

Socio-emotional support of Undocumented Students

Yessenia Moreno
Luz Bertadillo Rodriguez

Immigrants UndocuHealth: Serving the Mental Health Needs of Undocumented Immigrants

Stressors that can impact the mental health of undocumented immigrants:

1. Financial stress and pressure, working low-paid jobs for long hours
2. Not having access to health benefits or mental health providers
3. Feeling depressed or anxious due to anti-immigrant rhetoric and stereotypes
4. Fear of sharing status and exposing their family
5. Fearful or hesitant to be referred to outside agencies
6. Facing limitations in academic and career opportunities
7. Fear of deportation for themselves and family members

Best Practices when supporting Undocumented Students

DO'S

- Proper term for referring to a student's immigration status is: undocumented
- Ask student if it is okay to mention their immigration status when making a referral or introducing them (moreover, explain why it is relevant)
- Avoid blaming
- Do not attempt to solve all the student's problems yourself, empower yourself to connect students to the proper resources
- Engage in active listening

DON'TS

- Use the term illegal immigrant/alien
- Introduce a student as undocumented, without their approval
- Refer them to counseling without having a discussion with the student first
- Say "You're not the one that chose to come here"
- Say "You have nothing to worry about"
- Don't create identifiers, lists, or refer students based on status.

Serving the Needs of Undocumented Students

Financial Support

- Weekly newsletter with information about scholarships, internships and fellowships open to students regardless of immigration status.
- We maintain a DACA Renewal Fund
- John Jay Emergency Funding

Postgraduate Support

- Mental health resources to help students to transition.
- The center provides students with a series of workshops such as, independent contracting, freelancing and career exploration

Mental Health

- The center host a social worker to meet with students one on one.

Legal Screenings

- We provide legal screenings where we connect students and their families with legal providers who offer screenings.