



Beyond Borders



Immigration Basics for Nurses

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The United States has long been known as a nation of immigrants and a land of promise that welcomes the needy, poor, and oppressed. In the last 250 years, immigrants have brought energy, diversity, talent, and new ideas that have shaped the country's identity and helped create the solid economic foundation that now positions the United States as one of the world's superpowers (Lind, 2012). During this history, each new

wave of immigrants experienced discrimination and resentment, but ultimately American values of democracy and freedom prevailed, human rights were upheld, and the new group was eventually accepted (Lind, 2012). Because of recent increasing fear of global terrorism and the hotly debated topic of access to health care for persons without citizenship residing in the United States, immigration has become a divisive issue.

Abstract The United States is known as a nation of immigrants and a land of promise that welcomes the needy, poor, and oppressed. Immigrants represent some of the most vulnerable in society. It is vital that nurses and other health care providers possess knowledge of social, economic, and political factors related to health care for immigrant populations. This article provides definitions of the various immigrant populations, addresses health needs within this group, and offers suggestions for nursing practice and advocacy. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.nwh.2017.10.004>

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The American Nurses Association (Godfrey, 2010) passed a resolution that reaffirmed its position that all persons living in the United

Because of the psychological trauma many of these individuals have endured, mental illnesses, especially posttraumatic stress disorder and depression, are also commonly exhibited

States should have access to health care and that nurses should possess the knowledge of social, economic, and political ramifications if immigrants are denied access to health care. Considered a vulnerable population, immigrants need protection from derogatory or stereotypical comments or actions that create hostile health care environments and threaten the quality or safety of patient care (Fitzgerald, Myers, & Clark, 2016). It is helpful for nurses to understand basic principles of immigration and their implications for the profession of nursing and the individuals to whom they provide care.

Basic Definitions and Statistics

Immigration is a broad term often used to describe any group of people who have moved from one place to another. To gain a deeper understanding of the process and the people

involved, it is important to be knowledgeable of the various terms and to use them appropriately (see Box 1).

In addition to the terms listed in Box 1, a term used to define a particular group is *DREAMers*, in reference to the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act, which was first introduced in 2001 as Senate bill 1291 (DREAM Act Summary, 2001). The authors of this legislation aimed to provide a pathway for undocumented immigrant children to attain permanent legal status (LawLogix, 2013). Although the original bill and several subsequent DREAM Act bills have failed to pass into law, the label of this group of individuals remains. After the failure of the DREAM Act to pass in the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives, the Obama administration put forth an immigration policy known as Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) in 2012. This policy allowed persons who entered the United States illegally as minors a renewable 2-year period of deferred deportation and eligibility to apply for a work permit (Georgetown Law Library, 2017). By 2017, 800,000 DREAMers had enrolled in the program (Duke, 2017). DACA was rescinded by the Trump administration in September 2017, although at the time of this writing, rescission has been delayed 6 months to allow Congress time to develop a strategy to address implementation (Kopan, 2017).



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