



**INSTITUTE FOR
COMMUNITY
HEALTH**

**LEAH ZALLMAN CENTER
FOR IMMIGRANT HEALTH RESEARCH**

**CHA
Cambridge
Health Alliance**

LEAH ZALLMAN CENTER
FOR IMMIGRANT HEALTH RESEARCH

Research for
Immigrant, Economic, and Health
Equity

Our Core Values

Equity, Collaboration, Joy, Rigor,
Generosity, Impact

A center at the Institute for
Community Health (ICH)

- ▣ Participatory Evidence
- ▣ Applied Research
- ▣ Assessment and Training
- ▣ Policy and Social Activism

Lead Author: [https://www.leahzallmancenter.org/](#)

Impact Report

2022-2024

LEAH ZALLMAN CENTER
FOR IMMIGRANT HEALTH RESEARCH

Director's Note

“Wow, you are having BIG FEELINGS!” was one of my go-to phrases when my son was a toddler. It sounded silly but was a connection point and assertion that I would be there with him as he found his way in tough moments. I know I am not alone in having some BIG FEELINGS about the recent presidential election’s impact on immigrant communities' well-being, feelings of safety, and sense of security for the future.

At LZC, we are grateful for the connections we have with many of you and as we strategize together about our respective roles in social change. We stand committed to the values of equity, collaboration, joy, rigor, generosity, and impact. We will continue to work in partnership with all of you to advance immigrant justice, economic justice, and health justice.

The theory of change presented in this report demonstrates how our collective work advances immigrant health. LZC’s foundation is research. We partner closely with advocates, policymakers, funders, clinicians, and practitioners to ensure that our research is actionable and tied to community priorities. We are not policy advocates, but we take a clear stand when there is evidence demonstrating how specific policies or programs harm immigrants. We are not implementers or practitioners, but we study and uplift best practices in immigrant health programs, policies, or cases to be replicated. Our research also contributes to social theories related to multi-level drivers of immigrant health and structural solutions for equity.

Scientific evidence is not enough to create social change. Data alone does not make policy. We seek to advance immigrant health through public education, mentoring, technical assistance, pro-immigrant counter narratives, organizational capacity and strategy, cross-



Pictured (left to right) : Lisaury Diaz, Danielle Chun, Dr. Jessica Santos, Sofia Ladner, and Dr. Ariela Braverman Bronstein

sector dialogues, and the supporting of powerful immigrant scholars and leaders. This is relational, collective, and long-term change work. During different political and policy environments, we may find that certain tools work better than others as we seek to structure society in ways that support and sustain immigrant and community health and well-being.

Stay informed about immigrant rights in this unpredictable policy environment with the Know Your Rights materials provided by the [Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition \(MIRA\)](#), the [Immigrant Legal Resource Center](#), the [ACLU](#), and the [National Immigration Law Center](#)

Stay in touch. Stay informed. Take care and stay with those BIG FEELINGS if and when they arise!

Jessica Santos, PhD, Director

The Leah Zallman Center

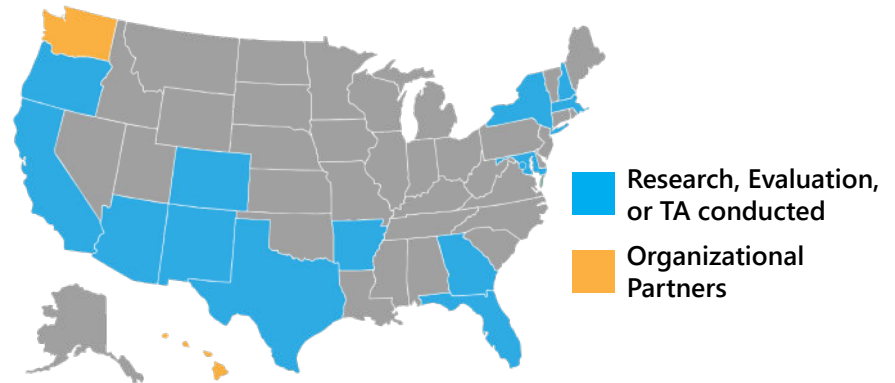
The Leah Zallman Center for Immigrant Health Research (LZC) is a research center at the Institute for Community Health (ICH). We are a team of interdisciplinary social science researchers with expertise at the intersection of immigrant, economic, and health justice. We are proud to build on ICH's history of using participatory methods to ensure that community voices in research are amplified to the state and national level as part of evidence-based policymaking. LZC was launched in 2022 in honor of Dr. Leah Zallman, former Cambridge Health Alliance (CHA) physician and Director of Research at ICH, who passed away suddenly in 2020. LZC's core values (below) reflect Dr. Zallman's approach to her work and guide us as we partner with a range of leaders to advance immigrant and community health and well-being.

Our Mission:
To partner with immigrant communities, advocates, policymakers, and social and health systems on actionable research to improve immigrant health and well-being

Core Values:

- Collaboration
- Equity
- Rigor
- Joy
- Generosity
- Impact

2022-2024 Geographic Impact





Theory of Change

This Fall, one of our advisory council members asked what LZC’s “theory of change” is. The irony is that as researchers and evaluators we work with partners to develop logic models and theories of change on a regular basis. But even though we have a strong mission, core values, and a research agenda that we developed through a participatory process, we hadn’t made the theoretical links to show how our activities create change and have impact. So, we got to work uncovering hidden assumptions, debating the boundaries and potential reach of the Center, and documenting our impact to date. Here’s where we landed. ***How are we creating change and making an impact on immigrant health?***



Leah Zallman Center’s Theory of Change



Research:

We conduct rigorous, actionable inquiry to build knowledge that advances immigrant health and well-being by:

- Identifying immigrant health policy opportunities, best practices, and cases
- Developing evidence-based narratives that support immigrant well-being
- Building theory and methods grounded in community and equity

Capacity and Learning:

We provide immigrant scholars and immigrant-led organizations with technical assistance and mentoring while fostering an internal learning culture by:

- Supporting the growth of immigrant scholars to develop into future leaders
- Equipping immigrant researchers, community leaders, and practitioners with tools and resources to lead anti-assimilationist inquiry
- Assisting immigrant-led and immigrant-serving organizations to refine programs, policies, and evaluation frameworks through systematic learning

Networks:

We engage with and connect immigrant advocates, policymakers, funders, and social and health systems to build cross-sector relationships, knowledge, and power by:

- Connecting leaders across disciplines with shared values to identify new solutions, collaboration opportunities, and resources to turn research into action
- Raising public awareness about how society can be organized to advance immigrant health equity
- Creating spaces that inspire and empower people to effect change

Research

16

research and evaluation projects

7

public reports based on research findings

15

research presentations

Mental Health: Weaving Well-being

Nearly half (46%) of survey respondents in a nationally-representative survey cited escape from violent or unsafe conditions as a reason for migrating to the United States. LZC's Weaving Well-being reports demonstrate how immigrant community-driven mental health activities support healing and mental well-being.

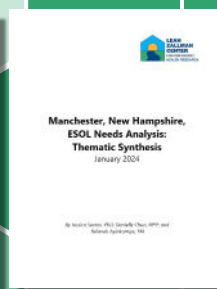
91%

of survey respondents said the program

helped them contribute to the happiness and well-being of others.

“As an immigrant, at the beginning, staying away from my native country was not easy. I had difficult moments, and this experience made me want to help anybody [who’s a] newcomer to this country.” – Weaving Well-being Participant

Read our reports:



Public Charge: From Fear to Trust

In 2022, 43% of immigrant families with children in a nationally representative survey reported at least one type of material hardship. That same year, the “chilling effect” of federal public charge policies and narratives caused between 3-4 million children in immigrant families to miss out on public benefits

that they were eligible for and could have addressed hunger. LZC’s [From Fear to Trust](#) research demonstrates how immigrant leaders and organizations funded by Share Our Strength – No Kid Hungry reduced fear and harm while empowering immigrant communities with direct food assistance, knowledge about their rights, linkages to SNAP and WIC benefits, and new narratives.



In 2022, 16 organizations distributed 3 million pounds of food and directly assisted 31,000 families.

“I can share that once a family member is in, community members know what the opportunities are. They become empowered . . . They’ve been able to make changes and advocate at the Capitol for the bills that they feel passionate about that will help support their communities.” – Service Provider



Research Highlight:

City of Boston COVID-19 Immigrant Economic Recovery Initiative Evaluation

Research has long established links between economic security and health. Immigrant financial inclusion is also associated with healthier communities. During the COVID-19 pandemic, many immigrant communities in Boston experienced disproportionately high rates of job losses, small business closures, COVID-19 infection and mortality, and anxiety and depression. Existing social safety nets did not sufficiently address these economic hardships and health inequities. Particularly since immigrants, unlike other populations, were ineligible for other government programming provided at the time such as federal stimulus checks. In response, the Equity and Inclusion Cabinet of the City of Boston launched the Immigrant Economic Recovery Initiative (IERI) in 2024, allocating \$3 million from American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to support long-term economic recovery in these communities. Last spring, 236 eligible immigrant families were selected via an application and lottery process to receive \$600 for the months they are enrolled in the program (up to one year) and are connected to caseworkers who ensure that they obtain access to financial institutions (such as opening US based bank accounts with low-or no fee savings options), job opportunities (such as trainings and employers seeking to expand their workforce), and incentives for participating in English or skills training classes and savings programs. LZC is partnering with the City of Boston and the Massachusetts Immigrant Collaborative to evaluate the program’s outcomes on economic stability, mental health, and basic needs.

Capacity and Learning

19
Students

14
Schools

3
Spotlight Briefs

8
TA Projects

Learning Highlight:

LZC's immigrant scholar internship program provides students with opportunities to engage in research and Center strategy. Each summer, our cohort of immigrant scholars works to produce Spotlight Briefs—short, evidence-based issue briefs that break down a topic related to immigrant health in a publicly accessible style. With the guidance of the LZC team, the immigrant scholars choose their area of interest and hone their research and writing skills over the course of the summer. Our scholars also take leadership roles in events and/or share their ideas and research through writing, presentation, or networking opportunities, as described in the blog [Immigrants Like You](#), written by Abhirupa Dasgupta, MPH (LZC Predoctoral Fellow, 2023-2024).

People talk about “good” and “bad” immigrants all the time, but these experiences and the anger, frustration, sadness, and humiliation they cause affect us all the same, regardless of national origin or immigration status. We are all united by our ambitions for ourselves and our dreams for our families and thus, we as immigrants should be infinitely wary of narratives that try to pit us against one another.

– Abhirupa Dasgupta, MPH, LZC Predoctoral Fellow, 2023-2024

Networks

21
academic
conferences

17
community
events

2
Coffee Chats

3
annual events

LEAH ZALLMAN CENTER FOR IMMIGRANT HEALTH RESEARCH

LZC Coffee Chat on Immigrant Mental Health

All are welcome!

- Join us for an hour-long virtual chat on immigrant mental health in Massachusetts.
- Talk with experts and share your opinions and ideas about improving immigrant health and well-being.
- The conversation will be moderated by LZC Strategy and Partnerships Manager, Danielle Chou.

Friday, November 8, 2024
12-1 pm ET

CLICK HERE TO REGISTER

Asha Abdulkhalik, Executive Director and Founder, Somali Parents Advocacy Center for Education (SPACE)
Diya Kattiyappil, PhD, Co-Director, Cambridge Health Alliance Asylum Program (CHAAAP)
Monique To Nguyen, MPP, Executive Director, City of Boston Mayor's Office for Immigrant Advancement (MIOIA)

Please reach out to info@communityhealth.org with any questions.

LEAH ZALLMAN CENTER FOR IMMIGRANT HEALTH RESEARCH

Save the Date for
LISTENING IN Action

Learn from researchers and community experts, strategize and shape our Center's future work to influence policy and practice.

Thursday, May 9th, 2024
3:30pm to 5:00pm
(with post-event networking until 6:00pm)

The Center for the Arts at the Armory
191 Highland Ave., Somerville, MA 02143

REGISTER HERE

For any additional questions reach out to info@communityhealth.org

LEAH ZALLMAN CENTER FOR IMMIGRANT HEALTH RESEARCH

LZC Coffee Chat on Access to Care

All are welcome!

- Join us for an hour-long chat about Access to Care for Immigrants in MA.
- Talk with experts and share your opinions and ideas about improving immigrant health and well-being.
- Moderated by LZC Director, Dr. Jessica Santos.

Friday, March 15th, 2024
2-3 pm ET

CLICK HERE TO REGISTER

Isabel Lopez, Founder and Director, Director, Women's Alliance
Dr. Melissa Kennedy, Preventative Medicine Fellow in Refugee and Immigrant Health, MAHRI School for Social Policy and Management, Lowell Community Health Center
Shayana Sharma, Visiting Research Scholar, MAHRI School for Social Policy and Management, Lowell Community Health Center

Please reach out to info@communityhealth.org with any questions.

YOU'RE INVITED!
POWER IN LISTENING
Research. Strategy. Immigrant Health.

Learn from researchers and community experts. Strategize and shape our future work. Influence policy and practice.

MARCH 15TH, 2023
9-11AM

DANTE ALIGHIERI SOCIETY
41 Hampshire St, Kendall Sq,
Cambridge, MA

REGISTER HERE!

CELEBRATING ONE YEAR OF
LEAH ZALLMAN CENTER FOR IMMIGRANT HEALTH RESEARCH

HOPE IN POWER

OFFICIAL LAUNCH OF THE
LEAH ZALLMAN CENTER FOR IMMIGRANT HEALTH RESEARCH

Welcome! Add your name & organization to the chat to introduce yourself!

“The Leah Zallman Center addresses a critical gap in Boston and nationwide by centering immigrants and immigrant communities in their research. The Center models how to engage immigrant and marginalized communities meaningfully, using research outcomes to drive empowerment and equity. It produces actionable, policy-relevant findings and goes the extra mile once projects end to educate the public about immigrant rights and well-being.”

- **Ân H. Lê**, Senior Director of Policy and Research, Equity and Inclusion Cabinet, City of Boston, Mayor Michelle Wu



Network Highlight:

On November 8, 2024, three days after the U.S. presidential election, LZC hosted a Coffee Chat with over 60 people focused on immigrant mental health and well-being. Our panelists Asha Abdullahi from [Somali Parents Advocacy Center for Education](#) (SPACE), Diya Kallivayalil, PhD, from the [Cambridge Health Alliance Asylum Program](#) (CHAAP), and Monique Tú Nguyen, MPP, from the [City of Boston Mayor’s Office for Immigrant Advancement](#) (MOIA) shared a range of perspectives on mental health. During the coffee chat, LZC released our [Spotlight on Mental Health: Restructuring Care for Immigrant Families](#), coauthored by LZC immigrant scholars, Jennifer Zhang, MPH ‘25, and Vilma Uribe, PhD ‘26, and referenced findings from our ongoing [Weaving Well-being partnership](#) with MOIA. The informal nature of the coffee chat provided a space for people to express their feelings after the presidential election, and participants also shared examples of coping skills they are using to care for themselves, their families, and their communities during this time (see visual below). As we research structural solutions to reduce health inequities and improve immigrant mental health, we continue to learn alongside our partners about prioritizing well-being, as Danielle Chun, LZC Strategy and Partnerships Manager, points out in her blog [Community Care in Uncertain Times](#).

Strategies for Resilience in Uncertain Times



Our Leadership

We are grateful to the ICH leadership, LZC Advisory Council, and the ICH Board of Directors for their support and guidance.

LZC Advisory Council

Amy Smith, MD, MPH; Cambridge Health Alliance

Ân H. Lê, JD, MSW; City of Boston Mayor's Equity and Inclusion Cabinet

Andres Lopez, PhD; Coalition of Communities of Color

Cassandra Pierre, MD, MPH, MSc; Boston Medical Center

Dieufort "Keke" Fleurrisaint, MDiv, ThM; True Alliance Center

Marcia Bernbaum, PhD

María Rosario González Albuixech, MSPS; American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network

Robert P. Marlin, MD, PhD, MPH; Lowell Community Health Center

Trinidad Tellez, MD; [Health] Equity Strategies, LLC

ICH Board of Directors

Aviva Must, PhD; Tufts University School of Medicine

Cassandra Pierre, MD, MPH, MSc; Boston Medical Center

Craig S. Andrade, RN, MPH, DrPH; Boston University School of Public Health

David H. Bor, MD; Cambridge Health Alliance

Ellen Lawton, JD (Vice Chair); HealthBegins

Gregory Hagan, MD (Chair); Cambridge Health Alliance

Karen Bullock, PhD, LICSW, FGSA, APHSW-C; Boston College School of Social Work

Joseph D. Restuccia, DrPH, MPH; Boston University Questrom School of Business

Leonor Fernandez, MD; Beth Israel Lahey Health

Paul Geltman, MD, MPH; Pappas Rehabilitation Hospital for Children

"Dr. Jessica Santos was recognized in 2024 with the Academic Council Award for her contributions to immigrant inclusion and well-being through the development of the Leah Zallman Center and in mentoring immigrant scholars. Building on the legacy of past awardee Dr. Leah Zallman, LZC has developed a rigorous, community-centered approach to immigrant health research at ICH and CHA. At a time when immigrants are increasingly marginalized politically, I am proud to support and celebrate LZC's approach that uplifts immigrant knowledge and power in our society."

– Dr. Sarah Jalbert, ICH Executive Director



A CENTER AT



Donate now to the Leah Zallman Center to support our community-engaged approach to advancing immigrant health and well-being through action research!



Your support makes it possible for LZC to build a cohort of up-and-coming immigrant scholars, center the priorities of less-resourced, immigrant-led organizations, and spread knowledge about building healthy communities through public conversations.



immigranthealth.org