

Months after the Biden Administration ended the 2019 public charge regulations, the “chilling effect” those policies created continues to deter millions in immigrant families from getting the health and human services they need. [PIF’s public officials toolkit](#) includes a wide range of actions elected officials and government agency leaders can take to improve immigrant families’ access to critical services and care, including COVID-19 vaccination.

This document, updated in October 2021, recommends 3 actions elected officials should all take immediately to thaw the public charge chilling effect. These recommendations, drawn from the toolkit, are all things that:

- Elected officials can lead, whether at the local, state, or national level
- Do not require policy changes and can be implemented immediately
- Are based on best-practices advanced by advocates working with immigrant families

#1: MEDIA OUTREACH

The chilling effect has always been driven by misinformation about the 2019 public charge policy, engineered largely by the Trump White House and its anti-immigrant allies. Now that the 2019 policy has been reversed, thawing the chilling effect requires not only the communication of accurate information to immigrant families, but also a sustained effort to reestablish trust with immigrant families. Elected officials can do much to help through outreach to ethnic and mass-market, English-language media, including:

- Issuing a statement ([sample here](#)), clearly indicating that the Trump policy has been reversed
- News pitches ([sample here](#)) focused on the health, food security, and economic recovery potential of thawing the public charge chill
- Op-eds ([sample here](#)) urging community leaders and employers to partner with government to thaw the chilling effect

#2: PARTNER WITH IMMIGRANT-SERVING COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

Every community has its own distinct needs and mix of potential partners, including immigrant-serving organizations who have a direct line to those who need this critical information. These community partners will bring deep expertise when co-creating materials and outreach strategies along with public officials. Health care and other service providers, faith leaders, advocates, and businesses serving or employing immigrant families can leverage a wide range of resources and relationships to develop and implement an outreach strategy specific to your community’s needs. Many such organizations already

face significant funding and staffing constraints, so to maximize impact, consider opportunities to direct resources their way.

#3: OUTREACH EVENTS

Public events can deliver dual benefits: they can help to thaw the chill among participating families, and they can signal to the broader community that public officials support immigrant families getting the care and help every family should have. Work with your community partners to design an event that responds to the specific needs of our community. And consider the following best practices:

- **Spokesperson mix** — As a public official, you can serve to convene a diverse set of spokespersons who can assure families that it is safe to get the help and care they need. Research shows families want to hear directly from government officials, so consider asking health care and human services agency officials to speak at outreach events. Trusted messengers like community health centers or pediatricians, immigration attorneys, faith leaders, school officials, and labor unions can reinforce those messages. Work with your community task force to select the right mix for families in your community. Identify speakers who can be interviewed in different languages for local ethnic media.
- **Official government agency materials** — Focus groups show immigrant families look to official government agency materials to verify that using safety net programs will not affect immigration status. DHS has issued a [statement confirming](#) that the Trump public charge regulations are no longer in effect, and ICE has issued a [statement confirming](#) that enforcement actions will not be taken at or near COVID-19 vaccination sites. These resources and [PIF community education materials](#) are a good place to start, and PIF can provide additional support to public officials developing community outreach materials. Ensure that materials are available in multiple languages to meet the needs of your community.
- **Effective promotion** — Leveraging your communication resources and those of community task force members can help you reach many more families than can attend outreach events. Newsletter articles and social media channels are a good place to start, but consider inviting ethnic and mainstream English-language media outlets to interview speakers or (to the extent privacy and safety considerations are addressed) participating families.

PIF CAN HELP

PIF and its local and state partners stand ready to work with elected officials who take action to thaw the public charge chilling effect. Please contact Alicia Wilson at akwilson3000@gmail.com for technical assistance, support developing materials, or other aid.