

MIGRANT BUSING ISSUE BRIEF & STATE ADVOCACY RESOURCE GUIDE

State Advocacy Guide

Overview

In Spring and Fall 2022, governors in Texas and Florida began transporting thousands of migrants from the southern border across the country. Florida Governor DeSantis transported migrants and their families to Boston, MA, New York, California, and Martha's Vineyard, justified by a \$12 million allotment by the state's legislature to transport immigrants out of Florida. Texas Governor Abbott sent immigrants to New York city, Washington, DC, and Chicago, IL. Arizona's former governor Gucey also sent migrants to Washington, DC.

On October 13, 2022, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) Council on Immigrant Child and Family Health (COICFH) convened a townhall featuring healthcare officials and experts to discuss the response by various cities to the influx of arrivals of asylum seekers. The townhall discussed effective strategies to support migrants, advocacy opportunities, and recommendations for future actions. Representatives from organizations serving immigrant and refugee families in New York, Washington DC, Chicago, and Massachusetts were featured during the townhall.

Although *Title 42* of the 1944 *Public Health Services Act*, which allows the federal government to expel immigrants during the ongoing public health emergency, did not end in December due to a ruling by the Supreme Court, border states continue to experience sustained levels of arrivals of immigrant families. This guide briefly discusses state and local government actions to date and provides some advocacy strategies AAP chapters could adopt to support immigrant children and families arriving in their states.

Current State/Local Level Policy Actions to Support Arriving Immigrant Families

New York

New York city has received an estimated 32,000 plus asylum seekers since Spring 2022. On October 7, 2022, New York City Mayor, Eric Adams issued an emergency [declaration](#) requiring all relevant city agencies to coordinate efforts to respond to the needs of asylum seekers and create Humanitarian Emergency Response and Relief Centers. Citing a cost of over \$1 billion, Mayor Adams has called for federal and state funding to support efforts to provide humanitarian relief services to immigrants transported to New York City from Texas and Florida.

Several New York city community-based nonprofit organizations, hospitals, and federally qualified health centers have responded to the medical needs of asylum seekers.

Washington, DC

Washington, DC has received over 9,000 immigrants bused there from Texas and Florida. On September 8, 2022, Washington, DC Mayor, Muriel Bowser, [declared](#) a public health emergency to coordinate city agencies to support arriving migrants. The Office of Migrant Services was established to provide support and services to migrants which

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included creating welcome stations and linking arriving migrants to medical, housing, and legal services. Pediatricians in DC are providing immunizations and ensuring migrant children are enrolled in DC public schools. Similar to New York City, collaboration between nonprofit organizations and federally qualified health centers (FQHCs) in DC is underway. In DC, legal aid is available for immigrant status proceedings, nutrition supports are provided via WIC benefits, and other case management services are provided to link immigrant families to shelter. On September 22, 2022, the DC Council approved the [Migrant Services and Supports Emergency Act of 2022](#) granting the DC Mayor authority to utilize local funding to provide services through the *Homeless Services Reform Act of 2005*. A bill before the DC Council to establish permanent migrant supports and services programs was withdrawn.

Chicago

By November 2022, about 3,700 migrants had arrived in Chicago, IL from Texas. Notably, about 500 of the arrivals are children. The city of Chicago and State of Illinois announced supports for migrants upon arrival, including immediate shelter and support for basic needs. On September 14, 2022, Illinois Governor Pritzker issued an emergency disaster [proclamation](#) to extend assistance to migrants. The emergency declaration extends services such as transportation, emergency shelter and housing, food, health screenings, medical assessments, treatments, etc. Cook County Health (CCH), the public hospital system, was designated to provide initial healthcare for all new arrivals. Cook County and city of Chicago have prioritized promoting school readiness, providing immunizations, and comprehensive physicals for arriving children. CCH has implemented case management to ensure that children receive appropriate follow up. Transportation services are especially crucial as many of the arrivals are being housed in hotels in suburban settings far from centralized resources in the city

Massachusetts

In September 2022, Florida sent about 50, mostly Venezuelan immigrants, to Martha's Vineyard and Boston, MA. The group sent to Martha's Vineyard included children as young as 3 years old. Local government officials set up temporary shelters. The state of Massachusetts has focused efforts on data collection by the Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH) Center for Immigrant Health. The data collection process is to support information to be included in advocacy efforts.

State Advocacy Considerations

AAP chapters could:

- ✓ Educate state policymakers about immediate medical services needs of immigrant children and children with special healthcare needs eg immunizations, housing, psycho-social supports, medication and legal services, etc.
- ✓ Advocate before state and local government executives to declare emergencies to meet immediate needs expeditiously and in a humanitarian manner.
- ✓ Provide testimony before legislatures to support humanitarian service provisions for immigrant families.
- ✓ Work with state and local health departments to identify infectious disease mitigation strategies and establish government and community-based treatment supports.
- ✓ Share information about pediatric providers who provide medical screenings and services for migrants with government entities to encourage linkage to care and supports.
- ✓ Encourage state and local governments to connect migrant families to existing nutrition support programs such as WIC and provide coverage for Medicaid-eligible children regardless of immigration status.
- ✓ Advocate for ongoing mental health services.
- ✓ Facilitate school readiness by ensuring children are fully vaccinated and eligible for public school enrollment, receive trauma-informed care supports and services.
- ✓ Encourage government coordination and collaboration with healthcare, legal, social services, and education institutions to address the unique needs of immigrant children and families.
- ✓ Educate immigrant families about available health insurance coverage and access.

- ✓ Work with statewide or regional coalitions and partners to support arriving immigrant families and children. (Linked [here](#) is a list by *Protecting Immigrant Families* of organizations supporting immigrant families by state).

Clinical resources for pediatricians:

- Massachusetts data collection tool to document experiences of families and children at the border. <https://redcap.partners.org/redcap/surveys/?s=PM17CTHCM3NEPP1>
- CareRef is a tool that guides clinicians through conducting a post-arrival medical screening. The tool was created using data specific to refugee populations coming into the United States. <http://careref.web.health.state.mn.us/>
- The CDC Domestic Medical Screening Guidance provides guidance for healthcare providers who conduct initial medical screening for refugees. <https://www.cdc.gov/immigrantrefugeehealth/guidelines/domestic-guidelines.html>
- The Center of Excellence in Newcomer Health in Minnesota is a network for training and epidemiology in refugee health. The center promotes communication among health professionals and dissemination of best practices. <https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/rih/about/coe.html>
- Health Network ensures continuity of care for mobile patients. <https://www.migrantclinician.org/engage/enrollment-health-network.html>

For additional information or advocacy support, contact the AAP State Advocacy Team at stgov@aap.org.