

IMMIGRANTS AND HIV CARE

Best Practices for Maintaining Access to Prevention and Treatment

Study Interviews

Researchers at UCSF completed interviews with 20 key informants (medical and legal providers) in 3 counties in Northern and Central California. Participants were asked about client engagement and experiences accessing care and services, as well as current practices to retain immigrant clients.

Quotes

"The experience changes when the work is client centered and nonjudgmental. Having someone, who perhaps has been through that process before, someone who looks like them, someone who speaks their language, is really, really helpful."

- Case Manager, San Francisco



Living with HIV requires consistent engagement with the health care system to achieve viral suppression and reduce the risk of onward transmission. The barriers that immigrants face when accessing health care and supportive services pose challenges for managing HIV disease. With continual changes to the policy landscape that impact immigrant communities, health care providers will need to sustain heightened efforts to maintain access for their patients. The following recommendations are best practices for retention of patients in medical care, based on interviews with medical and legal providers.

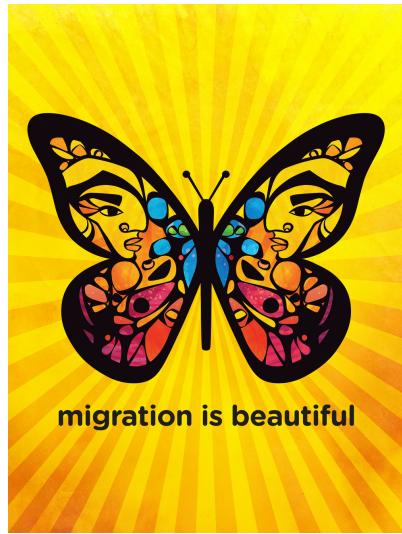
How to Strengthen partnerships between legal and medical providers

- Create standard procedures to screen for immigration needs so that clinic staff can offer referrals and additional assistance.
- Accompany clients and facilitate telephone appointments with legal services.
- Remain involved throughout the client's work and legal services.

Improve Cultural Competency

- Hire bilingual/bicultural staff and/or individuals who are also immigrants.
- Consider changes to the physical space, such as welcoming signage and implementing protocols to reduce the time patients are in public spaces.





Quotes

"There is a special synergy that you get when you know the providers... I could call the medical social worker or call the doctor because they might not be showing up for their legal appointments... It made it so much easier with that kind of trusting relationship to be able to get the kinds of documents we needed to support our cases and vice versa... the relationship was mutually beneficial."

- Policy/Legal Expert, Alameda

"My undocumented folks who I established care with at least a year or two before all this stuff changed, they're still in care. They're still engaged in care because we've got their cases going. They trust us; they know us. We've been advocating for them around their legal status. The patients who we don't—we haven't had that established [link], they're the ones who are disappearing. To me, there's a clear difference between before and after."

- Medical Provider, San Francisco

- Ensure that any information regarding a patient's immigration status are not documented or retained in medical records.

Provide Services in the Field

- Use postal services for prescription delivery.
- Conduct home visits or utilize tele-health modalities.
- Provide mobile services in the community and at work sites.

Trump-era Federal Immigration Policy Changes

The Trump administration brought about increased restrictions to legal immigration and harsher policies and enforcement of penalties for undocumented immigrants. Anti-immigrant policy can "spill over", having significant impact on the health of immigrant communities more generally. These policies included:

- Significant budget cuts to refugee and resettlement programs.
- Cuts to health and social services for immigrant communities.
- Increased deportation and detention of immigrant community members.
- Militarization of the US-Mexico border.
- Changes to public charge rules.

Though some steps have been taken to reverse these regulations under the Biden administration, through implementing policies that are more welcoming to immigrants, the hostile policies and rhetoric will continue to have an impact on health care access until significant efforts are made to educate communities on new policies and re-establish trust.



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More information:

<https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0229291#sec003>

<https://escholarship.org/content/qt1gm4307v/qt1gm4307v.pdf>

<https://prevention.ucsf.edu/>