



## Information about COVID-19 for New Americans

Last updated: December 9, 2020

*The New York State Office for New Americans (ONA) has prepared this overview to ensure that immigrants and refugees are well informed during the spread of the COVID-19 virus.*

### Background:

Since December 2019, a new respiratory disease, novel coronavirus (COVID-19), has rapidly spread as a global pandemic, including across New York State. COVID-19 is caused by a virus (SARS-CoV-2) that is part of a large family of viruses called coronaviruses.

### Protect your Health:

- You can seek and receive medical care related to COVID-19, regardless of your immigration status or lack of health insurance.
- Healthcare workers should not ask you about your immigration status. However, if they do, you can refuse to provide this information and you can tell them you have a right to be treated. If you provide information about your immigration status, remember that healthcare workers are required to keep your personal information confidential.
- Seeking or using medical care related to COVID-19 – including preventive care, testing, or treatment – will **NOT** be used against immigrants in a “public charge” test, even if those services are funded by Medicaid.
- Everyone has a right to an interpreter at no-cost when seeking medical care. You may request language interpretation directly from healthcare staff. Interpretation services may be provided in person or by phone.
- If you feel sick, use telehealth services or call ahead before seeking medical care at your healthcare provider, a community health center, or a hospital emergency department. Telehealth services keep you, and those around you, safer. Governor Cuomo is requiring insurance companies to waive co-pays for telehealth visits: [https://www.dfs.ny.gov/consumers/coronavirus/health\\_insurance\\_faqs](https://www.dfs.ny.gov/consumers/coronavirus/health_insurance_faqs)
- If you do not have health insurance, you may apply for coverage through NY State of Health: <https://nystateofhealth.ny.gov/>

### Can all immigrant communities receive health care related to COVID-19?

#### Yes.

If you are concerned about your health during the COVID-19 public health emergency, you can seek and receive medical care regardless of your immigration status or lack of health insurance.

#### Medical care will have no impact on “public charge” test.

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services has stated that medical care related to COVID-19 – including preventive care, testing, and treatment – will not be held against you in a “public charge” test.

- Testing is free to all eligible New Yorkers as ordered by a health care provider or by calling the NYS COVID-19 hotline at 1-888-364-3065. Assistance is available in over 100 languages. If you go to a test site run by New York State, there is never any charge for your test: <https://forward.ny.gov/covid-19-testing>
- The NYS Emotional Support Helpline is available for free and confidential support for those experiencing increased anxiety during the pandemic. You can reach the Helpline between 8AM and 10PM, 7-days a week at 1-844-863-9314.
- Health care workers can text NYFRONTLINE to 741-741 to access 24/7 emotional support services.

### **Protect Your Family and Community:**

- To prepare yourself and your family for COVID-19 related impacts, you should create plans for school, work and home. Make a list of people and organizations who can help if you become sick. Plan ways to care for family members at risk for serious complications, such as older people and people with chronic health conditions.
- Find out about restrictions for COVID-19 hot spot zones throughout New York State: <https://forward.ny.gov/>
- Stay informed about the spread of COVID-19 in your child's school. Visit the NYS COVID-19 Report Card to find positive case data for every school district in the state: <https://schoolcovidreportcard.health.ny.gov/>
- Download the COVID Alert NY App to get COVID-19 exposure alerts and help protect your community while maintaining your privacy: <https://coronavirus.health.ny.gov/covid-alert-ny>
- On December 3, 2020, Governor Cuomo announced he will be expanding eligibility for New York State's COVID Rent Relief Program and is reopening the application window so that more rent relief can be provided to New Yorkers: <https://hcr.ny.gov/RRP>
- Find a food bank in your area: <https://coronavirus.health.ny.gov/food-pantries>
- Major utilities will not shut off services to households during the COVID-19 outbreak. If you experience any issues with your utility company, you may contact the Department of Public Service Hotline (for residential electric and gas shut offs) to file a complaint at 1-800-342-3355.
- Governor Cuomo signed an Executive Order waiving the 7-day waiting period for workers in shared work programs to claim unemployment insurance if they are out of work due to COVID-19.

- Governor Cuomo also signed legislation guaranteeing job protection and financial compensation for employees while they are under mandatory or precautionary quarantine or isolation due to COVID-19. For more information: <https://paidfamilyleave.ny.gov/COVID19>

### **Know Your Rights:**

- The New York State Human Rights Law (HRL) protects individuals from discrimination based on a wide variety of personal characteristics, including race, national origin, and disability. The HRL prohibits discrimination against individuals who are assumed to have been exposed to or infected by COVID-19 based on these traits. If you believe you have been discriminated against, or have questions about the law, please visit the NYS Division of Human Rights website at [www.dhr.ny.gov](http://www.dhr.ny.gov) or call 1-888-392-3644.
- New York has extended the moratorium on COVID-related evictions for residential and commercial tenants until January 1, 2021. Visit NYS Homes & Community Renewal's [COVID-19 Helpful Links & FAQ page](https://hcr.ny.gov/covid-19-helpful-links-and-faqs) for more information on housing related to the pandemic: <https://hcr.ny.gov/covid-19-helpful-links-and-faqs>
- Beware of scams related to your Social Security payments and COVID-19. For more information, visit: [www.socialsecurity.gov/coronavirus/](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/coronavirus/)
- To report unfair price increases of products such as household cleaning supplies and hand sanitizer, call the NYS Consumer Assistance Hotline at 1-800-697-1220.
- To file a complaint about violations of health and safety restrictions and requirements for a business, location, or incident in your community visit: <https://mylicense.custhelp.com/app/ask>
- To file a COVID-19 related complaint about your employer or place of work, visit: <https://labor.ny.gov/workerprotection/laborstandards/coronavirus-complaints.shtm>
- Immigrants and refugees can continue to access free legal assistance and other services through ONA's statewide network of providers, even remotely. Call the confidential, multi-lingual NYS New Americans Hotline at 1-800-566-7636 to be connected to a provider.

### **For More Information:**

New York State Department of Health's COVID-19 Webpage:  
<https://coronavirus.health.ny.gov/home>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Webpage:  
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/>

New York State Office for New Americans  
<https://www.newamericans.ny.gov/>