



OPPORTUNITY STARTS AT HOME COLORADO

Immigrants, Housing, and Homelessness

Immigrant families face severe economic challenges specifically, barriers to many stabilizing systems including housing, employment, education, shelter, and various safety net programs such as rental assistance which puts them at elevated risk of housing insecurity and homelessness. COVID-19 has heightened existing challenges for low-income immigrant families forcing them to the streets.

Immigrant families face a range of systemic barriers to economic and housing security:

- In December 2020, **more than 1 in 5 low-income, immigrant families reported that paying rent, mortgage or utility bill was a significant concern.**¹
- More than 100,000 undocumented Coloradans, disproportionately Latino adults, are part of Colorado's labor force, many making the state minimum wage of \$12.56/ hr.² Meanwhile, the state housing wage for a modest two-bedroom rental is \$27.50, well over twice minimum wage income.³
- Undocumented immigrants are barred from many types of government assistance like unemployment benefits, SNAP, and Medicaid.⁴ In Colorado, they may qualify for state rent assistance programs regardless of status but that adds up to a fraction of what unemployment benefits would provide.
- Even though the Federal Emergency Rental Assistance (ERA) is available regardless of immigration status, **nearly 1 in 10 adults in low-income immigrant families reported avoiding ERA due to concerns such as language and cultural barriers, lack of awareness, and above all, fear of deportation.**⁵

¹ Adults in Low-Income Immigrant Families Were Deeply Affected by the COVID-19 Crisis yet Avoided Safety Net Programs in 2020 (urban.org)

² Undocumented families in metro Denver face added barriers as they struggle to keep their housing during the pandemic | Colorado Public Radio (cpr.org)

³ Ibid

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Despite COVID-19 Economic Hardship, Low-Income Immigrants Avoid Safety Net Programs Due to Immigration Concerns | National Low Income Housing Coalition (nlihc.org)

Moving Forward

Without adequate housing options, employment opportunities, and safety net programs, Colorado's immigrant families are vulnerable to housing insecurity. Policy solutions may include:

- Developing housing affordable to individuals and families with limited income and assets;
- Improving Colorado's and the nation's aging public housing stock;
- Funding universal housing vouchers so all eligible households can access subsidies;
- Expanding access to public benefits, including housing subsidies, to immigrants regardless of immigration status;
- Improving protections for renters and mobile home park residents, including immigrants; and
- Investing in programming that is culturally responsive.

Immigration and citizenship status should not prevent individuals and families from accessing safe and stable housing. Long Standing barriers to housing can be addressed through inclusive housing policy.

Alejandra Chacon arrived in Colorado from Mexico around 17 years ago with her parents. At 16, she worked to help her family pay rent despite poor upkeep and landlord neglect.

She says things have only gotten worse for immigrant families. Many work low-wage jobs making it hard to pay increasing rents. And, like her, many are single mothers working multiple jobs to support their families because their husbands have been deported.



Opportunity Starts at Home: Colorado

From better health to food security to good education, housing is foundational to every aspect of well-being, building stronger communities, promoting economic growth, and providing opportunities for everyone to thrive.

Our Colorado-based, multi-sector coalition is working in coordination with the National Low-Income Housing Coalition to generate widespread support for local, state, and federal policies that correct long-standing racial inequities and economic injustices that have prevented access to affordable, quality housing for people with low incomes.

Learn more and see coalition partners at www.ColoradoCoalition.org/OSAH