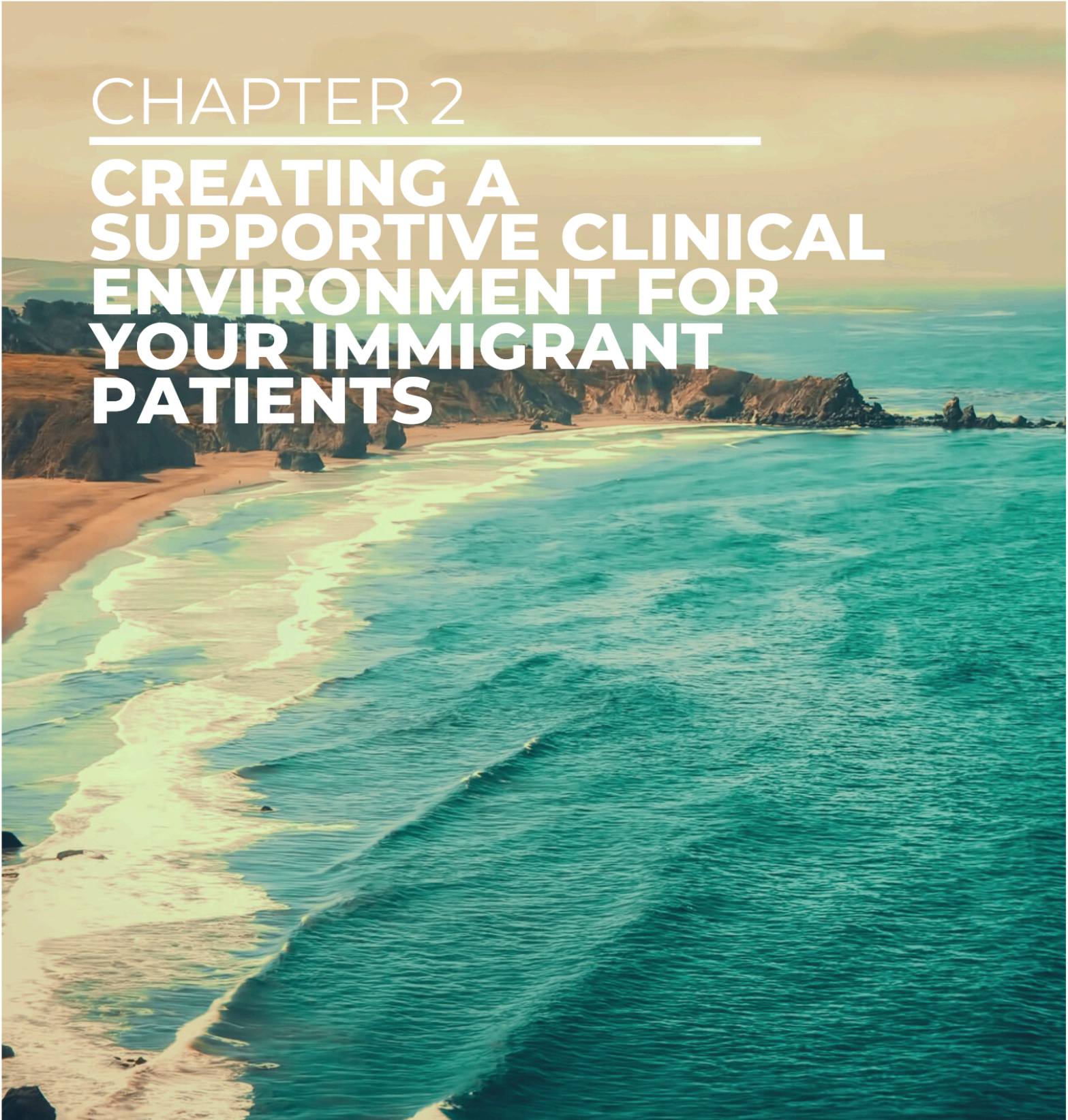


HEALTHY HARBORS FOR ALL CALIFORNIANS

CHAPTER 2

CREATING A SUPPORTIVE CLINICAL ENVIRONMENT FOR YOUR IMMIGRANT PATIENTS



CHAPTER 2: Creating a Supportive Clinical Environment for Your Immigrant Patients

SUMMARY: Health care settings should be important spaces of safety and reassurance for immigrant patients. This chapter outlines practical steps clinics can take to create welcoming environments, such as staff training, displaying know-your-rights materials, and sharing eligibility resources. While federal immigration policies remain in flux, the clinic's role in reducing fear and improving access to care remains critical.

Health care facilities (clinics, offices, hospitals, and community health centers) play an essential role in creating welcoming environments for immigrant patients. Policies and procedures should not only maximize physical safety but also provide emotional reassurance for immigrant patients. This includes familiarizing all staff, especially front desk/reception staff, with current immigration-related policies, and training them on what to say (and what not to say) to patients. Visible signals of support, such as displaying know-your-rights materials and information about immigrant eligibility for health and social services, reassure patients that they are welcome, and encourage them to raise questions or concerns.

Key Resources:

California Attorney General, Promoting Safe and Secure Healthcare Access for All: Guidance and Model Policies to Assist California's Healthcare Facilities in Responding to Immigration Issues

<https://oag.ca.gov/sites/all/files/agweb/pdfs/immigration/healthcare-guidance.pdf>

National Immigration Law Center, Healthcare Providers and Immigration Enforcement: Know Your Rights, Know Your Patients' Rights

<https://www.nilc.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/Health-Care-Providers-and-Immigration-Enforcement.pdf>

Federal Immigration Law and Enforcement Changes Affecting Immigrant Patients

Federal immigration law is very complex, and under the current Administration, it is also rapidly changing. These changes directly affect immigrant communities in California:

- **Rising enforcement actions.** Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) arrests in California increased by 123% in the first six months of 2025. In June 2025, the federal government deployed over 5,000 members of the National Guard and 700 Marines to assist with immigration enforcement in Los Angeles. California is continuing its legal challenge against utilizing the military for immigration enforcement activity. Meanwhile, immigrant communities face daily reports of masked ICE agents in unmarked cars, arrests at immigration court hearings, and detentions at U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) appointments, including interviews for U.S. citizenship.⁸
- **Executive order on birthright citizenship.** On inauguration day, the Administration issued Executive Order 14160: Protecting the Meaning and Value of American Citizenship, seeking to reinterpret the 14th Amendment to restrict U.S. citizenship by birth. Multiple legal challenges have followed, including a June 2025 U.S. Supreme Court decision limiting the scope of nationwide preliminary injunctions. Litigation continues in multiple courts and will likely return to the U.S. Supreme Court.^{9,10}
- **Termination of temporary humanitarian programs.** The current Administration has sought to end:
 - Humanitarian parole for Cubans, Haitians, Nicaraguans, and Venezuelans.
 - Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Haitians, Venezuelans, Hondurans, Nicaraguans, and Nepalese.

These terminations affect hundreds of thousands of immigrants and remain under active litigation.^{11,12,13}

Because immigration laws shift frequently, it is unrealistic for family physicians to track every detail. What is most important is recognizing the widespread fear and uncertainty created by these changes and their impact on immigrant patients' access to health care, mental health, and family stability.¹⁴

⁸ New York Times, Immigration Arrests Are Up Sharply in Every State. Here Are the Numbers, June 27, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2025/06/27/us/ice-arrests-trump.html>

⁹ Executive Order 14160: Protecting the Meaning and Value of American Citizenship <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2025-01-29/pdf/2025-02007.pdf>

¹⁰ ACLU, Trump's Birthright Citizenship Executive Order: What Happens Next, August 6, 2025 <https://www.aclu.org/news/immigrants-rights/trumps-birthright-citizenship-executive-order-what-happens-next>

¹¹ U.S. Immigration and Citizenship Services, Litigation-Related Update: Supreme Court Stay of CHNV Preliminary Injunction, June 6, 2025 <https://www.uscis.gov/newsroom/alerts/litigation-related-update-supreme-court-stay-of-chnv-preliminary-injunction>

¹² U.S. Immigration and Citizenship Services, Temporary Protected Status <https://www.uscis.gov/humanitarian/temporary-protected-status>

¹³ National TPS Alliance <https://www.nationaltpsalliance.org/>

¹⁴ Health Begins, Health Equity for Immigrants in a Time of Crisis, May 29, 2025 <https://healthbegins.org/providing-health-equity-for-immigrants-in-a-time-of-crisis>

Practical Steps for Clinics: Creating a Welcoming Environment

Even as federal policies remain in flux, you can take proactive steps to support immigrant patients:

- **Post welcoming signs.** Display multilingual posters and flyers affirming that all patients are welcome, and outlining rights when interacting with immigration enforcement.



Immigrant Legal Resource Center, Everyone Is Welcome Poster

<https://www.ilrc.org/community-resources/know-your-rights/solidarity-signs>

- **Provide know-your-rights materials.** Share flyers that explain patients' right to decline answering immigration enforcement questions and to request a lawyer before responding.¹⁵
- **Make know-your-rights cards available.** Stock "know-your-rights" wallet cards in your reception areas. Patients can hand these to ICE agents while remaining silent, asserting their rights and protecting against constitutional violations. See the Sharing Information and Resources About Immigration Issues with Your Patients chapter for these resources.
- **Stay informed on benefits eligibility.** Eligibility rules for federal and California programs and services, including public health insurance programs such as Medi-Cal are frequently changing. Clinics should remain updated on how these changes impact immigrant patients and share relevant resources. See the Sharing Information and Resources About Immigration Issues with Your Patients chapter for updates and resources.

¹⁵ Immigrant Legal Resource Center, Know Your Rights Flyer
<https://www.ilrc.org/community-resources/know-your-rights/know-your-rights-when-confronted-ice-flyer>