

# What you need to know about getting the COVID-19 vaccine if you're undocumented

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It's clear that the pandemic isn't going to go away soon—and getting vaccinated remains an important tool in warding off COVID-19.

But if you're undocumented, getting the [vaccine](#) can seem complicated.

Federal authorities have said that vaccines are open to everyone "regardless of [immigration status](#)." So, if you are an undocumented person who is otherwise eligible to receive the vaccine, your immigration status won't prevent you from being vaccinated.

"You are eligible to receive this vaccine," Lenart says. "It's in the public health interest to help get us out of this pandemic that we make sure everybody who lives in the U.S. has access to the vaccine."

But you may have other concerns about getting the vaccine. "These often come from decades worth of mistrust that has been bred in the healthcare system, as well as in the immigration system," says Jana Lenart, a COVID-19 outreach specialist with Philadelphia-based immigration services and resettlement organization HIAS Pennsylvania. "That can be a powerful influential factor." That trust is not going to be regained overnight.

If you have concerns about getting vaccinated opening you up to immigration enforcement, if English isn't your preferred language, or you want to know how it will affect your status, here is what you need to know:

### **Q: Will the vaccine cost me anything out of pocket?**

A: No. Getting vaccine should not cost you any money, regardless of whether you are undocumented or not, or whether or not you have health insurance.

If you do have insurance, your insurer will be billed for the cost of the vaccination—and if you are enrolled in Medicaid, that service will pay for the vaccine. If you are uninsured, providers will be able to have the federal government pay for it through the Health Resources and Services Administration's Provider Relief Fund, according to the National

Immigration Law Center.

"These vaccines are free, and you should not be charged for either the vaccine itself, or the cost of the provider providing you with that vaccine," Lenart says. "If you don't have [health insurance](#), you're not going to be billed—you're not going to have to pay a single penny."

## **Q: What ID do I need to show?**

A: That depends on the individual provider or vaccination site, Lenart says.

Some places ask for information like your Social Security number (if you have one), or identification such as a state ID or driver's license. Others may ask you to prove that you are a resident in the area by showing a piece of mail, such as a utility bill.

But providing a [social security numbers](#) is "absolutely not a requirement" to have one or provide it to be vaccinated, Lenart says. Some providers, like those who use the Provider Relief Fund, are required to ask for it, but not having one shouldn't prevent you from getting a vaccine. And in lots of cases, no identification is required.

## **Q: What if English isn't my preferred language?**

Language access can be a big challenge, and providers having translation services is often case-by-case, too, Lenart says, and finding clinics with translation services for less common languages has been a challenge. In those cases, she adds, it may be up to you to find the space that best accommodates your situation.

A: If you need help:

- Check with other community members
- Reach out to immigration organizations in your area
- If you want information about the vaccine in different languages, check the CDC's COVID-19 Communication Toolkit for Migrants, Refugees, and Other Limited-English-Proficient Populations.

## **Q: Is ICE allowed at vaccination sites?**

A: No. Neither U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) nor U.S. Customs and Border Protection are able to "conduct enforcement operations at or near vaccine distribution sites or clinics," according to a February announcement from the Department of Homeland Security.

As a result, immigration enforcement "will not be at or near any vaccination clinics," Lenart says, and getting vaccinated will not increase the likelihood of deportation.

## **Q: Can the provider share my information with authorities?**

A: No. The information you give cannot be used against you. This is because of a "[data use and sharing agreement](#)" with the CDC and jurisdictions where vaccines are being administered. That information can only be used to expand the public health response to COVID-19.

"Information that's collected for the purpose of vaccines cannot be used for any civil, criminal, or immigration-related enforcement," Lenart says. "It does not put anybody—especially [undocumented immigrants](#)—at greater risk of deportation."

## **Q: Will getting the vaccine affect my public charge**

## status?

A: No. Getting vaccinated won't impact your ability to get a green card or become a naturalized citizen in the future, says Lenart. The DHS announced that in March, noting in a statement that "medical treatment or preventative services for COVID-19, including vaccines, will not be considered for public charge purposes."

"That's the big concern—that it could affect [your] eligibility," she says. "But it absolutely does not."

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