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## **Report Presents “Immigrant Eligibility Crosswalk” and Urges Continued Advances in Immigrant Access to Health Care as NY Implements Insurance Exchange**

Today, Empire Justice Center released a report that chronicles immigrant access to health care in New York and zeros in on significant advancements to come with the new State Health Insurance Exchange.

The report, **New York’s Exchange Portal: A Gateway to Coverage for Immigrants**, includes a new tool for policymakers, health care staff and advocates in the form of a detailed “Immigrant Eligibility Crosswalk,” which, along with a glossary of status related terms, will help navigate the complex intersections of immigration status and eligibility for both existing and emerging health care coverage options.

“We are very excited to present this Crosswalk. We see it as a useful and easy to use tool that will help advocates and policymakers figure out which federal and state health care coverage options are available to immigrants of different status,” said Barbara Weiner, a Senior Attorney at Empire Justice Center and co-author of the report. “The table includes a glossary explaining the different immigration status terms, which are often so confusing to everyone, including the public benefit workers who have to determine applicant eligibility.”

The report urges New York to fully incorporate the Department of Health’s ground-breaking process for pre-certifying undocumented immigrants for Emergency Medicaid into the real time online Exchange application for two reasons: to encourage immigrant families to apply for health care coverage, and to help maximize revenues for hospitals that serve as a safety net for the uninsured.

“Simplifying the process for signing up for Medicaid and getting pre-certification for Emergency Medicaid through the Exchange will mean easier access to health care. It will also help hospitals and other providers get paid when they provide services to people who are eligible for coverage, including immigrants,” said Assembly Member Richard N. Gottfried, Chair of the Assembly Health Committee. “The Crosswalk will also help legislators’ district office staffs know how to help people in our communities.”

“In addition to pre-certification for Emergency Medicaid, the Exchange’s assurances around confidentiality will really encourage immigrant parents to enroll their families, so that children, in particular, can get the health care services they need,” said Trilby de Jung, a Senior Attorney at Empire Justice and co-author of the report.

The report's additional recommendations for New York to fine-tune its online Health Insurance Exchange application and the application process include:

- Develop a special unit of workers within the Consumer Service Center who are specifically trained on immigration classifications, particularly those statuses that cannot be easily determined through the federal hub.
- Use electronic data to verify statuses that are included in state eligibility categories, even if they are not included in federal eligibility categories.
- Give local district workers access to electronic data to verify information received from elderly or disabled immigrants applying for help outside the Exchange.
- Use consumer testing before roll-out and periodically thereafter to help focus ongoing adjustments to the new application system.

“New York is poised to be a model for other states by creating an application and enrollment system that addresses the varied circumstances of immigrant families, especially mixed immigration status families, and directly allays immigrants’ unique concerns. If Empire Justice Center’s recommendations are implemented, New York would achieve a true “No Wrong Door” approach for all New Yorkers, including those ineligible for comprehensive coverage based on their immigration status,” said Jenny Rejeske, Health Policy Analyst for the National Immigration Law Center.

This report was supported by a grant from the United Hospital Fund, a health services research and philanthropic organization shaping positive change for the people of New York.

[The full report can be found here.](#)

[The Immigrant Eligibility Crosswalk table and glossary can be found here.](#)

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*Empire Justice Center is a statewide, multi-issue, multi-strategy, public interest law firm focused on changing the “systems” within which poor and low-income families live. Empire Justice protects and strengthens the legal rights of people in New York State who are poor, disabled or disenfranchised through: systems change advocacy, training and support to other advocates and organizations, and high quality direct civil legal representation. Empire Justice has four offices in Albany, Rochester, White Plains and on Long Island.*