



LZC Winter Updates

February 2026



Director's Note

It's the coldest stretch of the year, when I find it difficult to remember the feel of sun warming my skin. Many of us feel frozen with fear, grief, confusion, and despair given the structural, racialized violence against immigrants that we've seen reach new levels of harm and public consciousness since Inauguration Day, just a little over a year ago. It has been a grueling year for immigrants, advocates, policymakers, service and health providers, and pretty much anyone seeking to build compassionate, caring communities for all. Massachusetts may not be Minnesota (yet), but we are ICED IN. See [***iced In: when frozen water brings joy and heartbreak***](#) for more on ICE.

At LZC, we do these newsletters twice a year, and it is always valuable to stop, reflect, look ahead, and ground ourselves in where we have been and where we are going. [**Six months ago, we called for attention and action**](#), highlighting just a few of the incredible coalitions, actions, and organizational and individual efforts that our partners have led here in Massachusetts for immigrant and community well-being.

I hope that you can see and feel the shifts in public awareness, engagement, and resistance like I can. In just one tiny example, last summer, LZC partnered with [**Health and Law Immigrant Solidarity Network**](#) and [**Bearing Witness @ ICE**](#) to share key data points at a peaceful healthcare-focused standout and rally at the Burlington ICE facility, where our neighbors are being held in an [**office building in overcrowded, unsanitary conditions**](#). The weekly standout [**started with a local couple in April**](#) and grew — a few weeks ago 900 people showed up. These public actions supplement the vital, core, long-term work of immigrant-led advocacy and mutual care organizations who have been working directly with families and in the statehouse for decades.

From an organizational perspective, we are holding steady to LZC's core work of research, capacity and learning, and networks ([**elaborated in December 2024**](#)). I'm proud and somewhat floored by the work we accomplished in 2025, given the year we've had. I'm especially grateful to our [**LZC advisory council**](#) and the ICH leadership team and [**Board of Directors**](#) for their encouragement to be responsive to partners while staying the course during these turbulent times and

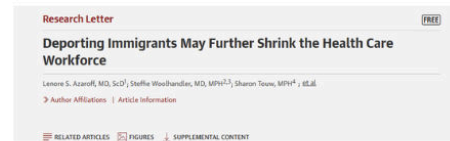
focusing on our long-term role of documenting, analyzing, lifting up, therapy-building, educating, and witnessing.

As a result, we have some exciting public-facing reports and events on tap for 2026. We hope you enjoy seeing some highlights from our recent work. Please subscribe to **MIRA Coalition's bulletin** to learn more about local news and actions and contact **LUCE at 617-370-5023 if you see ICE in your area** or want to volunteer. Contact us at **lzc@immigranthealth.org** about research, evaluation, narratives, technical assistance or education. Stay grounded in your values and the endless opportunities for collective care. Celebrate Black History Month! And stay warm.

Research Highlights

October Health Affairs Insider Event highlighted impacts of immigration policies on healthcare

ICH and LZC researcher Sharon Touw spoke at a virtual *Health Affairs* insider event in October, emphasizing the integral role immigrants play in our health care system, and the risks posed by increased immigration restrictions. She highlighted findings from her **research letter** titled, "Deporting Immigrants May Further Shrink the Health Care Workforce" from the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA). Co-authors include **Lenore S. Azaroff, MD, ScD**; **Steffie Woolhandler, MD, MPH**; **David Bor, MD**; **David U. Himmelstein, MD**, long-time collaborators with Dr. Leah Zallman.



Nearly half of US nursing homes report limiting admissions because of staffing shortages,¹ and only 15% currently meet the minimum staffing levels mandated by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services by 2029.² Shortages of nurses and other personnel caused two-thirds of hospitals to operate below full capacity in 2023.³ The Trump administration's plans to deport undocumented immigrants and some with temporary protected status (TPS)—which allows some migrants from countries with unsafe conditions to live and work in the US—and increase legal barriers even for skilled immigrants, could worsen workforce shortages. This study estimated the number of immigrants employed in health care who might be affected by deportation or immigration restrictions.



Beth Israel Lahey Health
Beth Israel Deaconess
Medical Center



New study in immigrant sexual and reproductive health

ICH and LZC are leading a multi-site qualitative study funded by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) to better understand how immigrant communities experience sexual

and reproductive healthcare (SRH) overall, and where gaps exist between policy and practice. This work centers the perspectives of both patients and providers, and is being conducted in partnership with **Dr. Robert Marlin**, Director of Policy at Boston Medical Center Immigrant and Refugee Health Center, **Dr. Rose Molina**, Associate Professor of Obstetrics, Gynecology and Reproductive Biology at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, and **Dr. Olga Valdman**, Executive Director of Worcester RISE for Health. Guided by a reproductive justice framework, the study explores how structural factors such as immigration status, language access, care

delivery models, and patients' cultural backgrounds, beliefs, and prior experiences with healthcare shape both the delivery and experience of SRH care. Findings will be shared with MDPH and other stakeholders to inform practical, equity-focused recommendations grounded in real-world experiences across Massachusetts.

Co-Researcher Perspectives

Hear from LZC co-researchers about their work on our ongoing research on narrative change with MIRA, [Policy on the Frontlines: Narrative Change for Immigrant Well-being](#):

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Working with LZC has been a meaningful opportunity to collaborate as a team with staff and fellow consultants while deepening my understanding of community-based research. Participating in the focus groups has reinforced the importance of listening to those who work within and are most affected by our health system. This work helps raise awareness not only about needed improvements, but also about the vital contributions of immigrant communities—who are not only recipients of care, but active participants, leaders, and gifts within the system itself.

- Walter Francisco Mena, Co-researcher

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During my time as a co-researcher with the Leah Zallman Center and MIRA, I've had the opportunity to explore questions of belonging, education, and care for immigrant communities much more deeply—particularly within my own communities in Massachusetts. Centering narratives in this research is especially important to me. Examining the messages people receive—and spread—about immigrant communities reveals the systems, structures, and policies that uphold harm and perpetuate fear, while also offering insight into how those systems can be challenged and dismantled. Doing so requires meeting people where they are and understanding the experiences and pathways that shaped those views.

- Sophie Frushell, Co-researcher

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As a community researcher and an immigrant myself, this work is deeply personal to me. In today's political climate, I both hear and feel the fear, uncertainty, and frustration shared by immigrant families, health workers, and nurses. Facilitating focus groups through this project creates a rare and necessary space for people to name their experiences, process their emotions, and feel truly seen. The work is challenging, but deeply meaningful, and it reminds me why narrative change is essential for healing, advocacy, and long-term change.

- Qin Li, Co-researcher

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New reports coming soon!

LZC's active research portfolio includes ongoing studies in narrative change, immigrant economic security, immigrant mental health, participatory action research, and social policy. We work closely with partners to develop public-facing reports, evaluation reports, and Spotlights to ensure our findings inform policy, practice, and social change in real time. We are putting the finishing touches on three reports, coming this Spring:

- *ICED IN: The Actions and Impacts of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) in Massachusetts in 2025*
- *Immigrant Mental Health Services in Greater Boston: A Landscape Review*
- *Spotlight on Legal Status: How Immigration Influences Wellbeing*

Capacity and Learning Highlights

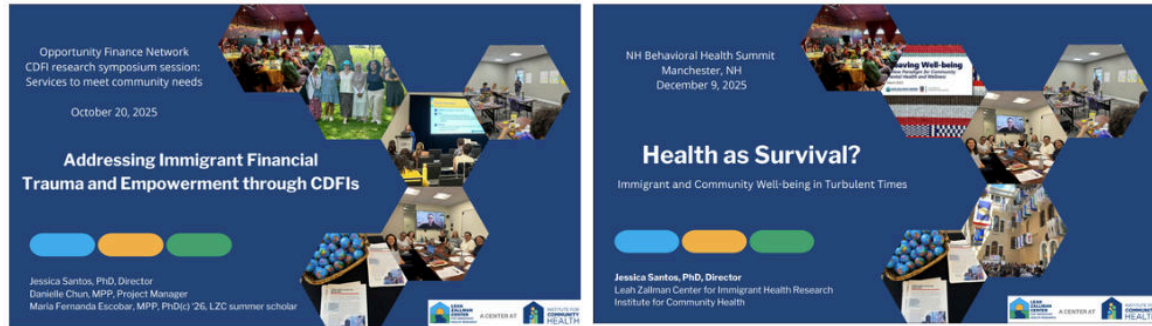
Technical Assistance (TA) project ensures community insights from immigrant Bostonians drive planning

LZC is honored to be an ongoing collaborator with the City of Boston Mayor's Office of Immigrant Advancement (MOIA), which conducted a community insights survey in 2025, achieving a sample of 744 responses in 12 languages. LZC provided technical assistance (TA) and guidance to support survey methods, implementation, analysis, and



dissemination, sharing findings with the community at MOIA's 2nd Immigrant Advancement Forum in October. Ongoing TA to MOIA in 2026 includes designing and/or facilitating meaning-making sessions to incorporate the survey findings and other sources of data into a strategic planning process.

Learning across projects



Increasingly, LZC's projects are coalescing into a broader and deeper portfolio of research that provides key insights for immigrant and community health and well-being. The LZC team has worked to integrate findings from multiple projects into presentations on topics such as financial trauma (**Addressing Immigrant Financial Trauma and Empowerment through CDFIs** presented at the Opportunity Finance Network Community Development Finance Institution [CDFI] Research Consortium in Washington, DC), narrative change for immigrant well-being (presented to multiple partners across Massachusetts throughout the year) and structural challenges to immigrant well-being (**Health as Survival?** presented at the NH Behavioral Health Summit in Manchester, NH).

Networks: LZC in Community



Know Our Rights: Legal Updates for Immigrant Health

Join the Leah Zallman Center for Immigrant Health Research (LZC), Francis Xavier Basoud (FXB) Center for Health and Human Rights at Harvard University, the Health & Law Immigrant Solidarity Network (HLISN), and Massachusetts healthcare partners for a virtual update on immigration law and policy.

Healthcare leaders, providers, workers, public health professionals, and all encouraged to attend!

Panelists

Susan Church
Chief Operating Officer & Legal Advisor, MA Office for Migration and Investments

Heather Yountz
Senior Immigration Staff Attorney, Massachusetts Law Reform Institute

Thursday, October 16th, 2025
2:00-3:00 pm ET
Virtual on Zoom

Please reach out to lzc@communityhealth.net with any questions.

CLICK HERE TO REGISTER

SCAN TO REGISTER

Coffee Chat on Legal Updates for Immigrant Health

On October 16th, the Leah Zallman Center hosted the LZC Coffee Chat on Know Our Rights: Legal Updates for Immigrant Health with our partners at the **FXB Center for Health & Human Rights at Harvard University** and **Health and Law Immigrant Solidarity Network (HLISN)**. Two panelists shared updates on immigration law and policy.

Save the Date: Events coming soon

On Wednesday, March 3rd, we will be hosting a virtual training with **Health and Law Immigrant Solidarity Network (HLISN)**, **Health Law Advocates**, and **MIRA Coalition** on Know Your Patient Rights: Keeping Healthcare Welcoming and Safe for Immigrants.

On Thursday, March 26th, we will be hosting an in-person coffee chat at the **Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health** on Innovations in Immigrant Mental Health.



More details coming soon!

"LZC coffee chats" are designed to highlight specific findings and partners and to foster dialogue about immigrant health. LZC will continue to co-host and support coffee chats and trainings in 2026 to engage healthcare leaders and workers as they resist or adapt to policies that shape immigrant well-being.

Updates from the Institute for Community Health

LZC is a center at the **Institute for Community Health (ICH)**. Through participatory evaluation, applied research, and other services, ICH staff work with local and national partners to improve community health in a sustainable and equitable manner. ICH is supporting state and local governments, health care systems, and community-based organizations that strive to make health and wellbeing accessible to everyone. Visit [our website](#) to learn more about the work that we do and check out our latest [blog posts](#) and [publications](#).



Support and engage with the Leah Zallman Center for Immigrant Health Research

The work of the Leah Zallman Center for Immigrant Health Research is made possible by generous private donations that support our unique and intensive model of community-engaged, participatory research. We are grateful for our monthly and special donors who enable us to support the perspectives and knowledge of immigrants and grow future leaders. We invite you to join us on our mission by donating [here](#) and share this newsletter with others who support immigrant health and invite them to join our listserv [here](#).



A CENTER AT



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