families, including donations and other supports.

Ohio Public Benefits Screening Chart for Immigrant Survivors (NIWAP, 2025)

This screening chart helps advocates, attorneys, judges, and service providers identify which immigrant survivors and children may qualify for state- and federally funded public benefits in Ohio. It summarizes eligibility by immigration status —covering programs such as TANF, SNAP, SSI, CHIP, Medicaid, and childcare—and distinguishes between unconditional eligibility, conditional access, and ineligibility. The resource is

intended as a simplified tool to guide initial assessments, with references to NIWAP's detailed charts and legal citations for further verification.

Newcomer Resources Directory (Refugee Services Collaborative of Greater Cleveland, 2025)

The RSC of Greater Cleveland maintains an interactive online directory of services for international newcomer families in Northeast Ohio. The directory connects immigrants, refugees, and asylees with a broad range of local supports, including ESL programs, healthcare providers such as Neighborhood Family Practice, school-based supports, legal aid, housing assistance, and community integration resources. Maintained by a coalition of Cleveland-area resettlement agencies, nonprofits, and educational partners, the RSC directory serves as a centralized tool for families and service providers to navigate available programs and build connections across the regional newcomer network.



This guide offers many tips and resources for mixed-status households.

Ohio Immigrant Alliance: Ohio is Home, 2025

The Ohio Immigrant Alliance is a statewide advocacy organization dedicated to defending and advancing the rights of immigrants and refugees through storytelling, community organizing, and policy reform. The group partners with legal experts, service providers, and directly impacted families to highlight human rights concerns in detention, deportation, and reentry contexts. OIA publishes reports, supports legislative advocacy, and provides resources that center immigrant voices in shaping Ohio's policies on immigration, incarceration, and social equity.

The Ohio Immigrant Alliance also offers Ohio-based resources for immigrants, service providers, and community members, including a multilingual confidential hotline to share information, request resources, and connect with

local support groups. **Community members can email hotline@ohioimmigrant.org or call 419-777-HELP (4357).** Messages can be received in any language, and Hotline Managers respond within 24–48 hours to ensure timely, compassionate assistance and referrals to trusted community partners.

Ohio Refugee Services Program – Directory of Resettlement Agencies (ODJFS, 2025)

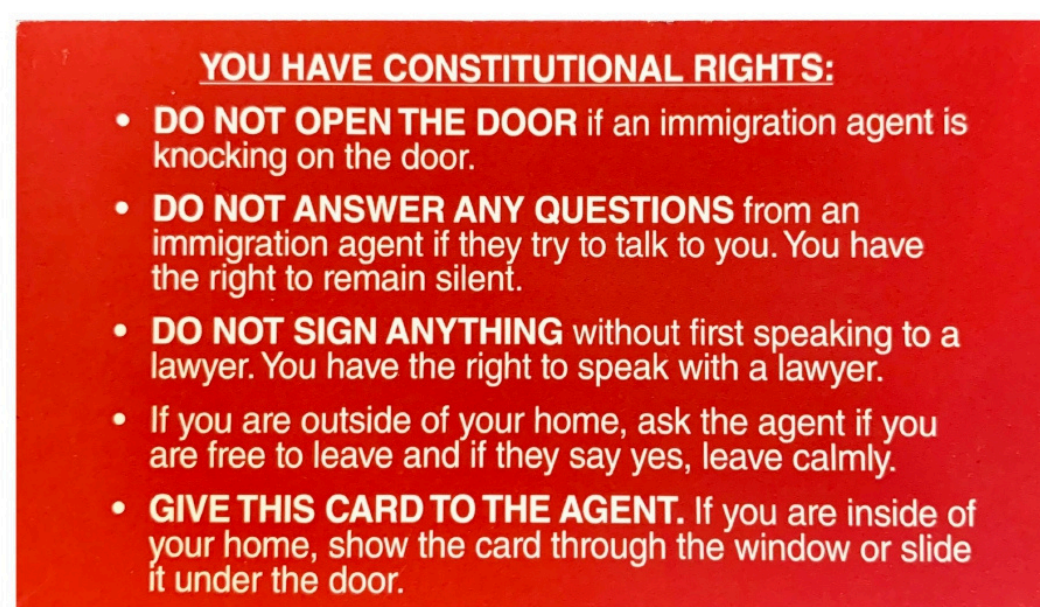
The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) Refugee Services program oversees the coordination of refugee resettlement, employment assistance, and integration support across the state. Its online directory supports providers, caseworkers, and families seeking orientation, employment assistance, English-language training, and culturally responsive support for newly arrived refugees and similar populations. The directory provides an up-to-date listing of Ohio's major refugee resettlement organizations and partner agencies, helping service providers and families connect with trusted local resources. The directory includes key agencies such as Catholic Charities Southwestern Ohio (Cincinnati), Catholic Social Services (Dayton), Community Refugee & Immigration Services (Columbus), Catholic Charities Migration & Refugee Services (Cleveland), the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI – Cleveland), and the International Institute of Akron. Each entry provides addresses, phone numbers, and websites for easy referral and coordination.

Re:Source Cleveland

This organization supports newcomer families in becoming engaged, self-sufficient and contributing members of their new communities. K-12 specific supports include teen academic services, youth mentoring, sports and recreational programming, as well as post-secondary support.

US Together

This is an Ohio non-profit that seeks to “coordinate, organize, and initiate services to refugees and immigrants through education, advocacy, support services, information, referrals, and networking opportunities to strengthen the community that we live in and to promote international understanding through intercultural exchange.” It serves Cleveland, Columbus and Toledo and provides links to an array of community resources (educational, health and social services).



The Immigrant Legal Resource Center's red cards give examples of how people can exercise their rights.

Legal Support Referrals in Ohio

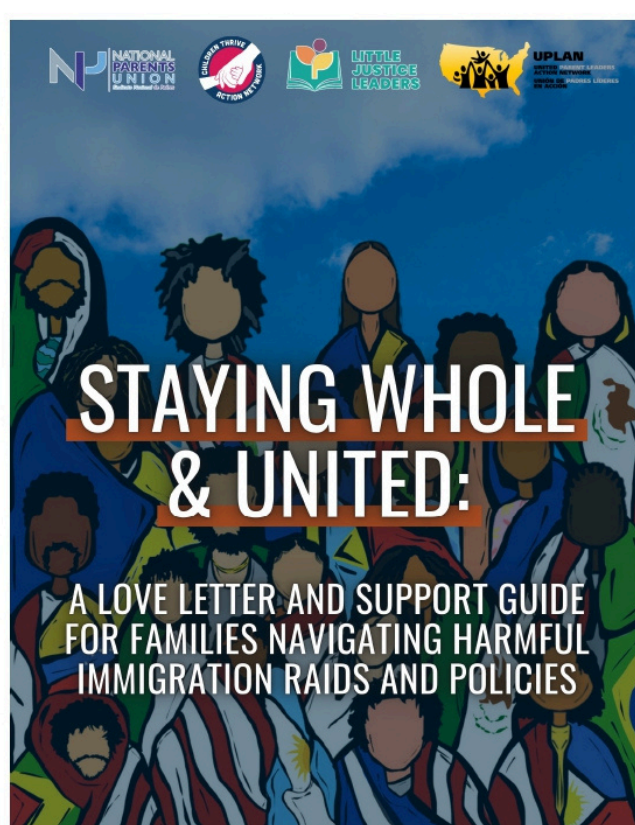
For child-serving professionals seeking to connect students and families with legal, medical, or basic-needs assistance, Legal Aid offers free or reduced-cost services across Ohio. Materials are available in multiple languages. Go to [Legal Aid in Ohio](#) or links to regional legal aid offices:

- [Legal Aid of Southeast and Central Ohio](#) (Columbus)
- [Legal Aid of Western Ohio](#) (Dayton)
- [Legal Aid Society of Cleveland](#)
- [Legal Aid Society of Greater Cincinnati](#)
- [Community Legal Aid Services Inc.](#) (Akron)

Encouragement & Guidance from Immigrant Families

[Staying Whole: A Love Letter and Guide For Families Navigating Harmful Immigration Raids and Policies](#) (CTAN, 2025).

This resource was created for and by immigrant parents, shaped by the insights and experiences of families impacted by immigration enforcement throughout the country. The guide highlights their experiences and offers advice, walking readers through safety planning and providing parents with mental health resources for themselves and their children. This guide is for providers in mixed-status families and could be shared with mixed-status families.



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Endnotes

^[1] Ohio [House Bill 26](#) (136th GA) would prohibit sanctuary policies and mandate local law enforcement cooperation with federal immigration authorities. Ohio [House Bill 42](#) (136th GA) would require public institutions, including schools and Medicaid offices, to collect and report immigration status data.

^[2] The U.S. Department of Education defines *newcomers* as “a subset of immigrant students who have recently arrived in the United States and who may face unique challenges in adjusting to U.S. schools and society.” This includes students with limited English proficiency, interrupted formal education, and unfamiliarity with U.S. school systems.

^[3] A [court warrant](#)—also known as a judicial warrant—is a written order issued and signed by a state or federal judge that authorizes law enforcement officers to conduct a search, make an arrest, or seize property.

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