

# Pittsburgh Immigrant Community FAQs: COVID-19

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## Key:

Information in **grey** includes local + federal resources for which Pittsburgh residents are eligible

Resources in **purple** are best practices from other regions, though they are not adapted for Pennsylvania

*\*\*Have you tried to access these resources but not been able to due to barriers such as language access or eligibility? Do you have other feedback on the resources presented here? Please let us know by commenting on this document or filling out [this survey](#).\*\**

## COVID-19 Testing + Information

It is not easy to find **information on medical care and available resources in language** -- this is not just about translating static materials, but navigating services and information.

- 2-1-1 has a help line with TTY and language services available in more than 170 languages and dialects. (Flyers in [Arabic](#), [Chinese](#), [Nepali](#), [Russian](#), [Spanish](#), and [Swahili](#).) Call 1-888-856-2774 to speak with a language representative.
- [Allegheny Alerts](#) are translated into [Arabic](#), [Chinese](#), [Nepali](#), [Spanish](#), & [Swahili](#) as well as [American Sign Language](#) daily
- Translated general flyers/ information on COVID-19 (not Pittsburgh specific) can be found [here](#).
- In-person interpretation has been eliminated at AHN and UPMC facilities as a result of strict limitations on visitors - they will rely on existing phone and virtual medical interpretation services.
- Programs that train and empower community members to respond to Pandemic
  - Neighborhood Resilience Project [Community Health Deputy](#) program provides individuals with skills to interrupt transmission, prevent future spread, and change community norms, as well as scripts and resources for conducting telephonic wellness checks on community members in isolation. A community with strong social capital is better equipped to meet its own needs during a crisis. Email [NRP](#) to get involved. **Their training is being translated into Spanish!**
  - [Natural Helpers Program](#) is a training program that equips existing immigrant and refugee community leaders with tools needed to become more effective and complete resources for COVID-19 response (successful program in Aurora, CO).
- Hispanic Corporation [Preparedness Tool Kit](#) includes phone numbers and emails of their staff to call with questions about creating a safety plan or medical concerns

There needs to be **audio/video information** for those who are not literate. (Languages there has been an expressed need for are Maay Maay, Kizagua, Spanish)

- Dr. Diego Chaves-Gnecco will have a webinar for people from the Latinx community to discuss health care and isolation in Spanish (details pending) - he recommends Google Duo as an easy video-calling app for telemedicine/video information for those who have smartphones

- Animated videos from Cultural Orientation Resource Exchange (CORE) on How to Protect Yourself from COVID-19 in multiple languages [here](#). (Covers symptoms, prevention, steps to take if you feel sick) (Arabic, Burmese, Dari, Kinyarwanda, Russian, Swahili, Tigrinya, Somali, Ukranian, Nepali, Farsi, French, Amharic)
- [Podcast recordings](#) by CORE for refugees on Resettling to the US During the COVID-19 Pandemic (Arabic, Burmese, Dari, Kinyarwanda, Russian, Swahili). Instructions on how to download podcasts for offline use [here](#).
- COVID-19 [video resources](#) for Somali-speaking community by Sinaan Outlets
- Coronavirus Education Materials In [Indigenous Languages, Dialects, and Spanish](#)
- [Audio info on COVID-19](#) for in multiple languages (Literacy Pittsburgh Youtube Channel)

### People are worried about being able to cover **medical costs**.

- **Testing.** Immigrants can continue to access services at [community health centers](#), regardless of their [immigration status](#), and at a reduced cost or free of charge depending on their income. However, people should call first to find out the availability of COVID-19 screening and testing. Health centers may do patient assessments over the phone or using telehealth. If you are experiencing symptoms, please call your primary care provider. If you do not have one, call the PA Department of Health hotline at 1-877-PA-HEALTH (724-3258)
  - Rite Aid in Monroeville has free COVID-19 testing site for those *not experiencing severe symptoms* - must [schedule appointment online here](#) (must be 18 years or older; able to drive to testing site; have a Google email address); pre-registration is in English and does not ask for insurance, SSN, income
- Clinics available to the uninsured
  - Squirrel Hill Health Center. Phone number: 412-422-7442. Address: 4516 Browns Hill Rd, Pittsburgh, PA 15217
  - East Liberty Family Health Center. Phone number: 412 6612802. Address: 6023 Harvard Street Pittsburgh, PA 15206
  - iHealth Clinic (call with a friend/family member who speaks English, or if you go directly to the office he has a device he can use to interpret). You can also go here without an appointment. (412) 385-7705 6008 Centre Ave, Pittsburgh, PA 15206
  - Birmingham Clinic 412-481-7900 ext. 281 - Birmingham Clinic in [Spanish](#)
  - [Salud Para Niños](#) free, bilingual primary pediatric care at Birmingham Clinic (Salud Para Niños at Primary Care Center of Children's Hospital in Oakland requires insurance and appointment)
- **Treatment.** Emergency Medical Treatment and Labor Act ([EMTALA](#)) requires that anyone arriving at an emergency room/department be stabilized and treated regardless of insurance status or ability to pay; however, EMTALA does not provide any payment for these services. Therefore, individuals who are uninsured — and not eligible for emergency Medicaid — may be billed for this treatment. (Some hospitals have charity care or other ways to reduce a bill, but this is not always available and cannot always meet the need.)

- PA is still processing Medicaid applications; [individuals should apply as normal](#). Applicants should note if they have a health emergency related to COVID-19. DHS will continue to prioritize Medicaid applications where there is an immediate health concern
  - [Medical Assistance for Immigrants](#)
- [UPMC and Highmark](#) are waiving all deductibles, co-pays and co-insurance costs for insurance members (who have coverage via a fully-insured group, the Affordable Care Act or a Medicare Advantage or traditional Medicare plan, as well as self-insured employer groups who opt in) who receive in-network, inpatient care related to covid-19. However, this does not apply to patients with limited insurances plans who seek out-of-network care (i.e. UPMC insurance at an AHN hospital)- the exceptions being UPMC Children’s Hospital for Highmark insurance members. UPMC insurance covers Highmark patients at AHN’s Jefferson Hospital in the South Hills and St. Vincent Hospital in Erie.
- [USCIS](#) has announced that immigrants can seek testing, treatment, and prevention of COVID-19 without fearing immigration consequences due to public charge

What resources exist to support **International Medical Graduates (IMG)** to engage in COVID-19 response? Many IMGs are unemployed or underemployed in jobs that don’t make use of their life-saving skills.

- [IMPRINT](#) has a national campaign calling on Governors to take steps to create emergency pathways for internationally trained health professionals so they can join the fight against COVID-19 - healthcare and public health providers can [endorse the letter here](#).
- The [IRC](#) launched a new platform that helps refugee and immigrant health providers register their skills and professional background ([register here](#)), and provides state-by-state guidance for those interested in volunteering and working against COVID-19 but currently restricted from doing so.

There is a need for the state and county to provide coronavirus data by ethnicity.

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## Employment / Income

Information in language on how to **file for unemployment**.

- PA filing unemployment page in Spanish - [¿Tengo Derecho al UC?](#)
- [The Hispanic Corporation](#) can help with applying for unemployment benefits (has already helped 22 applicants) - “We have found out that sometimes people feel more comfortable having assistance virtually to apply because they are not sure if they will complete their applications

correctly. Once they apply for unemployment benefits we also get them registered on CareerLink as part of the process. We have been doing an average of 2 or 3 applications per day.”

- [ISAC](#) is assisting clients with filing for unemployment. Call ISAC (412-742-4200) and leave a message in your preferred language, or [submit a referral online](#) to request case management services.
- [Justice at Work](#) is assisting their *pre-existing clients* with filing for unemployment - call (412-701-4368) if you qualify. JaW paralegals speak Spanish, and they use interpreters for other languages.
- If you are not a pre-existing client with Justice at Work, they will refer you to (or simply call on your own) [Philadelphia Legal Assistance’s statewide hotline](#) (215-999-6910). *You can call in to PLA’s new hotline and speak to a volunteer, who can help you file your claim for unemployment in Pennsylvania free of charge. If you require language assistance, you will receive a callback within a day.*
- Tips from [PICC](#) on filing for unemployment:
  - Workers without SSN don’t qualify for Unemployment Insurance.
  - Immigrants with work authorization do qualify (DACA, TPS, etc.)
  - For those with visas tied to a job it gets a little tricky as you need to be "able and available" to find other work in order to qualify for unemployment. Given that the state is waiving work search requirements, they may also be more lenient with visa issues.
  - [Apply](#) as soon as possible!
  - If at all possible, apply for UC benefits online, using a computer (instead of a cell phone, and certainly instead of calling).
  - If you are unemployed because your workplace closed due to COVID and no work is available from your employer, you should select the “lack of work” option when the application seeks the reason for unemployment. Selecting “voluntary quit” or “fired” will require more time for the claim to be processed (although in some cases those reasons will be accurate and should be selected).
  - You will get a “financial determination” about the amount of your UC benefit, but you still need a final decision on eligibility after that. If you are approved, you may not get a written eligibility decision, but the money will show up in your bank account. So after that first financial decision, keep checking your bank account to see whether UC payments have been deposited.
- Filling out the Pennsylvania unemployment application on video in [Nepali](#)

Many in our community do not qualify for government benefits/resources due to immigration status. Are there **other sources of income/support available?**

- [Betancourt Macias Family Scholarship Foundation](#) launched a campaign to support immigrant families and individuals across the United States - apply for funds [here](#).
- Rent Relief for Immigrants (up to \$200) - apply for funds [here](#)
- [Neighbors in Need Crisis Fund](#) for residents of Pittsburgh.

- [National Domestic Workers Alliance](#) - Coronavirus Care Fund provides \$400 in emergency assistance for qualifying home care workers, nannies and house cleaners who are experiencing financial hardship due to the coronavirus pandemic.
- [Restaurant Workers' Community Foundation](#) - Emergency assistance for those employed by restaurants or bars or are employed by a restaurant or bar supplier.
- US-based BIPOC artists can apply to the [Arts & Culture Leaders of Color Emergency Fund](#)
- OneFairWage [Emergency Fund](#) for struggling service workers
- [Scholly](#) is providing \$200 in cash assistance to students, parents of a student, or graduates to help to buy groceries, health supplies, and other necessities.
- FYI (**Public Charge**) - The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) does not consider the following as public benefits under the public charge inadmissibility determination: federal and state retirement, Social Security Retirement benefits, Social Security Disability, postsecondary education, or unemployment benefits ([NELP](#))
- Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot of Chicago signed an [executive order](#) explicitly ensuring that all benefits, opportunities, and services provided or administered by the City of Chicago are accessible to all residents, regardless of birth country or current citizenship status.
- Several foundations recently launched the [Families and Workers Fund](#), which aims to support workers who are left out of current COVID-19 relief. The application is not yet open.

Essential workers are not receiving the proper protective equipment they need to stay safe on the job.

- Those who feel unsafe at work should contact [Justice at Work](#) (412-701-4368) to speak to a paralegal who will answer the phone. All paralegals speak Spanish, and they have interpreters for other languages.

### People need help with resources for **housing/utility assistance**

- Intake open again (previously suspended until 4/17): The URA has partnered with the Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh to administer the COVID-19 [Housing Stabilization Fund](#), which provides rental, utility, and mortgage assistance to residents who have recently lost their jobs. Call 412.227.4164 for more information. ([Uzbek Translation](#) from ISAC)
  - Processing takes 5-10 days
  - Requires documentation from landlord and employer
  - Application requires signatures of applicants; however, applicants can take a photo of their signature (and send it to whomever is helping them apply) which can be pasted into the document and replace an actual signature.
  - FYI - application is very long and takes time to complete + Urban League does not have anyone on staff that speaks Spanish
- [The Hispanic Corporation](#) ([Spanish](#)) has a housing initiative with a staff person to help individuals complete the URA application. Call 412-343-0545 to schedule an appointment.

- [ISAC](#) has been able to secure funds to help people with rent. Call ISAC (412-742-4200) and leave a message in your preferred language, or [submit a referral online](#) to request case management services and potential funding assistance.
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## Education

### Schools have made little effort to **communicate with LEP parents**.

- Translations are being added to the [Pittsburgh Public Schools](#) website
- Pittsburgh Public Schools messaging is done through auto-calls to families; messages relayed into the top 9 languages in one business day because they don't have the capacity to do instant interpretation on the calls
  - Families can call [Jonathan Covei](#) at PPS (412-529-3516) and leave a message in their preferred language; they will try to get in touch with an interpreter as soon as they can
  - Also please contact Jonathan if any families you know have changed their phone number
- **While in-person communication is always preferred, schools may wish to experiment with apps that translate for families, such as [Talking Points](#), which uses a combination of human and automatic translation**

### How can Pittsburgh Public School students get their instructional packets?

- PPS students who are not able to participate in online classes have been assigned a school from which to pick up an instructional packet - [find the schedule for packet pick up here](#).
- Families must go to assigned schools to pick up instructional packets
- Packets modified for ESL learning should be available at every school doing packet distribution
- Can families more familiar with different schools go to that one to pick up packets instead of their assigned location? \*Looking into answer, will update\*
- District communication will go out after distribution on how to use packets

Many of our students don't have **access to technology**, which will be essential for doing any type of learning or post-secondary prep if the physical distancing goes on for the remainder of the school year.

- Pittsburgh Public Schools remote learning begins 4/22
  - Distribution of technology to identified 12th grade PPS students is [taking place 4/14 and 4/15](#) - those students needing technology should have received a call from their child's principal to outline pick-up locations and student expectations.

- PPS students who are not able to participate in online classes have been assigned a school from which to pick up an instructional packet - [find the schedule for packet pick up here](#).
- **Baldwin-Whitehall** has [expanded Chromebook distribution](#) - email principals to pick up.
- **Brentwood Borough School District** students should contact their school individually if they need a laptop.
- **Carlynton School District** is [distributing devices](#) through 4/17. If you were not contacted by a member of their Technology Department and are still in need of technology, please call 412-429-2500, choose option 8, then dial extension 4357 or email [chrome@carlynton.k12.pa.us](mailto:chrome@carlynton.k12.pa.us).
  - For families that do not have internet connection, Carlynton Schools will continue to reach out to you to determine who does not have access to online material. Copies of assignments can be emailed to parents or arrangements will be made to pick up material at our [Meal Distribution Locations](#). Directions for completing and returning assignments will be provided at that time.
- **Mt. Lebanon School District** is distributing Chromebooks, but at-home technology requests must be completed for each student in need of a laptop. Request tech [here](#). Email Mt. Lebanon SD technology department [here](#).
- CARES Act outlines [federal + state education funding](#), but still yet to receive clear details on how this will be implemented locally
- [EveryoneOn list of Low-Cost Internet Service Programs](#)
- [Free computers are available for low income students through The On It Foundation and Computers with Causes](#)

Are there plans for summer programs with the public schools at this point?

- This is still being navigated, will update as decisions are made.

Many of our seniors in high school are upset about the potential of missing out on important life events that they've been looking forward to like prom and graduation.

- Brentwood Borough School District emailed a survey to families asking for feedback on potential dates for prom and commencement. Please respond by April 24, 2020.

What is happening to **Adult Education Classes**?

- Literacy Pittsburgh's youtube classes can be found [here](#).

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## Food Access

- Allegheny County Free Resource Distribution sites [MAP](#). Use filters to determine which sites fit your needs.
- [Pittsburgh Public Schools](#) meal locations (these locations will not turn anyone away)
- Grab and go [Citiparks meal locations](#) (these locations will not turn anyone away)
- [Fishes and Loaves Cooperative Ministries](#) 131 E. Elizabeth St. Greenfield/Hazelwood. Free prepared meals 11:30-1 pick up

### What sites are supplying **kosher and halal meals**

- [Islamic Center of Pittsburgh Food Pantry](#) free food distribution includes halal meat. [Email](#) the ICP food pantry or visit their [website](#) to learn more about distribution times and events.
- [JFCS Squirrel Hill Food Pantry](#) – open and continuing to serve 15217 and families that eat Kosher outside the area code. Individuals receive pre-bagged foods when they come to the pantry. Contact 412-421-2708 for more information
- [Community Empowerment Association](#) in Homewood provides halal meat in their food distribution (looking into whether you must be in Homewood to qualify for meals)

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## Family Support

### Where can we find **Domestic Violence resources?**

- Women's Center & Shelter - call the 24/7 hotline at 412-687-8005 or 1-877-338-TALK or email [Becca Garcia](#) with the [WCS Refugee, Immigrant, and Limited-English \(RIL\) Team](#)
- During the Judicial Emergency, an effort is underway to reduce the number of inmates at the Allegheny County Jail due to the spread of COVID-19. It is very important for victims whose perpetrators have been incarcerated to sign up for Jail Release Notification through the [Center for Victims](#) at 1-866-644-2882 (no language options available in the initial phone tree) and through the statewide [PA SAVIN](#) at 1-866-972-7284. ([Recursos de Pennsylvania SAVIN](#))
  - PA SAVIN ([en Español](#)) registrants can access the [online portal to VINE](#), America's number one victim notification network, or call the toll-free phone support 24/7/365 for **operator support in over 200 languages for help locating an offender**, registering for notifications, or accessing victim services in their area - 1 866 277 7477 (option 2)

## Childcare needs for families who are considered essential workers

- The [Early Learning Resource Center](#) has 200 individual slots for childcare for essential workers. If you know any essential workers in need of childcare, contact ELRC 412-350-3577.
  - The [Department of Pediatrics](#) at the University of Pittsburgh are asking families to tell us what life is like in their household during the pandemic -- what are their strengths and what are their challenges -- and would value your help in asking families in your network and your community partners to [complete the Family Strengths Survey](#) - available online, in Spanish, and via phone.
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## Combatting Discrimination + Ethnic Intimidation

- If you believe that you have been discriminated against by an employer, housing provider, or public service within the City of Pittsburgh, please contact the [Commission on Human Relations](#)
- [StandAgainstHatred](#) - Tracking tool and resources for hate crimes, harassment and discrimination against Asian communities.
- Compilation of national resources that address [Racism and COVID-19](#)