



Called to Care So That

# Every Immigrant Is Welcomed and Well-Treated

Called to Care believes in the dignity of all and upholding the humanity of every immigrant among us, including each person's right to reach optimal health and well-being. Everyone deserves access to high-quality care. We call on providers and communities at large throughout the state to work together to eliminate inequities and advance social and racial justice—to create a welcoming, just and inclusive California, including removing barriers to critical health care and social services.

## California's Immigrant Communities and Our Shared Values

There are nearly 11 million immigrants living in California, representing more than a quarter of the state's population. In five counties—Alameda, Los Angeles, San Francisco, San Mateo and Santa Clara—at least one-third of the population was born outside the United States. Fifty percent of California's immigrants hail from Latin America, and 39% from Asia. More than two million immigrants in our state—one in five—are undocumented.<sup>1</sup>

In June 2022, California made history as the first state to agree to fully remove exclusions for Medicaid (Medi-Cal) coverage for all who are income-eligible, regardless of age or immigration status. Approximately 700,000 undocumented Californians ages 24-49, the last remaining age group to be excluded, will soon be able to access comprehensive Medi-Cal coverage. However, more work must be done to reflect California's values of diversity, equity, inclusion and fairness.

## A Legacy of Supporting Immigrant Communities and a Commitment to Building Common Ground

Immigrants themselves, the first Sisters of Mercy arrived in Pittsburgh from Ireland in 1843. And by 1854, many more came to settle in New York, Chicago, Little Rock and San Francisco, tending to the unmet needs of the communities they served, particularly those who were sick, marginalized and living in poverty. The Sisters of Mercy, along with other women religious congregations who established hospitals, cared for all as their "neighbors."

And that healing mission to care for all—regardless of immigration status or ability to pay—extends today in the dedication of Catholic health systems and Catholic-affiliated hospitals working to improve the health and well-being of immigrant communities.

An essential part of California's health care safety net, Catholic providers work closely with a wide range of organizations to build common ground in support of all immigrant communities, acting in solidarity with migrants, refugees, asylees and victims of human trafficking.

Called to Care seeks to:

- **Address Social Challenges Faced by Immigrant Communities.** Working with community partners to break down cultural barriers to care and improving social determinants of health, such as access to housing, nutritious food and employment; and supporting programs to prevent and respond to human trafficking, exploitation and violence.
- **Advocate for Immigrant Rights and Protections.** In collaboration with local, state and national partners, supporting access for immigrants to government programs such as housing and nutrition assistance; championing fair and just immigration policies for a healthier California and nation, such as the Lift the Bar Act; and [calling on Congress](#) to "promptly enact two essential Federal immigration reform measures," the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) and Farm Workforce Modernization Acts.
- **Provide Culturally Competent Care for Every Immigrant Community.** Providing high-quality, equitable care that respects the dignity of all people and responds to social, cultural, linguistic and literacy needs when delivering care and ensuring safe spaces for vulnerable patients, particularly those with undocumented status or those experiencing fear and/or trauma.
- **Confront the Health Challenges of Farmworker and Other Rural Immigrant Communities.** Providing access to care where and when it is needed, including mobile clinics and telehealth services, pop-up COVID-19 testing and vaccination centers; assigning community health workers and promotores to help immigrant families navigate their care needs; screening for conditions—like high blood pressure and pre-diabetes—that are prevalent in the population.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ppic.org/publication/immigrants-in-california/>



Called to Care So That

## Every Immigrant Is Welcomed and Well-Treated

### Initiatives to Support Immigrant Communities

California's Catholic-affiliated health care providers engage with their local communities to support the health and well-being of immigrant communities. Two examples of local engagement include:

- **Latino Health Promotores Program**—Throughout the San Fernando Valley, Providence's bilingual (English/Spanish) Community Health Workers/Health Promotores work with local schools, churches, health clinics and organizations to provide health education, health information and resource referrals to community members. The Latino Health Promotores Program focuses on vulnerable neighborhoods, including immigrant communities.
- **Community Wellness Program (CWP) of the Cambodian Association of America**—As part of its Families in Good Health initiative, Dignity Health supports the CWP of the Cambodian Association of America. This program serves southern California's Cambodian immigrant community, especially older refugees who continue to face challenges arising from the trauma experienced during the "Killing Fields" genocide of 1975-1979. Through culturally and linguistically appropriate prevention and intervention services, CWP supports both the physical and mental health of community members.

**"Ensuring that all immigrants are seen in their full humanity, including the ability to access quality health care, requires bold leadership, partnerships and action. As part of our service to immigrant communities, Dignity Health works every day to bridge language and information divides that can prevent immigrants from accessing health care. Our Statement on Comprehensive Immigration Reform offers guiding principles for advocacy on this policy priority."**

**Rachelle Reyes Wenger**

System Vice President, Public Policy and Advocacy Engagement, Dignity Health

**"We believe every person is part of the human family and that they deserve to be treated fairly and with respect. When major policy changes would limit immigrants' access to health care and social programs, we take stands on behalf of those who don't have a constituency to speak for them."**

**Matthew Gonzales, M.D., FAAHPM**

Associate Vice President, Chief Medical and Operations Officer, Providence Institute for Human Caring

### Share Your Story

Have you or your community benefited from the support and care provided by local health systems for immigrant communities? Please share your story about this important work at <https://calledtocareforall.org/take-action/share-your-story/>.

### About Called to Care

Called to Care aims to improve the health of every person in our state by supporting strong connections between safety net providers—including hospitals, clinics and health care professionals—and community organizations to address California's most pressing health and social challenges.

*Called to Care is a project of the Alliance of Catholic Health Care, together with members Dignity Health and Providence.*



#### Connect With Us.

Connect with Called to Care to stay informed and involved as Called to Care takes on California's health challenges by helping build strong partnerships between our communities and safety net hospitals and providers.

<https://calledtocareforall.org/register>