

WORKING
PRACTICE
PROFILE

Better Responses to Differing Immigration Statuses: Spreading and Adapting 2Gen Working Practices

Welcoming communities provide a sense of security and stability that allows immigrant families to make good decisions for their wellbeing, while creating a supportive environment to seek help from service organizations they can use to create a better future. But because of increasing anti-immigrant sentiment, discrimination, confusion over public charge and the threat of detention and deportation for some noncitizens, immigrant families may be less willing or able to access supports available to them by law. Immigrant families are more likely to be low-income than native born ones, and when they can reliably access relevant public supports, it benefits the entire community. What does it take to deliver 2Gen services to families, youth and children whose variety of immigrant statuses (naturalized citizen, legal permanent resident, refugee, noncitizen and unauthorized, among them) may dictate different access to benefits, and to make sure all family members are supported, healthy and feel welcome and safe in their place?

In 2021, a project team from the Aspen Institute Community Strategies Group, the Migration Policy Institute and Higher Heights Consulting set out to lift up 2Gen practices that work to help immigrant families by listening to the direct service organizations doing this work. There's no doubt that supporting families whose members may encompass a mix of different immigration statuses is challenging and must be done intentionally, but two broad strategies arose from our survey, interviews, webinars, and peer advising and learning convenings: Take time to educate staff, clients and community members about how different immigration statuses can affect eligibility for supports and the design of services, and build partnerships that can provide a continuum of services for mixed-status families.



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This brief is the second of four that all together explore practices that service organizations are using to provide 2Gen services to immigrant and refugee families. Each brief includes anonymous interview data, as well as multiple case studies that dive into the details of how a service organization does its work with immigrant and refugee families. Together, the briefs address trust-building, working with families regardless of immigration status, overcoming language barriers, and cultural competency secrets to success. The hope is that the lessons and insights shared here can inspire other organizations to adopt and adapt these practices to better support their immigrant and refugee clients. To access all four briefs please visit this [website](#).¹

Why 2Gen and Immigrant Families?



It can be challenging to reach and serve immigrant families because of trust and language barriers and cultural differences — the very challenge areas that drove our research. Furthermore, many social service programs focus solely on the child or the parent, often due to funding constraints or traditional areas of expertise within the organization. The two-generation (2Gen) approach does not focus exclusively on either children or adults because their well-being is directly interconnected. Instead, it takes stock of the family as a whole and uses a holistic, family-centered lens to understand the multiple dimensions of families and consider a variety of pathways for promoting positive outcomes.

The 2Gen model was developed over the past decade by family-based practitioners to reduce barriers to services and increase mobility out of poverty for children and adults. Championed nationally by **Ascend** and the **Community Strategies Group** at the Aspen Institute, the 2Gen mindset and model recognizes whole family units, as families define themselves, and meaningfully engages parents and caregivers in designing policies and programs that affect them. By working with families to solve problems, access new resources, and sharpen existing talents and skills, the 2Gen approach creates experiences and opportunities for all families to reach their full potential and for communities to thrive economically and socially. Because of these aspects, the 2Gen approach is a good fit for organizations that work, or seek to work, with immigrant families.



Defining Immigration Statuses

An immigrant is a U.S. resident who was born outside the United States or U.S. territory without at least one U.S.-citizen parent. There are nearly 45 million immigrants in the United States, holding immigration statuses ranging from naturalized citizen to temporary worker. A person's immigration status, and as a result their eligibility for a range of federal and state benefits, depends on several factors including what type of visa they hold, whether they lack a visa, or in the case of the U.S.-born child of an immigrant, what status the parent holds. Here are some of the main types of statuses dealt with in this brief:

To learn more about building responding to the continuum of status, you can watch the webinar recording and access resources shared during the webinar [here](#).

- **Legal Permanent Resident** – A noncitizen admitted legally for permanent residency, usually through family ties, employment, or humanitarian pathway. Often referred to as a green-card holder.
- **Refugee** – A refugee is a person who has been resettled due to a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group.
- **Other Humanitarian Migrant** – There are other humanitarian statuses, for example Temporary Protected Status (TPS), given to certain non-immigrants already present in the United States whose country is designated for TPS given natural disaster, political turmoil, or other hardship.
- **Non-immigrant** – A person residing in the United States on a temporary work, study, or other visa that does not offer a path to legal permanent residence.
- **Unauthorized Immigrant** – A person who entered the United States illegally or who entered legally but overstayed their visa, and who lacks legal status. Some unauthorized immigrants have been given access to work authorization and protection from deportation, for example via the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program. TPS also confers the same protections and work eligibility.

Other terms used in this brief include:

- **Mixed Status Family** – A designation for a family with members who have a mix of different legal statuses – for example, a parent who is unauthorized and has one child who is a DACA recipient and another who is a U.S. citizen.
- **Sanctuary Jurisdiction** – A state or municipality that has passed legislation or enacted an ordinance that instructs local police or other emergency services to limit their cooperation with U.S. Immigration and Custom Enforcement (ICE). There are many types of curbs on cooperation, some more expansive than others.

The Working with Immigrant Families Regardless of Legal Status Webinar

The second event in the four-part Immigrant Families: Spreading and Adapting 2Gen Working Practices series focused on promising practices for navigating immigration status when working with families. Leaders from three community-based organizations shared strategies such as offering education on rights and available resources, partnering with organizations who understand the continuum of status, and assisting families with capacity building. To learn more about building responding to the continuum of status, you can watch the webinar recording and access resources shared during the webinar [here](#).²

Among those featuring in the webinar was Vice-President of the Family Hub at Chicago Commons, Vikki Rompala, who emphasized the importance of building partnerships with organizations that are not dissuaded from working with undocumented people. Neighborhood Initiative Program Director for On the Move, Susana Garcia, discussed hosting “know your rights” education programs and having a safety net and disaster response plan ready for immigrants, who are often a more vulnerable population during disasters. Finally, Vice President of Community Impact for Napa Valley Community Foundation, Julia DeNatale explained how they help residents go through the naturalization process and prepare for citizenship exams and interviews in the absence of a strong legal services infrastructure.



Working Practice 1: Take time to educate staff, clients, and community members about the intersection between immigration status and benefits eligibility

Over the course of our interviews, we heard of many practices that are helpful when working with immigrant families who have mixed status or other statuses that can affect their eligibility for supports. What unites a broad swath of the responses is an organizational focus on educating staff, clients and the community about actual policies and program eligibility, as well as educating the community on the programs that different families may be eligible for, taking into account their immigration status. All noted that staff education is the first step to creating a knowledgeable environment, given the level of fear and confusion that families often experience when trying to navigate these issues.

An educated staff will help clients navigate social supports, which are often inflexible in their requirements. When one knows the ins-and-outs of a program like Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, more commonly known as food stamps), Medicaid or local housing assistance, they are better at helping cli-

ents navigate those social supports, enrolling eligible families and helping families keep their benefits. One interviewee noted that for SNAP, they let immigrant parents know that their US-citizen children are eligible: “Having someone navigate [the program] helps the whole family.”

Service organizations need to create a culture of learning on immigration status issues to keep up with laws and policy dynamics. This will allow staff to provide accurate information to client families, which will help alleviate fears around what is and is not legal regarding service provision to immigrant families. An organization must ensure that its staff are knowledgeable about legal work, so they don’t put the families at risk of not being able to get a green card or other immigration benefits.

To prevent putting those families with an unauthorized immigrant member at risk, multiple interviewees shared the importance of strict data protection policies and only collecting the minimum amount of information about a family that is needed. Interviewees suggest using a cyber-secure case management system customized to collect and track program information. Other organizations do not share data on immigration status outside of their legal department. Another interviewee said, “Unless we have to ask the question, we don’t ask about status. There are programs that require that, and we abide by that, if that’s not the case we don’t ask.”

Even with an educated staff, the fear of deportation prevents many immigrants from accessing support systems.³ This is even more true for families where some family members are unauthorized immigrants. However, education can help put fears into context with a proper understanding of the policy situation and everyone’s legal rights. Several interviewees discussed the “public charge” revisions advanced by the Trump administration (and subsequently revoked by the Biden administration), which expanded the range of public benefits whose use would make a person ineligible for a green card.

Promoted from the earliest days of the Trump administration, the proposed rule sparked confusion and fear, leading significant numbers of immigrants to disenroll from public benefit programs even before it formally took effect in March 2020.⁴ They noted that it wasn’t just the fear of what public charge is — misinformation and miscommunication led countless immigrants to forgo enrolling in programs they could legally access, like Head Start. Now that earlier public charge rules on the books dating to the 1990s have been reinstated, respondents stressed it is vital to communicate that the Trump rule has been rescinded to alleviate fear, and then to get families the available services that they need. Given that the fear that accessing services will impact future immigration status is so strong, organizations noted that providing services in a safe space⁵ was critical to building trust.



Immigration Status and COVID-19 Response

Because they may not be eligible for various types of federal support, depending on their immigration status and length of residence⁶ in the United States, immigrant families are a vulnerable population during disasters like the COVID-19 public health emergency and related economic crisis that hit in the spring of 2020. **Federal emergency assistance is typically not available for unauthorized immigrants, so our interviewees recommend having a disaster response plan ready to provide emergency rental, utility, food and assistance in case of need.** Immigrant workers of all statuses have been heavily affected by the pandemic because of their roles as food service workers, domestic workers, and home health aides. The situation is even more acute for unauthorized immigrants, because if they lose their job, they can't access unemployment, and are in turn among the most likely to be evicted. Multiple interviewees noted the importance of providing emergency cash grants for families when they can't access government resources.

Demonstrating the barriers affecting families in which some are citizens or permanent residents and others lack formal documentation, the Migration Policy Institute⁷ estimates that at least 14.4 million individuals in the United States live in mixed-status families that were excluded from initial 2020 COVID-19 stimulus payments. One interviewee noted that during the first waves of the COVID-19 pandemic, federal supports coming down the pipeline were not available for everyone. This organization quickly shifted to provide emergency assistance for immigrant families through other programs like local rental and food assistance. Over the course of 2020 and into 2021, they processed \$400,000 in emergency assistance, grocery gift cards and other types of direct aid. In the short term, they have offset those costs through city-level coordination on rent and utility assistance and by braiding together multiple funding sources, like CARES Act funding. But for this organization, it came down to determining the right funding source for individual needs and then processing it through the grant that made the most sense.

A big challenge for mixed status and unauthorized immigrant families during the pandemic has been the lack of reliable access to health insurance. For immigrant families of all types of statuses, access to healthcare has further been limited due to a lack of reliable transportation and an inability to visit primary care providers. Interviewees suggest providing healthcare services in easily accessible, local facilities. One interviewee noted that "Immigrants can't go to primary care providers to get a vaccine. Many have never received primary care services. You'd have to take three different buses to get to the vaccine location. Immigrants tell us: *It's not an unwillingness to get the vaccine, you've made it so difficult, you don't care about my life. As a solution, we provide vaccines at our facilities and at food pantries, in places that they regularly access.*"

CASE STUDY 1

Chicago Commons Supports Families Through Education and Partnerships

Chicago Commons serves over three thousand people annually across their Early Education, Family Hub, and Senior Services programs, and together these programs work to help families overcome poverty and systemic barriers, embrace opportunities and thrive across generations. The organization has supported Chicago's communities since its founding in 1894. Today, it serves primarily African American and Latino families, the neighborhoods of Humboldt Park, Pilsen, Back of the Yards and Bronzeville, and provides senior care throughout metro Chicago.



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Two members of the Chicago Commons team contributed to this work including Vikki Rompala, who sat for an interview in the summer of 2021 and participated in the national webinar focused on immigration status. Vikki also joined the resource team for our building trust peer advising session. Additionally, Andrea X. Guzmán, Family Hub Manager for Chicago Commons, presented a learning question during our peer advising session on growing language skills.

Chicago is a sanctuary city, but a general landscape of fear still exists that deters many immigrant families from accessing key resources. Immigrant residents, whether they are long-time residents or new arrivals, permanent residents or unauthorized, have voiced fear of losing their homes and fear of deportation by ICE. To address fears and confusion, Chicago Commons has adopted working practices related to the status and mental health of its immigrant client families. Chicago Commons staff needed to first assess those community fears and to educate themselves about relevant laws and federal rules. Chicago Commons prioritizes mental health and delivers trauma-informed care, both for families and for staff. They make it a practice to hire staff who understand systemic barriers and who have experience with trauma-informed care. They believe that every service organization needs to understand how trauma shows up in their work.

Chicago Commons has partnered with local legal aid organizations that help immigrant families understand their legal options based on their immigration status, whether due to asylum or refugee status, being a victim of a crime, domestic violence or human trafficking. Whether family members are working on a temporary visa, getting legal permanent residency, or need legal help to be eligible for regular employment, Chicago Commons and its legal aid partners help families understand their options.

Helping families or parents join the workforce is a priority for many 2Gen service providers, including Chicago Commons – it can help them secure their foothold in the society and also make them eligible for certain supports available for low-income workers. But promoting academic and career development while still operating under what is legally possible for clients without a social security number (SSN) or other workforce requirements can be a challenge. Many job placement possibilities involve

formal systems that require an SSN, which leaves few opportunities for immigrants who lack documentation. One option that is on the table is helping parents join the early childcare workforce, which Chicago Commons does through its Pathways for Parents Program. In Illinois, anyone can open a small business without an SSN or W2; they just need a Taxpayer Identification Number (TIN), so Chicago Commons is helping parents open home day care businesses. Staff recognized that many families were already doing the work of early childcare, and with the right training and support, this work can lead to income generation for the family — and help other families access affordable childcare options that are linguistically and culturally competent.

Under Illinois state law, immigrant families have many options to access post-secondary education and adult education, including scholarship eligibility. The state has also set aside funds for historically marginalized groups in education pathways. For example, there are funds to support men of color going into early childhood care. What's more, Chicago Commons has committed to supporting students through educational parity with their country of origin and by advocating for educational credit from previous educational attainment. This allows people to use their previous education to apply for post-secondary education or show their credentials in a workplace. Chicago Commons has also worked with the City Colleges to address barriers to student participation like transportation, digital literacy, tutoring services, childcare during classes and food access, to make it more likely that immigrant families will succeed in their education goals.



Working Practice 2: Creating Build partnerships to provide a continuum of services for mixed-status families

Strong partnerships with legal aid organizations, local school systems, food pantries, health centers and universities can help create an integrated network of supports for immigrant families. For different reasons, some immigrant families may need more supports than one organization can provide in-house. Multiple interviewees indicated that strong partnerships allowed them to provide wraparound services to their clients, regardless of immigration status, and many 2Gen efforts are creating a single point of entry for their clients to access services from different organizations by providing warm handoffs to partner organizations. One interviewee explained that many of their programs share a leasing space with other organizations that also understand the continuum of status:

Partnerships are particularly important for legal aid and workforce development efforts with immigrant and refugee families. **Multiple interviewees suggested the importance of promoting workforce and career development around what is feasible based on the immigration status of the client.** During intake, staff should assess needs and work to place family members in workforce trainings that are a best fit given their situation and connect them to wraparound services. One interviewee noted that many family members come in for legal assistance, but because of its 2Gen approach to supporting clients, they also get housing help, food assistance and English as a Second Language (ESL) courses, and the whole family is enrolled in programs that help parents and children together. Not all of these services are provided in-house, and staff personally hands off clients to partners who are well-positioned to provide other needed services.

A different interviewee noted that it can take time for immigrants to obtain work permits, so creating a partnership system where local families sponsor immigrant and refugee families is a good temporary work-around because it supports families while they can't legally work. This rurally located organization also works with landowning partners to develop local employment opportunities by having a "land bank" where immigrant workers can settle with their families, farm and make a living. Finally, while it is not a strategy that every organization can manage, some service groups are hiring unauthorized immigrant workers as independent consultants, learning from their expertise in understanding and navigating the struggles associated with immigration status. It also provides a stable source of income for these families as they work through immigration status issues.

CASE STUDY 2

Strong Partnerships for Citizenship in Napa Valley

On the Move is an umbrella organization of seven community initiatives in leadership and economic development for underserved populations, including immigrants and refugees. It began as a local organization in Napa Valley and has expanded through the years to become a statewide organization that serves over 27 California counties. Through their work, they function as a “trainer, convener and distinct purveyor of technical assistance and capacity building.” Longitudinal studies revealed that, due to a lack of mentorship and leadership opportunities, young people’s leadership dramatically declined after they graduated high school. To meet this need, On the Move was born in 2003 as a leadership development organization with the goal of developing leaders that reflect the diversity of the community.



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Two different organizations, One the Move and the Napa Valley Community Foundation, contributed to this paired case study. Terrance Mulligan, Napa Valley Community Foundation’s CEO sat for an interview in the summer of 2021 and Vice President Julia DeNatale participated in the national webinar focused on immigration status. On the Move’s Executive Director Alissa Abdo and Director Susana Garcia sat for an interview in the summer of 2021, and Susana participated in the immigration status webinar. Both Susana and Julia joined the resource team for our immigration status peer learning event.

With this goal in mind, On the Move began by asking about the factors that prevented Latino residents, immigrant and native born alike, from moving into leadership roles. In partnership with the school system, On the Move’s Leadership Academy worked with high school students to get them on track for college. What they soon realized was that waiting until high school was too late, and that school leadership instead needed to engage earlier with parents and children, helping families access the supports they need to be successful. Over time, they have formed sustainable relationships with school and district administration to make it easier to refer families into programs that can help them thrive.

Napa Valley is the heart of California wine country and has a lot of low-wage, seasonal employment in agriculture and wine tourism. On the Move also promotes workforce and career development for immigrant families, while considering what is legally possible for unauthorized immigrant members of the community. One strategy that On the Move and the Napa Valley Community Foundation have put into practice is to support citizenship initiatives, which opens additional career opportunities for immigrant residents.

In 2012, Napa Valley Community Foundation funded a Migration Policy Institute-led study on the Profile of Immigrants in Napa County.⁸ The report identified important ramifications of the county’s shift from manufacturing to wine and tourism; for example that 30 percent of the labor force earned less than \$25 per hour, and the fast-growing Latino population is predicted to be a majority by 2030.⁹ The study showed that, despite 9,000 green-card holders being eligible for citizenship, the lack of a proper legal services infrastructure posed a barrier that prevented them from becoming citizens. In response, the foundation launched the One Napa Valley Initiative (ONVI), which includes On the Move, as well as two other family resource centers and one legal services nonprofit, that together aid and assist green card holders as they move through the naturalization process, while also spreading awareness of the benefits of citizenship.

In addition, and separate from their work with green card holders, On the Move and other partners have been able to target neighborhoods with the greatest need for legal documentation work. They provide “know your rights” education to the community and help people gain legal status, if possible, including supporting individuals with DACA, TPS, or eligibility to apply for a green card under the Violence Against

Women Act. Most unauthorized immigrant members of the community have no pathway to a green card and eventual citizenship, but On the Move still educates them on their rights. The partners also assist legal immigrants and help file family-based immigration petitions. Since ONVI was launched in 2013, nearly 9,300 have received legal services, 5,300 have applied for citizenship or other benefits and 1,800 have become naturalized U.S. citizens.

Working together, the Napa Valley Community Foundation and On the Move provide working families with a single point of entry to access legal, educational, childcare, technological, and emergency resources, as well as naturalization support. On the Move's school-based Family Resource Centers (FRC) have evolved into a "one stop shop" for working families, connecting them to parenting classes, Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) filing help, basic emergency aid and referrals on childcare. Currently, there are five FRCs located in elementary schools that support families and neighborhood residents. Overall, the partnership works towards family stability and family economic success which include supporting individuals through the naturalization process for citizenship and helping identify and resolve citizenship issues. The partnership also holds group processing events at local churches after mass, with volunteers and an attorney available to walk families through their citizenship application. This community-focused effort can begin the steps to process dozens of families in a single afternoon.

Since the devastating wildfires of 2017, the partnership has designed new efforts to support Latino and immigrant communities in response to disaster. It provides a safety net for individual families who may not be eligible for government emergency support and has disaster response plans ready for unauthorized immigrants, whose families are less likely to stay in shelter or apply for resources since these are usually established by untrusted government entities, and oftentimes disaster government subsidies are not available to non-U.S. citizens. Its experience in providing emergency support was a big help in 2020 when the COVID pandemic hit. On the Move and Napa Valley Community Foundation had the skills and experience to provide a health safety net and knew how to design a long-term recovery plan, which has also helped in vaccine education with immigrant families.



Policy Implications

This paper makes clear that organizations providing 2Gen services to immigrant-background families will need to go beyond linguistic and cultural competence to be able to navigate the extraordinarily complex intersection of immigrants' status and their eligibility for public benefits. This complexity — and the confusion and fears that can flow from it — is owed to differences in eligibility criteria across benefit programs and across political jurisdictions.¹⁰ Further, as seen in the evolution of the federal COVID-19 pandemic economic relief bills,¹¹ eligibility standards for noncitizens can shift over time. In the case of the CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security) Act enacted in March 2020, exclusions of U.S.-citizen and other legally present children in households with unauthorized immigrants were eliminated in the subsequent December 2020 stimulus package, and benefits were awarded to legally present family members.¹²

This complexity in administering 2Gen programs is magnified in the case of immigrant-background families composed of members with differing immigration statuses and hence differing eligibility for public benefits. As shown here, many immigrant households contain one or more unauthorized adults who are generally barred from public benefit programs and one or more U.S.-born citizen children who remain fully eligible.

Further complicating the delivery of services to noncitizens and other populations have been shifts in enforcement priorities of the federal government. One important shift has been the Biden administration's Guidelines for Enforcement Actions in or Near Protected Areas that directs the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to **not** take enforcement actions in or near locations that would restrict people's access to essential services, such as food, shelter, medical care and education.¹³ Another important policy change has been the Biden administration's rescission of the Trump administration's public charge rule.¹⁴ That rule dramatically expanded the number of public benefit programs taken into consideration when determining whether an immigrant may qualify for a green card or for the extension of a temporary visa. Studies by the Migration Policy Institute and others have documented that the mix of Trump-era immigration and public benefit-related policies produced a "chilling effect" on immigrants applying for public benefits — even in programs for which they remained eligible.¹⁵ Further, rather than discouraging immigrants from seeking the public benefits to which they are entitled, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has recently sought to encourage states to educate immigrant-background populations regarding their eligibility for Medicaid.¹⁶

An additional confounding factor for organizations administering 2Gen programs has been the shifting flows and legal claims of significant immigrant populations following the Biden election. These include Afghan nationals, many of whom are being paroled into the country (a status that does not put them on a path to a green card); the more than 1 million noncitizens newly eligible for Temporary Protected Status and other humanitarian statuses; and the expected rise in the number of refugees admitted under the refugee resettlement program.¹⁷

The clearest policy implication of these trends is **the need for substantial public and private investment in formally training government agency staff, nongovernmental organizations, their clients and the communities within which they live** in providing accurate information on eligibility, enforcement, and the implications of benefit receipt on a future immigration benefits case. Because the legal, policy, program and population terrain is so dynamic, this will require the development of a culture of continuous learning about immigrant families' statuses. The imperative should inform both in-house practices as well as the development of partnerships with trusted organizations with appropriate experience and programmatic expertise. The National Immigration Law Center¹⁸ is widely viewed as a reliable source of up-to-date information on immigrants' eligibility for public benefits; state and city health and social services agencies that administer public benefits often provide such information as well,¹⁹ as do some state legal aid organizations.²⁰

A second group of status-related policies and practices that can secure trust among immigrant-background families and promote their access to social services centers around **the disclosure and privacy of information required to determine eligibility**. As the case studies suggest, training will require developing an understanding of the security requirements of individual and family data collected to determine eligibility for public benefit programs. In addition, agency practices that limit identification and other data required of immigrant and other populations to the extent permitted by law can enhance trust and program effectiveness, both for individuals and for families. Limiting the amount of individual data required of program applicants can be seen as serving the larger goal of reducing administrative costs and limiting administrative burden that has recently been strongly advocated by the Biden administration, as demonstrated in Executive Order 14058.²¹ One approach to limiting the amount of individual data collected has been to make services, such as access to broadband, available based on zip code as opposed to individual income levels.

Beyond funding training regarding immigrants' legal status and limiting administrative burden, a third set of policies that respond to the complex intersection of benefits and immigration status centers around **the dedication of direct support to immigrant families during health and economic crises**. Private support, such as that seen in Napa Valley that reaches individuals and families who would otherwise be ineligible for funding under federal or state programs has been a notable development during the COVID-19 pandemic. Here again, the mixed statuses of differing family members will require that agencies carefully target differing support streams to children and parents who retain eligibility and to those who do not.

At all turns, **meeting the 2Gen needs of immigrant families requires that a continuum of services be offered** — promoted by strategies that include co-location of providers or a single point of entry for multiple services such as is offered in Napa Valley. The key here is that those service clusters must not only be linguistically and culturally responsive but deeply attuned to a complicated and shifting legal environment as far as benefits and legal status are concerned. By formally training agency and organization staff on eligibility, limiting identification of applicants to the legal minimum, and intentionally designing 2Gen services to meet the needs of immigrant families, the patchwork of policies can begin to be untangled so that mixed status families can take full advantage of public benefits for which immigrant-background adults and children alike may be qualified.

Conclusion

Across the country, service organizations are doing the hard work of overcoming immigration status barriers through intentionally designing their interventions to meet the needs of families. The research and case studies above explore two broad strategies that arose from our survey, interviews, webinars, and peer advising and learning convenings: Take time to educate staff, clients and community members about how different immigration statuses can affect eligibility for supports and the design of services and build partnerships that can provide a continuum of services for mixed-status families.

- **Partner with organizations who understand the continuum of status.** Build partnerships with legal organizations, banks, healthcare institutions and postsecondary institutions who will serve undocumented immigrants.
- **Assist families with capacity building.** Recognize how their immigration status may pose barriers to academic and career development or financial wellness. Explore other options, such as giving them the tools to open their business, which may not require a SSN.
- **Involve families in program design.** Incorporate family voice into programming and build a team of staff who have cultural competence and understand what families need.
- **Track and measure program effectiveness.** Check-in with program participants to see if the program helped them meet their goals and ask what they took away from the program. Use this to inform changes to the program design and whether to proceed with partnerships.
- **Prepare a disaster response plan.** Immigrants are a vulnerable population during disasters and may not be eligible for all types of federal support, so have a disaster response plan ready to provide medical, financial, housing, and mental health support.
- **Offer education around rights and available resources.** Hold “know your rights” workshops and inform families about what options are available to them based on their legal status.
- **Put fears in context.** Understandably, some families may be afraid to access resources due to fear of ICE and deportation. Provide information about the reality of the situation and help distinguish between federal and local policy.

Description of the Project

With support from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the project team explored and examined the challenges and promising 2Gen working practices used by organizations that serve immigrant families. The project team included the Aspen Institute Community Strategies Group, the Migration Policy Institute's National Center on Immigrant Integration Policy (MPI), and Higher Heights Consulting, with valuable input from Ascend at the Aspen Institute.

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We were initially interested in how the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic shaped current challenges and responses of immigrant-serving organizations, but we also wanted to discover durable and promising 2Gen practices that could be replicable (and therefore valuable) within other organizations. A related goal of the effort was to advance the entire field of service provision by helping organizations who were not yet or only partially implementing a 2Gen approach to improve their work with immigrant families.

To discover 2Gen working practices, we first needed to assess organizational challenges and responses. The project team conducted a national survey of immigrant serving organizations, reaching a target audience of over 1,000 through multiple national service organization networks, including the National Community Action Partnership, the United Neighborhood Houses, and Welcoming America. The survey netted over 125 complete responses, and analysis revealed positive trends grouped around four major areas: building trust, overcoming language barriers, developing cultural competency, and working through documentation status.

To sharpen the promising 2Gen working practices that organizations use with immigrant families, the project team selected 25 geographically-diverse and reputationally-strong organizations²² and conducted 90-minute interviews with each one. Nine of these organizations were invited to participate as expert panelists at four webinars that individually covered the four positive area trends mentioned above. They also participated as part of the resource team for a peer advising and learning session on that same topic, held following the webinar. The learnings from the survey, interviews, topical webinars, and peer advising and learning sessions are gathered in a set of four issue briefs, of which this is one.

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Endnotes

- ¹ "Working with Immigrant and Refugee Families," *Aspen Institute*, <https://www.aspeninstitute.org/programs/community-strategies-group/family-economic-success/2gi/>.
- ² "Working with Immigrant Families Regardless of Legal Status: Spreading and Adapting 2Gen Practices," *Aspen Institute*, 16 September 2021, <https://www.aspeninstitute.org/events/2gen-in-immigrant-communities-working-through-immigration-status/>.
- ³ For more on fear and building trust with immigrant and refugee families, see our trust building brief, here. "Working with Immigrant and Refugee Families," *Aspen Institute*, <https://www.aspeninstitute.org/programs/community-strategies-group/family-economic-success/2gi/>.
- ⁴ Public charge has been on the books going back to the 1800s. What the Trump administration did, though, was seek to vastly expand it. The Migration Policy Institute estimates that the biggest application of the rule would have been to bar significant numbers of new arrivals into the country, and that it would not have affected large numbers of immigrants seeking to get a green card. Yet the chilling effects of the rule were of course huge.
- ⁵ For more on creating safe spaces, see our trust building brief in this series, [here](#); *ibid*.
- ⁶ LPRs are ineligible for many federal public benefits for their first five years as a green-card holder.
- ⁷ "Mixed-Status Families Ineligible for CARES Act Federal Pandemic Stimulus Checks," *Migration Policy Institute*, May 2020, <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/content/mixed-status-families-ineligible-pandemic-stimulus-checks>.
- ⁸ Randy Capps, Kristen McCabe and Michael Fix, Profile of Immigrants in Napa County, *Migration Policy Institute*, May 2012, <https://www.napavalleycf.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/Profile-of-Immigrants-in-Napa-County-Executive-Summary.pdf>.
- ⁹ The report identified that while Latino immigrant households earn approximately \$30,000 less than non-immigrant households, they pay into state and local tax coffers at a rate that is proportional to their share of the County's population. The report also identified that immigrants are over-represented in the Napa Valley workforce. While immigrants are only 23% of the population, they account for 33% of the region's workforce. Additionally, 89% of Latino immigrant men in Napa County are working. Immigrants represent a very significant part of the workforce in various sectors, accounting for 73% of the agricultural workforce, 39% of the manufacturing workforce, 37% of the construction workforce, and 29% of the hospitality workforce. Immigrants in Napa Valley are generally younger than other demographic groups and are augmenting Napa Valley's aging population. In fact, 48% of the children enrolled in Napa County's K-12 public education system are the children of immigrants, though the overwhelming majority of these children are themselves U.S.-born citizens. At the same time, the native-born, non-Latino community is aging rapidly in place, with this group remaining roughly the same size as it was in 1990 (95,000). For more Napa demographic data, see the fact sheet: [A Profile of Immigrants in Napa County, Napa Valley Community Foundation](#); *ibid*.
- ¹⁰ "TABLE 1 Overview of Immigrant Eligibility for Federal Programs," *National Immigrant Law Center*, 2021, https://www.nilc.org/issues/economic-support/table_ovrw_fedprogs/.
- ¹¹ Immigrant Eligibility for Public Programs During COVID-19, *Protecting Immigrant Families*, 26 March 2021, <https://protectingimmigrantfamilies.org/immigrant-eligibility-for-public-programs-during-covid-19/>.
- ¹² Julia Gelatt, Randy Capps and Michael Fix, "Nearly 3 Million U.S. Citizens and Legal Immigrants Initially Excluded under the CARES Act Are Covered under the December 2020 COVID-19 Stimulus," *Migration Policy Institute*, January 2021, <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/news/cares-act-excluded-citizens-immigrants-now-covered>.
- ¹³ U.S. Department of Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro N. Mayorkas, *Guidelines for Enforcement Actions in or Near Protected Areas*, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2021, https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/21_1027_opa_guidelines-enforcement-actions-in-near-protected-areas.pdf.
- ¹⁴ "Public Charge", *U.S. Citizenship and Immigrant Services*, 17 February 2022, <https://www.uscis.gov/public-charge>.
- ¹⁵ Randy Capps, Michael Fix and Jeanne Batalova, "Anticipated "Chilling Effects" of the Public-Charge Rule Are Real: Census Data Reflect Steep Decline in Benefits Use by Immigrant Families," *Migration Policy Institute*, December 2020, <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/news/anticipated-chilling-effects-public-charge-rule-are-real>.
- ¹⁶ "HHS Encourages States to Educate Eligible Immigrants about Medicaid Coverage", *U.S. Department of Health and Human Services*, 2021, <https://www.hhs.gov/about/news/2021/07/22/hhs-encourages-states-to-educate-eligible-immigrants-about-medicaid-coverage.html>.
- ¹⁷ Muzaffar Chishti and Jessica Bolter, "Biden at the One-Year Mark: A Greater Change in Direction on Immigration Than Is Recognized," *Migration Information Source*, 19 January 2022, <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/biden-one-year-mark>.
- ¹⁸ "TABLE 1 Overview of Immigrant Eligibility for Federal Programs," *National Immigrant Law Center*, 2021, https://www.nilc.org/issues/economic-support/table_ovrw_fedprogs/.
- ¹⁹ See, for example, information provided by [Maryland's Department of Health regarding Medicaid eligibility](#) - "Immigration Status Requirements for Medicaid," Maryland Medicaid Administration - and [Washington State](#) - "Public Charge Information," *Washington State's Department of Social and Health Services*.
- ²⁰ See, for example, "Immigrant Eligibility for Public Benefits in New York State," *Empire Justice Center*, June 2021, <https://empirejustice.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Public-Benefits-Chart-June-2021-FINAL.pdf>.
- ²¹ The President, "Executive Order 14058—Transforming Federal Customer Experience and Service Delivery To Rebuild Trust in Government," *Federal Register* 86, no. 239, 13 December 2021: 71357, <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2021/12/16/2021-27380/transforming-federal-customer-experience-and-service-delivery-to-rebuild-trust-in-government>.
- ²² For a list of people and organizations interviewed, [visit this webpage](#).



ABOUT CSG AND MPI

The **Aspen Institute Community Strategies Group** convenes, equips, and inspires local leaders as they build more prosperous regions and advance those living on the economic margins — with our primary focus on rural America since our founding in 1985. Committed to increasing equity and opportunity, CSG advances an asset-based and systems-building approach to improve economic, social, and health outcomes through community and economic development.

The **Migration Policy Institute's National Center on Immigrant Integration Policy** is a crossroads for elected officials, researchers, state and local agency managers, grassroots leaders, local service providers, and others who seek to understand and respond to the challenges and opportunities today's high rates of immigration create in local communities.