

Are the Schools in Your State Safe for All Students & Families?

Chronic absenteeism among Latino and immigrant students is [rising at an alarming rate](#) nationwide. Early data shows a [30% increase in absences](#) among pre-K and elementary Latino students in several California districts during the first two months of the new federal administration. These spikes occurred even before federal immigration enforcement actions (ICE raids) began, highlighting the impact that anti-immigrant policies have on families' trust in our nation's schools. This fear-based absenteeism reflects not just a reaction to enforcement, but also school climate, trust, and the degree to which schools support and protect immigrant communities. States play a critical role in helping districts foster safe, inclusive learning environments, regardless of immigration status.

To better understand the role of state leadership in addressing these issues, we reviewed official state education agency websites, memos, and publicly available resources across 22 states and the District of Columbia. We looked for state-level guidance issued to districts about supporting immigrant students and ensuring safe school communities, particularly in the context of potential immigration enforcement or anti-immigrant threats.

States with Official, Publicly Accessible Guidance

- **California:** [Mandates that all districts adopt policies to protect undocumented students](#), prohibit immigration-status inquiries, and provide clear procedures for ICE interactions on school grounds.
- **Delaware:** Provides [educator-facing tools and school policies](#) that affirm enrollment access, privacy protections, and trauma-informed practices.
- **Maryland:** Public guidance [affirms student protections and trauma-sensitive school climate](#) practices for immigrant families.
- **New York:** [Joint memo from the Attorney General and New York State Education Department](#) outlines enrollment rights, prohibits status inquiries, and requires family communication plans.

State Recommendations

1. Issue Clear Guidance Regarding Immigration

States should provide districts with clear policies on how to respond to immigration enforcement activity in their school communities. The guidance should include protocols for ICE interactions, student privacy, and communication with families. Guidance should be publicly posted and easily accessible to build trust with school communities.

2. Affirm Enrollment Rights Regardless of Immigration Status

State education agencies should require districts to affirm and communicate that all students, regardless of immigration status, have the right to enroll in public schools. This includes prohibiting documentation requests tied to immigration status and training school personnel on appropriate enrollment procedures.

3. Promote Trauma-Informed and Culturally Responsive Practices

States should support districts in creating welcoming school climates through trauma-informed training, culturally responsive practices, and multilingual communication strategies that are sensitive to the unique stressors that immigrant families face.

4. Provide Professional Development and Toolkits for Educators

State leaders should equip educators and school leaders with resources to support immigrant students and families, such as scenario-based toolkits, legal rights summaries, and family engagement strategies. Professional development should be ongoing and grounded in equity.

Although other states in our scan do not currently provide publicly posted, centralized guidance to districts specifically related to supporting immigrant students, some individual districts in these states may have local policies or practices. State leaders should build on best practices among their districts to create more consistent statewide guidance.

Additional Resources

[Immigration Enforcement Guidance for Schools | American Civil Liberties Union](#)

[How Federal Policies Are Undermining Educational Opportunity for Immigrant Students | Learning Policy Institute](#)

[Falling Short on New comers: A Report Card on How Well States Support Newly Arrived Immigrant Students | The Century Foundation](#)

[Ten Strategies for Supporting Immigrant Students and Families | Colorín Colorado](#)

[How Educators Can Support Immigrant Students | IDRA](#)

[Immigration Enforcement—What Can Educators Do? | Policy Analysis for California Education](#)