

Illegal Immigrants in the Healthcare System

Course Information

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This course is targeted towards Nursing and/or Political Science majors. Students will explore the healthcare system and its policies on a state and federal level. This course will use inquiry-based learning to educate students on current policies concerning illegal immigrants in the healthcare system and require them to develop potential solutions to this complicated issue.

Course Description

Illegal Immigrants in the Healthcare System explores the legal coverage immigrants receive under state and federal laws that gives them equal access to healthcare facilities. This course asks students to explore questions such as “is immigrant care fair to the legal citizens who are the ones paying for their care?”

*required texts

*Unit 1: State Law

BIG Question: <i>How much aid should the government provide to states who provide care to illegal immigrants?</i>
Argument of the Unit: <i>States experience extreme issues concerning lack of coverage, access, and quality of care for immigrants, these are significant public health problems that warrant government intervention.</i>
Key Words: <i>Mass Health, MIRACLE Coalition, SCHIP,</i>
Link to Reading: <i>Grassroots Coalitions and State Policy Change : Organizing for Immigrant Health Care: Chapter 5</i> https://drive.google.com/file/d/1hcaJHlfRy46ozKrkV6etLsvHn3KM9M66/view?usp=sharing
Annotation of Reading: <i>States have the authority to provide or limit the amount in which they distribute public benefits to illegal citizens. Massachusetts provided healthcare to all women and children regardless of immigration status under the Mass Health Coverage Program. In 2002, Governor Mitt Romney seized the funds available to the Mass Health Program and left hundreds of thousands of people with no healthcare coverage. While the program did cover children and pregnant women, it did not extend its coverage to illegally residing adults. The Health Safety Net provided coverage for people who had no other way of attaining healthcare coverage, including undocumented immigrants.</i>

Unit 2: Federal Law

BIG Question: <i>What is the federal law on providing healthcare access to illegal immigrants?</i>
Argument of the Unit: <i>With the implementation of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act welfare as Americans knew it was ended.</i>
Key Words: <i>PRWORA, welfare, Medicaid, immigration, publicly funded services</i>
Link to Reading: https://drive.google.com/file/d/13rPFhaObjpygAZ-j7bZ4bBu-dpzP1CH/view?usp=sharing
Annotation of Reading: <i>The federal government will not provide medical funding to undocumented immigrants except in instances of an emergent, non-planned hospital visit. Hospitals will only be reimbursed roughly ten percent of what they spend on each illegal patient through the federal Medicaid budget. In order to receive state and federal medical coverage, immigrants must first apply and then meet a list of qualifications mandated by the federal government. PRWORA declared that “current eligibility rules for public assistance and unenforceable financial support agreements have proved wholly incapable of assuring that individual aliens not burden the public benefits</i>

system” and that “it is a compelling government interest to remove the incentive for illegal immigration provided by the availability of public benefits. Many state level public health and healthcare facilities have difficulty with the legal, administrative, and ethical conflicts generated by the limitations set by federal laws.

Unit 3: Pediatrics

BIG Question: *Should the government be required to provide care to illegal children under the basis of ethics?*

Argument of the Unit: *Although laws for Medicaid eligibility differ from state to state, with CHIP laws and federal reimbursement of state healthcare funds, no child will be turned away due to their economic or legal status.*

Key Words: *Title XXI, Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP), Medicaid*

Link to Reading: *Health Services for Immigrant Children: Opportunities Under Title XXI*
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1YP6XFkhtjz3FrmxbggdpRALTZPYXuqoB/view?usp=sharing>

Annotation of Reading: *Due to federal laws put in place in 1996, many immigrant children no longer qualify for Medicaid coverage. The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act (PRWORA) restricts the amount of aid healthcare facilities can administer to immigrants while still receiving compensation from the federal government. Illegal immigrant children are automatically ineligible for healthcare coverage due to their illegal status, unless they meet Medicaid qualifications. States have the ability to allocate funds from CHIP to illegal immigrant children who do not qualify for Medicaid coverage, but they are fully responsible for the money they delegate to immigrants and will not be refunded by the government for non-emergent services.*

*Unit 4: Medicaid Qualifications for Illegal Citizens

BIG Question: *When compared to legal citizens, should illegal immigrants be required to meet additional qualifications to attain Medicaid coverage?*

Argument of the Unit: *Illegal immigrants should go through a more rigorous process and be required to meet higher qualifications than American citizens do when applying for Medicaid.*

Key Words: *Qualified non-citizen, lawfully present, green card holders, Affordable Care Act*

Link to Reading: *The Healthcare Safety Net in a Post-Reform World: Chapter 2*
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Yq7MCnQt3CtXzmd5DNwEI9o-GeAB76X/view?usp=sharing>.

Annotation of Reading: *In order to qualify for Medicaid coverage, immigrants must have a current United States address that they have resided at for a minimum of five years, and meet all other qualifications that apply to legal citizens as well. There are groups omitted from the five year waiting period such as refugees, trafficking victims, etc. The Affordable Care Act put in place an unnecessary expansion on the healthcare system that will create a deficit that results in inadequate healthcare for the millions of people depending on this program.*

Unit 5: Personal Story

BIG Question: *How do personal stories affect people's opinions on how immigrants in emergent situations should be treated, opposed to just hearing legislation?*

Argument of the Unit: *American hospitals should not be required to foot the bill of immigrants who require extensive medical care just because it was discovered in an emergency situation.*

Key Words: *Insurance, CHIP, emergency health care, federal law, Medicaid eligibility*

Link to Reading: *Personal interview with Case Management nurse at the Children's Hospital for the King's Daughters in Norfolk, VA.*

Annotation of Reading: *A young, immigrant girl was brought to the United States by her family, where they did not have a valid address that they had resided at for five years, thus making this young girl ineligible for CHIP and Medicaid services. While in the United States, it was discovered that she had a brain bleed and was in need of immediate medical attention. Because she was not eligible for Medicaid, the federal government would not cover the cost of her care, thus leaving the hospital responsible for not only the cost of the initial admission, but rehab and physical therapy expenses as well. For many people, attaching a face and a name to a story, especially a child, increases their sympathy towards illegal immigrants benefiting from the American healthcare system. This young girl was brought to America by her parents because they could not get her adequate care in Mexico and American doctors were their last hope. Although they went about the process illegally, doing so saved their daughters life and it is hard to fault parents for doing anything they can to save their child.*

*Unit 6: Negative Effects Illegal Immigrants Have on the Healthcare System

BIG Question: *What are the financial consequences healthcare facilities face as a result of providing free healthcare access to undocumented immigrants?*

Argument of the Unit: *Uncompensated care costs due to treating undocumented immigrants places a financial strain on healthcare facilities around the United States, especially in cities near the Mexican-American border.*

Key Words: *BBA, CMS, DSH, EMTALA, INS, GOA*

Link to Reading: *Undocumented Aliens: Questions Persist about Their Impact on Hospitals Uncompensated Care Costs*

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1e09AgLl_QcST99Ejntm_E8cYN3b1Sxgz/view?usp=sharing

Annotation of Reading: *Hospitals have petitioned the federal government to compensate funds spent on the emergency care of illegal immigrants. However, since hospitals do not collect immigrant status of their patients, it is difficult to have an accurate record of how much money is actually spent on emergency care of illegals. The federal government uses Medicaid funds to reimburse hospitals, but this reimbursement is not available to all hospitals. In addition, the government will only refund money that was spent on emergent services for immigrants who meet Medicaid qualifications. Through the Balanced Budget Act of 1997, the federal government annually allocates funds to certain states as a reimbursement of funds spent on undocumented aliens who are not covered under Medicaid. However, once hospitals exceed the budget they are responsible for covering any extra costs.*

Unit 7: Who Pays For It?

BIG Question: *When illegal immigrants pay their own medical bills does this advance their citizenship?*

Argument of the Unit: *While it is true that immigrants cost the country billions of dollars a year, the ones who are honest with their taxes do contribute to state and federal funding like any legal citizen would.*

Key Words: *ITIN, Social Security, IRS, DACA, Medicare*

Link to Reading: *“Undocumented Immigrants Pay Taxes Too. Here’s How They Do It”*
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1aMajZ6TLcp7zO8kcfYhAQwT6VJ7UY4ko/view?usp=sharing>

Annotation of Reading: *The article “Undocumented Immigrants Pay Taxes Too. Here’s How They Do It” by Alexia Campbell explores the ways in which illegal immigrants contribute to social welfare programs. Although they are in the United States illegally, immigrants that properly file their taxes do contribute to Social Security and Medicare. Their contribution creates revenue for these programs because illegal immigrants do not reap the benefits of these programs like citizens do. When immigrants file for citizenship, having a paper trail of their taxes demonstrates that they took the initiative to contribute to society and increases their chances of gaining legal citizen status in America.*