

Released by The Access Project and the National Health Law Program

August 21, 2002

The Access Project and the National Health Law Program (NHeLP) have released a revised publication, entitled *Immigrant Access to Health Benefits: A Resource Manual*. This manual, originally published in 2000, has been revised and expanded. It was written for use as a resource in conjunction with an intensive training program developed by The Access Project and the National Health Law Program.

Immigrant Access to Health Benefits: A Resource Manual is essentially a primer on health access for immigrants. It details and explains basic eligibility requirements for key federal and state programs and identifies issues that can be significant barriers to access to health care for immigrants and their families. Look at the bottom of this page for the table of contents.

Since welfare reform was enacted in 1996, the nation's safety net for immigrants has been seriously weakened, and the impact on health care for immigrants has been particularly harsh. Loss of benefit eligibility has swelled the numbers of uninsured people and created additional demands on the services offered at clinics and public hospitals. Fears of reporting and public charge determinations have driven many immigrants and their children out of the healthcare system, even when they are eligible for benefits.

Increasing immigrants' access to health care in the wake of welfare reform will not be easy. But communities can begin by becoming knowledgeable, not only about the law's restrictions, but also about the opportunities that may be present for advocacy at the state and local level to fill gaps created by the law. *Immigrant Access to Health Benefits: A Resource Manual* can be an important tool in this process.

The National Health Law Program (NHeLP) is a national civil rights organization working for justice in health care for low-income people. NHeLP uses the legal system to obtain equal access to health care for America's working and unemployed poor, minorities, immigrants, and

people with disabilities. It is headquartered in Los Angeles, with branch offices in Washington, DC, and Chapel Hill, NC.

The Access Project is a national initiative of The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, in partnership with Brandeis University's Heller Graduate School and the Collaborative for Community Health Development. The mission of The Access Project is to improve the health of our nation by assisting local communities in developing and sustaining efforts that improve healthcare access and promote universal coverage with a focus on people who are without health insurance.

Immigrant Access to Health Benefits: A Resource Manual is available for \$25 from either the National Health Law Program or The Access Project. To order, call NHeLP at 310-204-6010 or send an e-mail request to nhelp@healthlaw.org.

Below are the topics covered in this manual:

- Chapter 1: Medicaid and SCHIP for Immigrants
- Chapter 2: Health Benefit Programs Available to All Noncitizens Regardless of Status
- Chapter 3: State and Local Programs
- Chapter 4: New Responsibilities for Sponsors
- Chapter 5: Verification of Status, Confidentiality, and Reporting
- Chapter 6: Public Charge Determinations
- Chapter 7: Linguistic and Cultural Access in Health Care Settings