NEW YORK STATE

Department of State
Office for New Americans

# Supporting New Americans with Disabilities

## NYS Office for New Americans (ONA)

## Ramirez June Initiative

NYS ONA RAMIREZ JUNE INITIATIVE

OCTOBER 15, 2025

# Presenters

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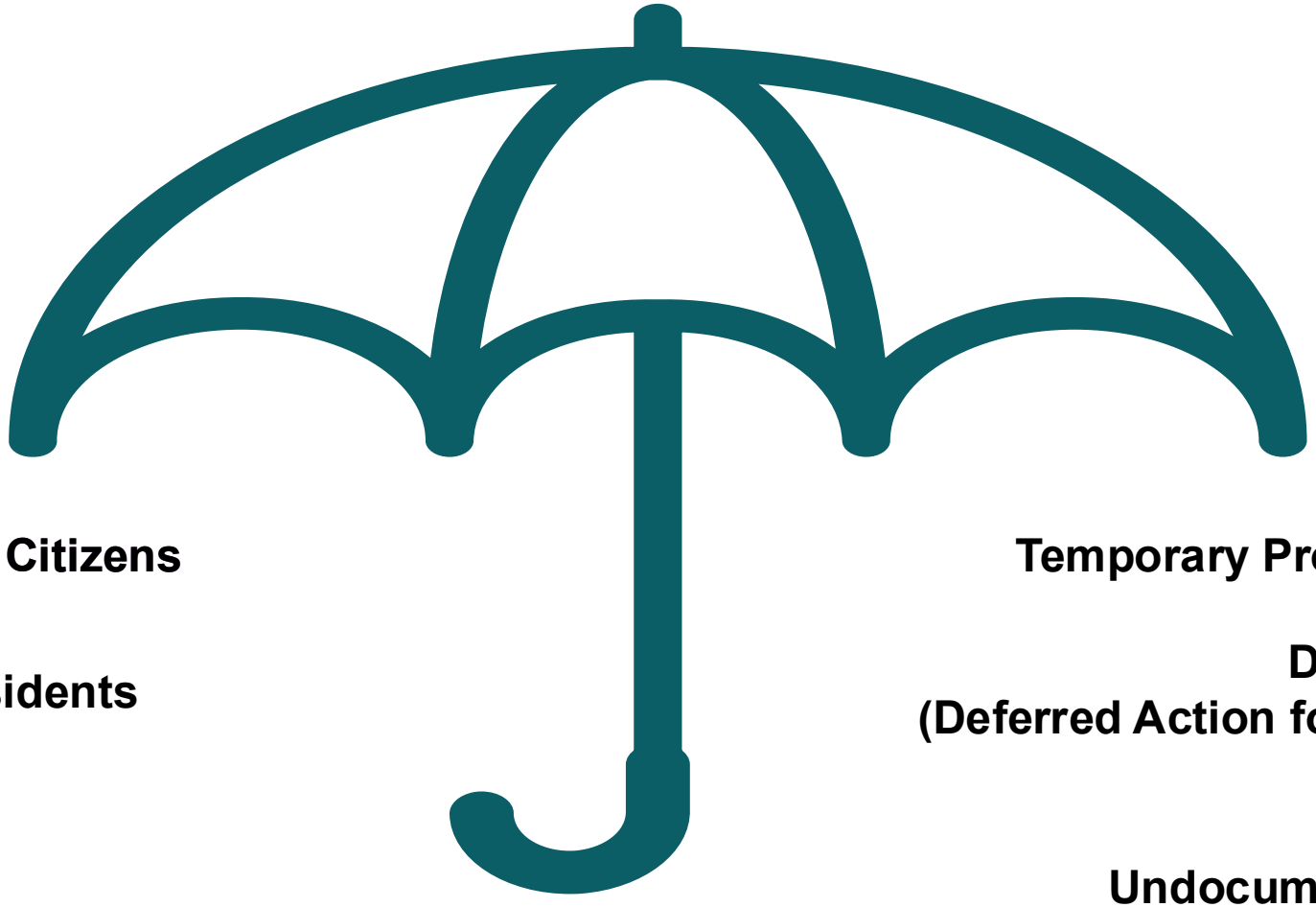
# Who are New Americans?

New Americans are people who were born outside the U.S. who moved to the U.S. to live here.

- New Americans can be people who have recently moved to the U.S. or people who have lived here for decades.
- Some new Americans are people with disabilities and developmental disabilities.
- Many new American families are mixed status which means family members have different immigration statuses.

# “New Americans” is an Umbrella Term



**Naturalized Citizens**

**Lawful Permanent Residents**

**Refugees & Asylees**

**Asylum Seekers**

**Temporary Protected Status**

**DACA**
**(Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals)**

**Undocumented Immigrants**

**And many more!**

# Agenda

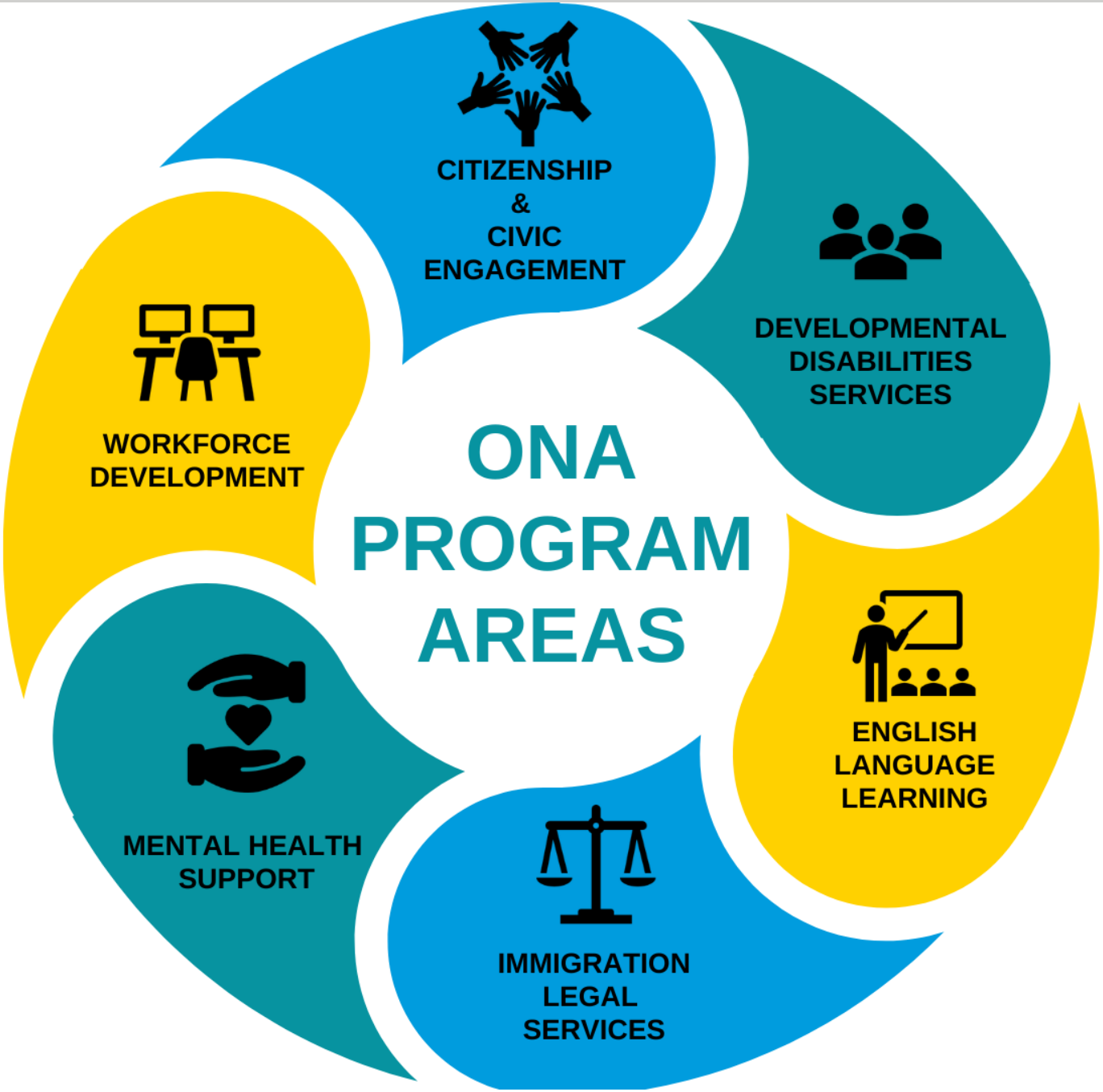
**1:00-200**

- How does the Office for new Americans support immigrants in New York State?
- How does the ONA Ramirez June Initiative increase access to services for immigrants with disabilities?
- What is immigration status and how does it affect access to benefits and work authorization?
- New American stories.

# About NYS ONA

- The New York State Office for New Americans (ONA), founded in 2012, is the nation's first statutorily created immigrant services office.

- ONA assists all new Americans with accessing and navigating a variety of free services and supports through its statewide network of community-based providers.


ONA PROGRAM AREAS
CITIZENSHIP & CIVIC ENGAGEMENT
DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES SERVICES
ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING
IMMIGRATION LEGAL SERVICES
MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

# Connect with ONA's Free Services

## Call the New Americans Hotline:

## 1-800-566-7636

- TOLL-FREE
- 9 am - 8 pm, Monday to Friday (except holidays).
- Anyone can call for information and referrals, regardless of citizenship or immigration status.
- Calls are private.
- Assistance available in 200+ languages.
- Information can also be found on the ONA website: https://dos.ny.gov/office-new-americans

# ONA Ramirez June Initiative

## Increasing Access to Disability Services for New Americans through Outreach, Training, and Partnership.

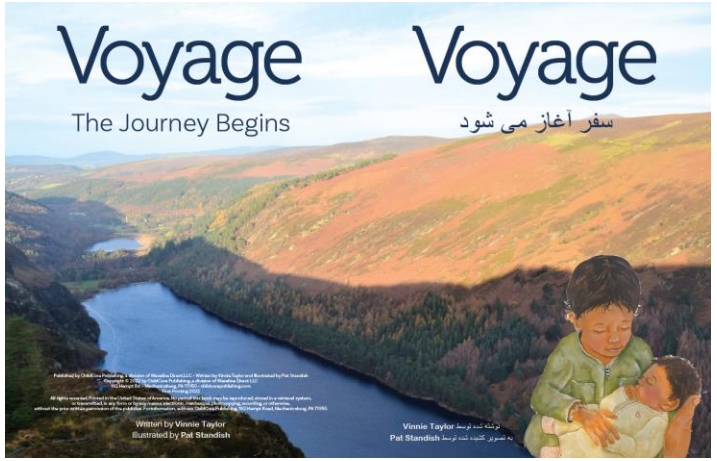
- The Initiative is a first of its kind in the nation, it launched as a grant from the NYS Council on Developmental Disabilities (CDD) in 2019 and continues to build capacity to support new American with disabilities.

NEW YORK STATE | Council on Developmental Disabilities

# Achievements of the ONA Ramirez June Initiative

**201 Workshops**

**6,489 Workshop Attendees**




**5,802 Copies of *Voyage* mailed**

**10/2019 – 09/2025**

# ONA Bilingual Coordinator Program – Case Management for Disability Services

- Launched in February 2023.
- Started through the ONA Ramirez June Initiative.
- Provides bilingual case management services.
- Connects clients with disability and mental health services with a focus on connecting with OPWDD services.

NEW YORK STATE Council on Developmental Disabilities

華人策劃協會 CPC

# Keep in Mind

- Examples in this training are provided to increase understanding of immigration status.
- These training examples do not reflect the experiences of every new American and should be used only as a learning tool.
- Immigration law and policies often change.
- This training does not constitute legal advice. Consult with an immigration attorney when working with a new American for more specific legal analysis and advice.

# Why is Understanding Immigration Status Important?

- Immigration status refers to the type of presence a person has in the U.S.
- You cannot determine someone's immigration status based on how they look, their culture, or the language they speak.

**Immigration status affects:**

- Eligibility for public benefits like **Medicaid** and **Supplemental Security Income (SSI).**
- Authorization to work in the U.S.
- Whether someone is lawfully present in the U.S. at the time.

# Pathways to an Immigration Status

- One's immigration status can change over time.
- Immigration laws and policies often change.
- An **immigration attorney** can consult with someone who is undocumented, or any new American in need, to determine if they have a pathway to obtain an immigration status.
- NYS Office for New Americans (ONA) offers free immigration legal support & screenings.

**NYS New Americans Hotline**

**1-800-566-7636**

# Work Authorization for New Americans

- Many new Americans are authorized to work in the U.S.
- There are different forms of documentation that demonstrate authorization to work in the U.S.
- Understanding work authorization can help new Americans with disabilities to access OPWDD employment services.

# Work Authorization

- The green card is evidence that someone is legally authorized to work in the U.S.
- New Americans with certain immigration statuses are eligible for an **Employment Authorization Document (EAD)** which enables them to work lawfully in the U.S.
- Refugees and asylees are granted work authorization through their status which is documented by their **I-94 form**.
  They can also get an EAD as additional proof of employment authorization.
- Connect new Americans who are work authorized  employment services.

**"Green Card"**

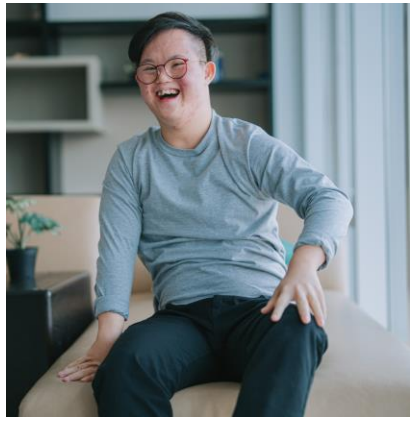
**Employment Authorization Card (EAD)**

**I-94 Form Example**

# NEW AMERICAN STORIES

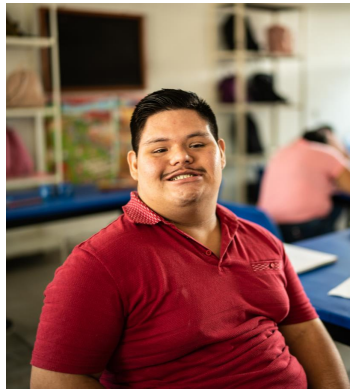
Mei, “Green Card” Holder

Nsayi, Refugee



Chen, Asylum Applicant

Carlos, Asylee



Manuel, Undocumented Individual

# Lawful Permanent Residents (LPR) “Green Card” Holders

**Mei**

- Lawful Permanent Residents (LPR) are also called Green Card Holders.
- LPRs have acquired this status through employment, family relationships, or other channels.
- LPRs are authorized to live and work permanently within the U.S.

# Lawful Permanent Residents (LPR) "Green Card" Holders

**Mei**

- Mei grew up in Malaysia and speaks Cantonese which is a Chinese language.
- Her dad was hired by a company in the U.S., and he petitioned for her to come to the U.S.

# Lawful Permanent Residents (LPR) "Green Card" Holders

**Mei**

## Work & Benefit Access:

- ✓ Authorized to work permanently.
- ✓ Can be Medicaid eligible.
- ✓ Can naturalize and become a U.S. citizen after 5 years.

# Lawful Permanent Residents (LPR) "Green Card" Holders

**Mei**

## Work & Benefit Access:

- ✓ LPR can be eligible for SSI after 5 years in LPR status, but only if they can be credited with 40 qualifying work quarters in the Social Security System (SSA).
- Earnings from their spouses or parent(s) can count toward these 40 quarters for SSI eligibility.

# Protection from Persecution

## Refugees & Asylees

- Individuals who have been granted protection from persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a **particular social group** can apply for humanitarian immigration statuses like **refugee** and **asylum.**
    - In some cases, belonging to a “particular social group” can include having a disability.

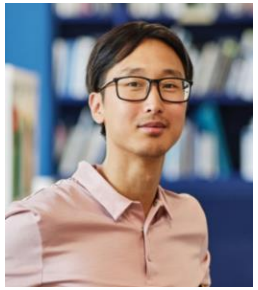
# Refugees, Asylees, & Asylum Applicants

Nsayi

**Refugee status** is applied for and granted before entering the U.S.

Carlos

**Asylum status** is applied for inside the U.S., either at U.S. border, a port of entry, or after an individual has entered the country with a different immigration status or without a status. After an individual has been granted asylum, they are officially recognized as an **asylee** and have the legal right to stay in the U.S. and receive protections.



Chen

**Asylum applicants** have applied for asylum but have not yet been granted asylum status. Asylum applicants have not had their right to remain in the U.S. determined.

# Refugees, Asylees, & Asylum Applicants

**Nsayi**

Nsayi was granted **refugee status** before entering the U.S.

**Carlos**

Carlos came to the U.S. without a status. Within the U.S., he applied for asylum and after 8 years he was granted **asylum status**.

**Chen**

Chen is an **asylum applicant.** He applied for asylum in the U.S. but has not yet been granted asylum status.

# Refugee

Nsayi is from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Nsayi speaks Kinyarwanda. Nsayi and her family applied for refugee status to escape decades-long armed conflicts in their home country. In 2022, she was granted refugee status and was resettled in New York State.

## Nsayi

# Asylee

- Carlos came from El Salvador in 2012 and speaks Spanish.
- He left El Salvador to escape from persecution from organized crime groups. He entered the U.S. without an immigration status and petitioned for asylum within the U.S.
- 8 years after he submitted his application, Carlos was granted asylum.

## Carlos

# Refugees & Asylees

## Work and Benefit Access:

- ✓ Refugees and asylees have a pathway to **Lawful Permanent Resident (LPR)** status.
- ✓ Can be Medicaid eligible.
- ✓ Refugees and asylees are authorized to work in the U.S. This is demonstrated through their stamped **I-94 form**.
- ✓ Refugees and asylees do not need an Employment Authorization Document (EAD). However, they can apply for an EAD as additional proof of work authorization.

**Nsayi**

**Carlos**

# Refugees and Asylees

## Benefit Access:

- Refugees and asylees have a 7-year limit to accessing Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits.
- Refugees and asylees must become U.S. citizens to keep or reinstate SSI benefits after the 7-year limit ends.

✓ Support & Connect with an immigration attorney to **naturalize** to keep SSI benefits before the 7-year limit expires.

**Nsayi**

**Chen**

# Asylum Applicant

Chen came from China in 2023 and speaks Mandarin. Chen came to the U.S. to flee discrimination as a member of the LGBTQIA+ community and hopes to one day find a partner and be able to get married. Chen applied for asylum in 2024, but his application is still under review.

**Chen**

# Asylum Applicants

- **Asylum applicants** do not have the same access to benefits as people who have already been granted asylum, who are called “asylees.”
- Asylum applicants may need to wait years for their applications to be processed and to wait for an interview.
- Not all applicants are granted asylum.

**Chen**

# Asylum Applicants

## Work and Benefit Access:

- ✓ Asylum applicants can apply for work authorization 150 days after filing their application for asylum.
- ✓ If work authorization is granted, asylum applicants get the Employment Authorization Document (EAD).
  - Asylum applicants cannot be eligible for SSI.

**Chen**

✓ **Support & Connect** to a free or low-cost immigration attorney, as needed.

# When do Asylum applicants become eligible for Medicaid?

- In NYS, asylum applicants become Medicaid eligible once they are classified as **PRUCOL** (Permanently Residing Under Color of Law).
- PRUCOL is a benefit status, **not** an immigrations status.
- PRUCOL is a term used for public benefits eligibility, particularly Medicaid.

**Chen**

# Undocumented Individual

**Undocumented** refers to someone who does not currently have an immigration status.

**Someone could be undocumented if:**

- They entered the U.S. without inspection (EWI) and have not filed for an immigration status.
- They overstayed their visa.
- They lost their immigration status due to a policy change.
- They have filed for an immigration status, but U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) has not confirmed receipt of their application.

**Manuel**

# Undocumented Individual

Manuel is from Venezuela and speaks Spanish. Manuel and his parents came to the U.S. in 2022 due to food shortages in their home country. Manuel currently lives in NYS without an immigration status.

**Manuel**

# Undocumented Individual

**Work and Benefit Access:**

- Not work authorized.
- Cannot be eligible for Supplemental .
- Medicaid eligibility depends on age and other factors.

**Manuel**

✓ **Support & Connect** to immigration attorney for a legal screening.

# Healthcare for Undocumented Individuals in New York State

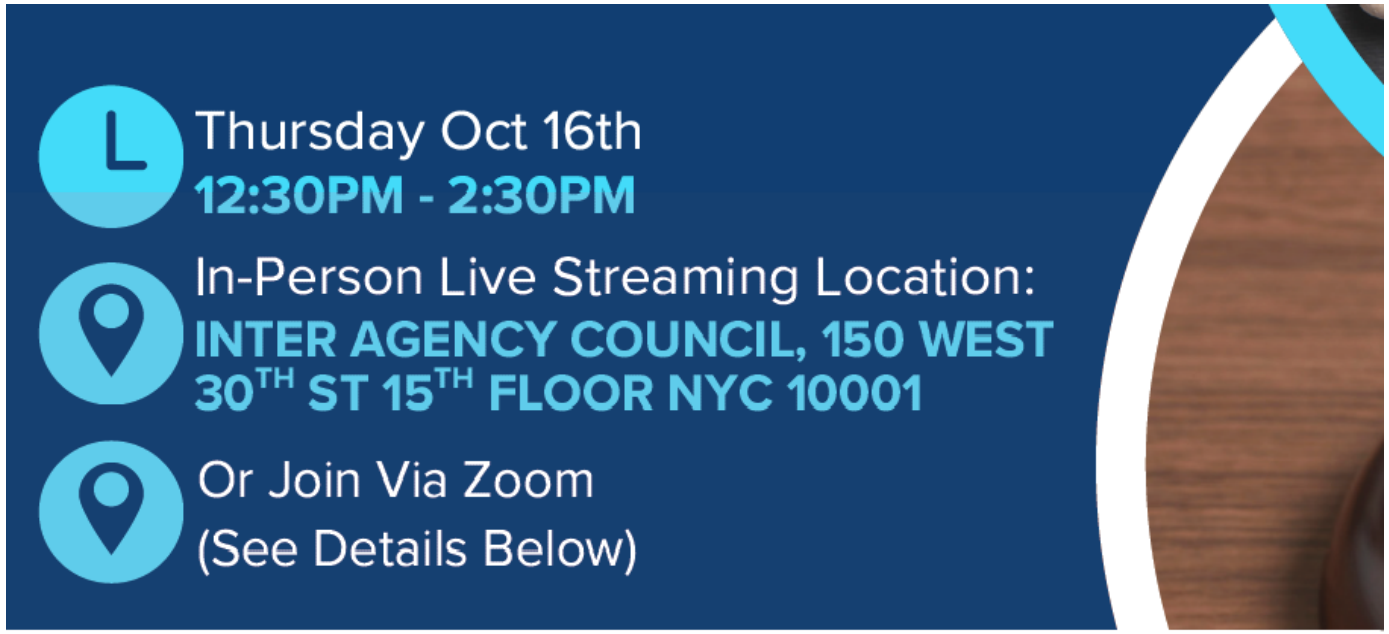
## Undocumented individuals can:

- Receive time-limited emergency and pregnancy-related Medicaid coverage for healthcare.
- Access healthcare services at clinics who serve the uninsured or offer sliding scale services.
  Example: NYC Care https://www.nyccare.nyc
- Undocumented children 18 and under can access healthcare through the Child Health Plus Program.
- Undocumented individuals aged 65 and older can access Medicaid healthcare coverage in New York State.

# Take Aways

- Immigration status affects access to work authorization and public benefits.
- One's immigration status can change overtime.
- Immigration law and policies often change.
- Assist new Americans with disability employment services and work opportunities as well as benefits they are eligible for, as needed.
- Connect new Americans in need with immigration attorneys.

# Know Your Rights Training Tomorrow 10/16




**Be Sure To Use This Link To Register For The Webinar On Thursday Oct 16th!**

Click Here To Join Webinar

**Or Scan This QR Code To Register !**

# We Welcome Your Feedback!

**Survey link: https://forms.office.com/g/Sev1svV2U6**

# Discussion Questions

- Do you have experience supporting new Americans with disabilities?
- What challenges do new Americans with disabilities face?
- What support is needed for new Americans with disabilities?
- How can we make New York State more welcoming for new Americans with disabilities?

# Department of State
## Office for New Americans