

Researchers Release Policy Recommendations for Latina Immigrant Mothers and Families Affected by Pandemic

“Voices at the Intersection of Discrimination and Health Disparities: Stories from Latina Immigrant Mothers during COVID-19” stresses an urgent need for targeted programs.

Los Angeles, CA. (April 19, 2021) – A team of researchers at the USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work has published findings from extensive interviews with low-income, Latina immigrant mothers about the impact of COVID-19 on themselves and their families. [*Voices at the Intersection of Discrimination and Health Disparities: Stories from Latina Immigrant Mothers during COVID-19*](#) highlights an urgent need for financial relief programs accessible to those with precarious immigration status, centralized hubs for culturally competent care coordination, and expanded access to physical and mental health services.

The three-month study was supported by the USC Center for the Changing Family, the USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work and the Southern California Clinical and Translational Science Institute. The research brief cites overwhelming economic difficulties due to job loss and access to resources among the top stressors that contributed to maternal depression and anxiety leading to negative impacts on children’s health and well-being. These stressors were often compounded by immigration status with undocumented and mixed-status families being overlooked in major relief programs.

“This population is being penalized by the system and by policy that has been created in real time, as we respond to the pandemic, and we have to ensure that this community is coming along with us,” said Abigail Palmer Molina, a PhD candidate at the USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work who initiated the study.

Communities of color have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic, with Latinos in California being [2.6 times more likely to test positive for COVID-19](#) according to the California Department of Public Health. The Latina mothers who participated in the study also cited experiences of discrimination and significant barriers to accessing critical health and social services as high contributors to increased family stress.

“The goal now is to get the information out as widely as possible in the hopes that the shortcomings that exist in the pandemic relief can be addressed,” said Ferol Mennen, associate professor at the USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work.

The published study provides quantitative and qualitative findings to produce recommendations for state and local policymakers on access to resources, housing, financial support, school support, and physical and mental health concerns. It stresses the urgent need for development of targeted programs to provide relief to this vulnerable population.

[Download](#) the full research brief.

About the USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work

The USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work is a leader in social work and nursing education and research. The school integrates the science of social work with real-world practice to improve the wellbeing of vulnerable individuals and communities and advance social and economic justice on a local, national and global scale. The school is a recognized leader in academic innovation, experiential learning, online education and translational research. For more information, visit dworakpeck.usc.edu.

About the USC Center for the Changing Family

The USC Center for the Changing Family at the USC Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences is an interdisciplinary group of USC faculty who study family systems, close relationships, and mental and physical health across the lifespan.