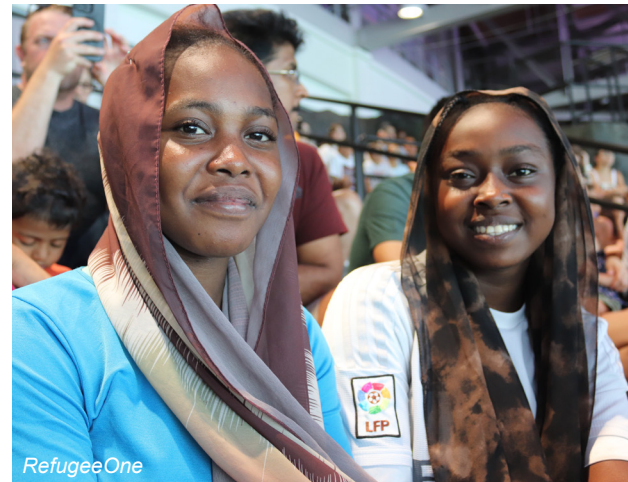


# 2025 Annual Report of the Governor's Office of New Americans



February, 2026

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# Welcome Letter

December 31, 2025

Dear Governor Pritzker and Honorable Members of the Illinois General Assembly,

Here in Illinois, we have spent decades leading the nation in implementing welcoming policies that in turn have made our State stronger. Building inclusive programming has allowed us to not only uphold our respect for the humanity of all who choose to call our State home but also strengthen our resilience and prosperity. Since the creation of the Office of New Americans Policy and Advocacy in 2004, and through today's Governor's Office of New Americans (ONA) we have embedded the spirit of inclusion within every corner of Illinois State government. With the reestablishment of the Office in fiscal year 2025 have come unprecedented challenges, enforcement actions, and uncertainty for immigrants of all backgrounds here in Illinois - and daunting challenges for the State and local governments that serve them.

In times of crisis, meeting the needs of New Americans is inextricably linked with meeting the needs of all Illinoisans. When we work to build government systems that are culturally competent, center access needs, and partner with trusted community-based organizations, we not only do right by our New American population, but by all Illinoisans. This year has brought new injustices and harms to Illinois, many acutely felt by New Americans who call our country home. These actions have been targeted and intentional, with the primary goal of punishing welcoming jurisdictions and making life harder for immigrant families of all backgrounds. The harshest enforcement tactics have been brought to bear upon our streets, families, and neighborhoods. Access to public benefits has been undermined, and data security has been violated, leaving families in limbo as lawful immigration statuses are threatened or terminated. It is more important now than ever to ensure that our State can adeptly reach out to and support immigrants and their families.

In the following report, you will learn more about the efforts of the Governor's Office of New Americans in the first fiscal year since its reestablishment in the Summer of 2024. This work builds on and works in partnership with strong immigrant-serving structures both inside and outside of Illinois government. ONA will continue to create strategy and support to coordinate our Statewide capacity to serve immigrants and build towards a future where all Illinoisans can thrive. Welcoming values are at the core of this Office, of Illinois, and of our nation of immigrants.

ONA looks forward to continuing to work in partnership with you and with the vast network of immigrant-serving partners, allies, and immigrant communities to move this crucial work forward.

Respectfully,

Isabella Hurtado



Director, Governor's Office of New Americans

# Introduction

Illinois is home to nearly two million immigrants. In other words, 15%, or one in every seven Illinoisans, are New Americans. As family members, neighbors, business owners, taxpayers and employees, New Americans are an essential part of communities across Illinois. The substantial economic and social contributions of immigrants are well documented, and immigration continues to play a critical role in Illinois' long-term competitiveness and growth.

According to an analysis of 2023 American Community Survey census data by the American Immigration Council, in Illinois:<sup>1</sup>

- 922,400 US-born residents live with at least one immigrant parent.
- Immigrants in Illinois contribute **\$27.4 billion** in federal, State, and local tax contributions and have a collective spending power of **\$68.5 billion**.
- Immigrants **make up 18.5% of Illinois' workforce**, and represent:
  - **25.8%** of employees in the manufacturing industry.
  - **25.6%** of employees in the construction industry.
  - **24.3%** of STEM workers.
  - **23.4%** of employees in the transportation and warehousing industry.
  - **27.2% of Illinois' entrepreneurs**, collectively **generating \$3.8 billion** in business income.

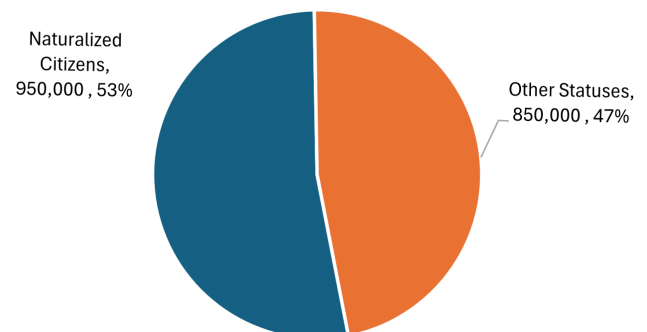
Illinois works to maximize the success of immigrants, like all Illinoisans, through inclusive and effective public policies. This report highlights the activities of the Governor's Office of New Americans in Fiscal Year 2025 to coordinate, implement, and support State policies and services that directly involve immigrants. Through this work, the Office helps equip the State with tools to support immigrant integration and advance opportunity for New Americans across Illinois.

## Who Are the New Americans of Illinois?

"New Americans" are individuals who were born outside the United States and who have made Illinois their home. They represent a wide range of immigration statuses and experiences. Some have lived in Illinois for decades, while others have arrived more recently. New Americans come to Illinois for many reasons, including to reunite with family members, pursue employment or education, or seek protection from danger in their home countries.

Approximately 1.8 million New Americans live in Illinois. The majority are naturalized U.S. citizens.

Figure 1: New Americans in Illinois: 2019-2023



Source: American Community Survey

1 [Immigrants in Illinois - American Immigration Council](#)

Most New Americans who are not naturalized citizens are lawful permanent residents, with the legal right to live and work in the United States indefinitely. Others hold specialized or temporary immigration statuses that allow them to reside and work legally, including Temporary Protected Status (TPS) and Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA). Some have work authorization through employers such as private companies, hospitals, or universities, while others are authorized to train or work in specialty fields for a defined period. Illinois' New American population also includes individuals without legal status. Access to legal status varies widely based on individual circumstances, reflecting the complexity of U.S. immigration law and legal pathways.

It is undeniable that New Americans make substantial economic contributions to the State. They have \$68.5 billion in spending power and pay \$27.4 billion in local, State and federal taxes. Immigrants in Illinois are 27.2 percent of entrepreneurs, 24.3 percent of STEM workers, and 18.3 percent of nurses.<sup>2</sup>

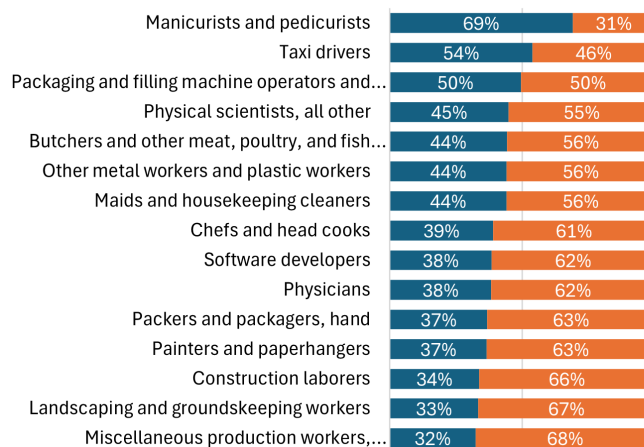
New Americans live in communities across Illinois, including neighborhoods in Chicago, suburbs throughout the metropolitan region, cities such as Bloomington, Peoria, and Rockford, and rural counties including Cass, Livingston, and Menard.

**Table 1: Selected Special Immigrant Statuses in Illinois: 2025**

Immigration Status	Number of Persons
Refugee Arrivals	30,000
DACA	27,800
H1-B	15,000
Temporary Protected Status	11,300
Exchange Visitors	8,700

Source: UIC Great Cities Institute, based on multiple sources

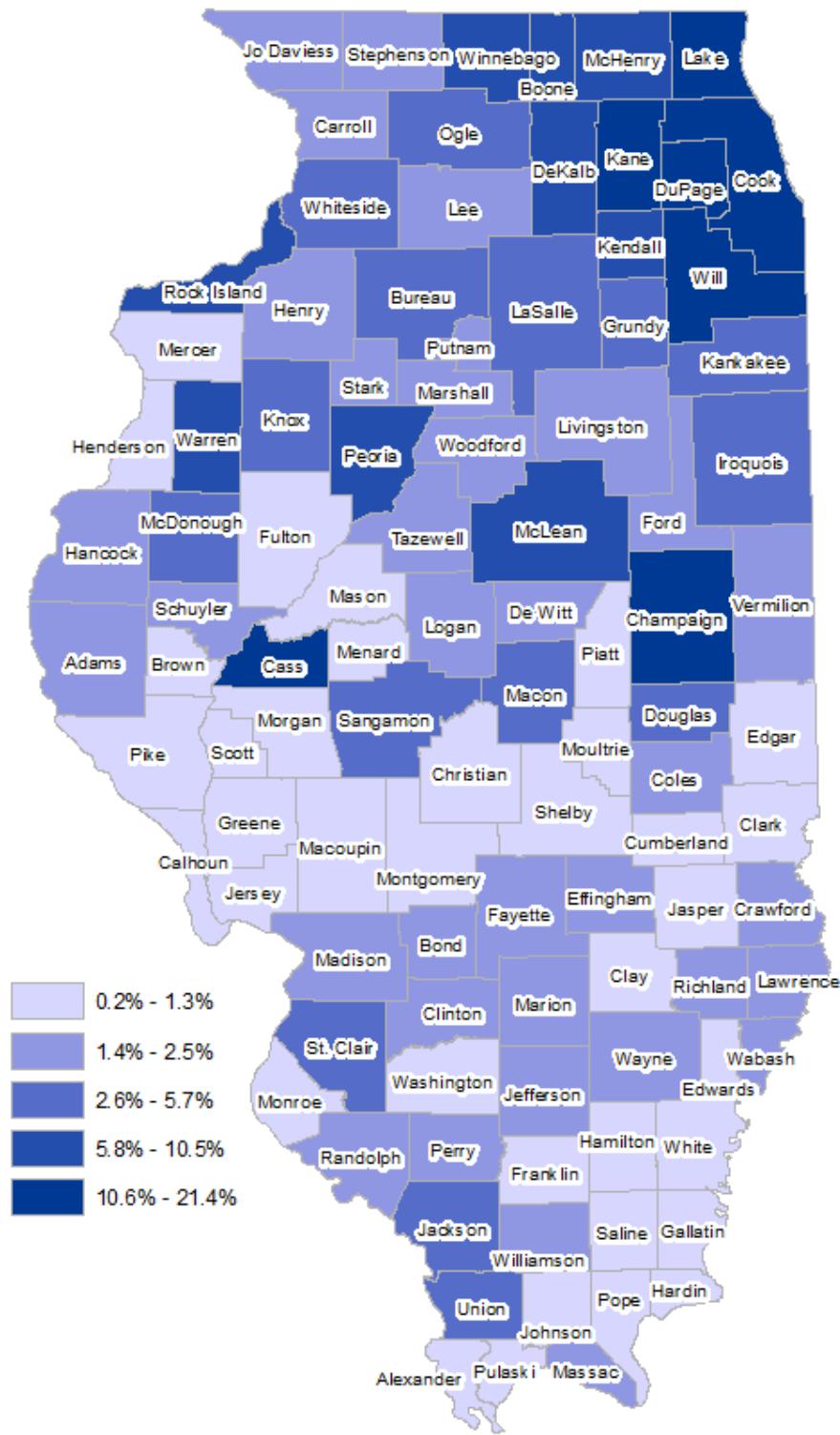
**Figure 2: Immigrant Share of Occupations in Illinois: 2020-2024**



Source: UIC Great Cities Institute

<sup>2</sup> <https://map.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/locations/illinois/>

Figure 3: Immigrant Percent of Population



## Promoting Immigrant Integration

Through “immigrant integration,” New Americans become our fellow neighbors, workers and taxpayers. Integration can be measured in a number of ways. Integration is **economic**, by which immigrants become increasingly self-sufficient and secure. It is **civic**, by which immigrants participate in community bodies and activities, potentially including participating in block clubs, joining school parent-teacher organizations, and ultimately, upon becoming US citizens and voting. It is **social**, by which immigrants communicate with the members of their new communities, live among them, and add to the fabric of our multiethnic and multiracial society. Integration is also a two-way process, as native-born Illinois residents benefit from the contributions and inclusion of immigrants.

There are clear indicators that demonstrate the ongoing integration of New Americans in Illinois. Over the last 10 years, the shares of New Americans in our State that speak English very well, that are naturalized citizens, and that are homeowners have all increased significantly. These are unmistakable signs of the return on investments that the State of Illinois has made in supporting immigrant integration over the last two decades.

**Table 2: Measures of Immigrant Integration in Illinois**

	2004	2014	2024	Change since 2004
Pct. Speak English Very Well	46%	49%	52%	+6
Pct. Naturalized Citizens	42%	49%	52%	+10
Pct. Homeowners	61%	59%	63%	+2

Source: American Community Survey; UIC Great Cities Institute

# The Governor's Office of New Americans

## Background

In Illinois, the Governor's Office of New Americans (ONA) is primarily charged with "welcom[ing] and support[ing] immigrants and refugees in the State of Illinois" ([15 ILCS 55/1-10](#)).

This charge, and the additional responsibilities assigned to ONA in statute, inform four core strategic pillars of work:

1. **State Services Accessibility and Planning:** Provide support, technical assistance, training, and input to State agencies, boards, and commissions across State government in establishing best practices to serve New American populations
2. **Social, Cultural, Economic, and Civic Immigrant Integration:** Establish state-level policy priorities to support integration and work with key agencies to advance and improve available programs and interagency coordination.
3. **Stakeholder Education and Community Engagement:** Convene immigrant stakeholders and community representatives to capture and respond to community need.
4. **Policy Analysis and Research:** Advise the Governor's Office and State agencies on issues related to immigration policy and support research and data analysis on immigrant populations, language needs, and engagement with State services.

Breakdowns of ONA's core pillars, statutory duties, and related activities in the last fiscal year are listed in Table 3. A more detailed description of many of these activities can be found in the Highlights of Fiscal Year 2025 section of this report.

**Table 3: Core Pillars, Statutory Duties and Related Activities of the Governor's Office of New Americans**

Core Pillar	Related Statutory Duties ( <a href="#">15 ILCS 55/1-10</a> )	FY25 Activity
<b>State Services Accessibility and Planning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify strategic partnerships with State agencies under the jurisdiction of the Governor in an effort to implement best practices, policies, and procedures and make recommendations for statewide policy and administrative changes.</li> <li>• Monitor completion of New Americans Plans at each State agency level.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Established and developed the Statewide Language Access Coordinator Network.</li> <li>• Submitted the Language Equity and Access Status Report to the Governor and Illinois General Assembly.</li> <li>• Worked with UIC Great Cities Institute to prepare the 2025 Illinois Language Access Needs Assessment.</li> <li>• Facilitated language access planning and implementation.</li> </ul>

Core Pillar	Related Statutory Duties ( <a href="#">15 ILCS 55/1-10</a> )	FY25 Activity
<b>Social, Cultural, Economic, and Civic Immigrant Integration</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote and support immigrant and refugee integration into the social, cultural, economic, and civic life of the United States.</li> <li>Evaluate the scale, quality, and effectiveness of State initiatives with respect to immigrant and refugee social and economic integration.</li> <li>Identify the anticipated effects of new State government policies on integration efforts and provide strategic advice to the Governor on how to address effects, gaps, and needs created by such policies.</li> <li>Ensure access to quality English language learning programs that support the successful integration of immigrant adults.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Partnered with the Illinois Department of Human Services and the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights to administer the New Voter Registration Pilot Program.</li> <li>Supported the Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation in the exploration of a clinical readiness program to support the creation of a licensing pathway for International Medical Graduates.</li> <li>Supported agencies in sharing information and developing protocols and procedures in response to changes in federal immigration enforcement.</li> <li>Participated in the Racial Equity Roundtable on Latine Homelessness facilitated by the Illinois Office to Prevent and End Homelessness.</li> </ul>
<b>Stakeholder Education and Community Engagement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Coordinate the efforts of State, federal, and local entities to support the effective social, economic, linguistic, and civic integration of immigrants, refugees, and the children of immigrants and refugees.</li> <li>Ensure the inclusion of the perspectives of immigrants and refugees.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participated in the National Network of Offices of New Americans and attended the annual convening in Washington DC.</li> <li>Convened the Illinois Task Force on Black Immigrants in partnership with the Illinois Department of Human Rights.</li> <li>Convened key stakeholders to align local planning and develop resources in response to changing federal policies, including the Illinois Immigration Information Hub.</li> <li>Convened stakeholders across business, higher education, local government and early childhood to coordinate sector-specific large-scale know-your-rights opportunities in partnership with lead organizations.</li> </ul>
<b>Policy and Research</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Serve as the key advisor to the Office of the Governor, members of the General Assembly, and other State government officials on the challenges and opportunities facing such entities with respect to immigrant and refugee integration.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provided capacity and expertise in the Governor's Office to understand and create strategy to respond to changing federal immigration policy.</li> <li>Engaged relevant state agencies.</li> </ul>

Source: American Community Survey

## History of ONA: Timeline

The Office of New Americans has a rich history in the State of Illinois, built across over two decades of advocacy and partnership with Illinois' immigrant communities, advocates, legislators, and State government:

- In **2004**, the Office of New Americans Policy and Advocacy was established in the Governor's Office.
- In **2005**, the Illinois Department of Human Services and the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights launched the New Americans Citizenship Initiative, a coordinated multiyear campaign for citizenship that linked legal permanent residents directly to the information and services they need to successfully pursue citizenship.
- On **November 19th, 2005**, Governor Rod Blagojevich signed the [Executive Order Creating New Americans Immigrant Policy Council](#), which required the establishment of the Council, co-chaired by the Illinois Department of Human Services and the Illinois Department of Employment Services, and the creation of agency-level New Americans Plans.
- In **2007**, the Illinois Welcoming Center Program (IWC) was launched to model a state-operated one-stop human service center designed to help immigrants and Limited English Proficiency (LEP) individuals navigate State services and coordinate those State services with non-profit community social services.
- On **March 31st, 2010**, Governor Pat Quinn signed the [Executive Order Creating the Governor's Office of New Americans](#), formalizing the Office and the appointment of its first official director, Denise Martinez.
- In **February of 2013**, Representative Elizabeth "Lisa" Hernandez introduced the Governor's Office of New Americans Act, which was signed by Governor Quinn in August of that same year with a January 1st, 2014 effective date.
- In **September of 2013**, Teresa Reyes was appointed as the second Director of the Office of New Americans and served through the end of Governor Pat Quinn's term in January of 2015.
- The Governor's Office of New Americans was inactive during the term of Governor Bruce Rauner (**January 2015 – January 2019**). The Illinois Department of Human Services continued to administer immigrant-serving programming, despite proposals from the Rauner administration to eliminate Welcoming Centers in its FY19, FY18, and FY17 budgets and other funding challenges.
- In **2017**, the Illinois Department of Human Services transitioned the Welcoming Center Program to include a community-based service model that continues to operate as a one-stop human service center in community settings.
- In **January of 2019**, Governor Pritzker signed the [Executive Order Strengthening our Commitment to Immigrants, Refugees, and Asylum Seekers](#) to ensure restored funding to the Illinois Welcoming Centers and prioritize Know Your Rights outreach, led by the Illinois Department of Human Services.
- In **2022**, the Deputy Governor for Health and Human Services became the Governor's Office representative to coordinate the State's nation-leading response to the busing of New Arrivals from the Texas border, and the Illinois Department of Human Services became the lead State agency to coordinate services.
- In **2024**, Governor JB Pritzker signed the Language Equity and Access Act, initially introduced by Senator Karina Villa and Representative Dagmara Avelar, and designated Isabella Hurtado as the Director of the Office of New Americans to lead implementation of the Act and rebuild the Office of New Americans in alignment with broader statutory requirements.

## Highlights of Fiscal Year 2025

### *Responding to Federal Actions*

State and federal policies profoundly affected New Americans in Illinois over the course of fiscal year 2025. The year was marked by an escalation of punitive federal immigration enforcement and policy actions that sought to destabilize immigrants, their families, and communities across the State.

### *Escalation of Federal Enforcement*

On October 8th, 2025, the U.S. Customs and Border Patrol (CBP) and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) deployed agents at an unprecedented scale as part of an operation titled Operation Midway Blitz. Thousands of New Americans were apprehended, including individuals with legal status and U.S. citizens.

Reports described:

- The deployment of chemical agents in public streets
- Excessive force used against immigrants and bystanders
- Enforcement actions in locations previously designated as “sensitive,” including schools, daycares, and hospitals, under guidance that has since been rescinded

These actions occurred amid near-daily federal immigration policy changes, including attempts to rescind temporary protections, the implementation of a travel ban, the suspension of certain visa applications, and significant reductions to the U.S. refugee program.

### *ONA's Coordinated State Response*

The Governor's Office of New Americans responded rapidly to support Illinois communities and coordinate a statewide response. ONA served as a central resource for State agencies and community partners and worked to ensure that New Americans understood their constitutional rights to due process.

Key response actions included:

- Convening large-scale Know Your Rights calls and trainings
- Engaging business associations, mayors and local government leaders, and childcare providers
- Coordinating cross-agency response efforts and supporting messaging and outreach from the Governor's Office

### *Spotlight: Illinois Immigration Information Hub*

As part of its response, ONA coordinated and oversaw the steering committee responsible for creating the Illinois Immigration Information Hub ([www.illinoisimmigrationinfo.org](http://www.illinoisimmigrationinfo.org)).

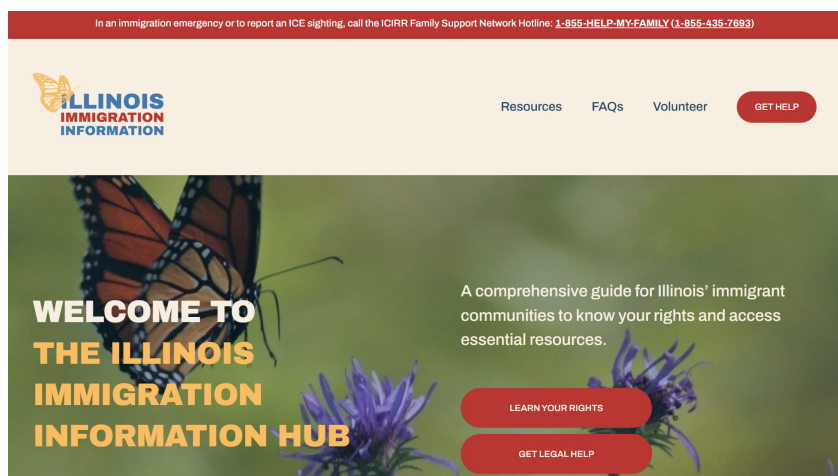
The Hub is maintained by The Resurrection Project, with content developed and vetted by a Steering Committee that includes:

- Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights
- National Immigrant Justice Center
- Illinois Department of Human Services
- City of Chicago Office of Immigrant, Migrant, and Refugee Rights
- Great Cities Institute of the University of Illinois Chicago

The centralized site provides New Americans, their families, and advocates with up-to-date information on:

- Know Your Rights resources
- Family emergency planning and guardianship options
- Free legal workshops
- Access to trusted immigration attorneys

**Figure 4: Illinois Immigrant Information Hub, at <https://www.illinoisimmigrationinfo.org/>**



## Promoting Positive Change

In Fiscal Year 2025, the Governor’s Office of New Americans advanced several major initiatives to strengthen access to State services, promote equity, and support the integration and security of New Americans across Illinois. Key efforts included implementation of the Language Equity and Access Act, the creation and convening of the Task Force on Black Immigrants, and ongoing coordination with State, philanthropic, and national partners.

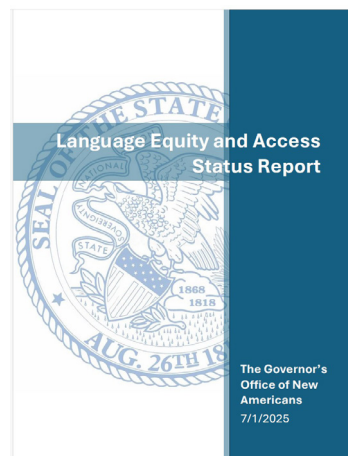
### *Implementing the Language Equity and Access Act*

ONA oversaw the statewide rollout of the Language Equity and Access Act (Public Act 103-0723), enacted on August 2, 2024. The Act seeks to ensure that all Illinois residents, particularly those with limited English proficiency, have equitable access to State services and programs. It requires all executive agencies, departments, boards, commissions, and authorities under the Governor’s jurisdiction to develop and implement Language Access Plans.

ONA supported agencies through multiple phases of implementation, including:

- Convening agency personnel and providing technical assistance during the development of Language Access Plans
- Coordinating the review and assessment of submitted plans

**Figure 5: Language Equity and Access Status Report**



- Partnering with the Great Cities Institute at the University of Illinois Chicago to develop:
  - A statewide Language Needs Assessment report
  - A digital data report
  - An interactive dashboard identifying populations with limited English proficiency

### ***Convening the Task Force on Black Immigrants***

ONA co-convened, in partnership with the Illinois Department of Human Rights (IDHR), the Task Force on Black Immigrants, which was established through a joint resolution of the Illinois House and Senate.

In 2025, the Task Force:

- Met quarterly
- Convened 13 community leaders and subject-matter experts
- Review data related to approximately 85,000 Black immigrants living in Illinois
- Developed policy recommendations to support the successful integration of Black immigrants statewide



### ***Additional Activities and Partnerships***

In addition to these core initiatives, ONA:

- Coordinated access to philanthropic grant requests and funding opportunities to support core initiatives
- Actively participated in the National Network of Offices of New Americans, contributing to cross-State learning and collaboration



## ONA Staffing

Under the leadership of the Director, ONA operates through a decentralized staffing and support model that leverages agency capacity while maintaining a small core staff embedded within lead agencies. This model allows the Office to advance statewide initiatives while coordinating across multiple departments.

### *Core Staff*

- Isabella Hurtado, Director, Governor's Office of New Americans
- Clare Sigelko, Office of New Americans Lead, Illinois Department of Human Services

### *Agency Designees*

- Office of New Americans liaisons
- Language Access Coordinators

ONA also draws on expertise within the Governor's Office, including Legal, External Affairs, Communications, and Policy and Legislative teams, to support program implementation, outreach, and coordination. This support includes significant contribution by:

- Cynthia Flores, Deputy General Counsel and Deputy Chief Compliance Officer
- Nancy Huynh, Director of Government Affairs
- Kayla Payvar, Dunn Fellow

Over time, the Office aims to expand core staffing, formalize advisory groups, and further strengthen its capacity to drive progress.

# Existing Programs that Support New Americans

Over several decades, Illinois has created a wide variety of programs that support the integration of immigrants. The Governor's Office of New Americans works to coordinate and support these programs. Examples of State programs that benefit from coordination, planning, and review include:

## [Illinois Accountability Commission](#)

- The Commission, housed within the Illinois Department of Human Rights (IDHR), will create a public record of the conduct of federal agents during "Operation Midway Blitz" and the Trump Administration's military-style operations throughout the Chicagoland area. Additionally, the Commission will examine the impact of that conduct on individuals and communities and consider policy recommendations to prevent future harm in Illinois.

## [Refugee Resettlement Program Network](#)

- Provides services to refugees and asylees. Community service providers are provided with federal and State funding to provide assistance to refugees and asylees.

## [Immigrant Family Resource Program](#)

- Ensures that low-income immigrant families and other limited-English-speaking persons can thrive by reducing barriers to public benefits (nutritional, medical, housing, psychological, childcare, employment).

## [New Americans Initiative](#)

- Offers qualified permanent residents the support needed to naturalize, including English-language preparation and study of U.S. civics and history. Also assists young persons who have Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) status.

## [Illinois Welcoming Centers](#)

- Welcoming Centers are found at more than 50 locations statewide and help immigrants connect immigrants to essential resources and understand their responsibilities, rights and opportunities.

## [Access to Justice](#)

- Provides legal services such as case management, legal literacy and education, and legal counsel and representation to immigrants on immigration issues via a network of non-profit organizations.

There are numerous other programs and policies such as access to driver's licenses, to higher education, to healthcare and to linguistically and culturally accessible services. These programs and policies are described in detail in the 2023 report of the Illinois Immigrant Impact Task Force.

## *Conclusion: Preparing for Future Challenges*

The landscape of immigrant policy and programming faces significant and growing challenges. The U.S. Department of Justice has initiated lawsuits and investigations involving states and municipalities with immigrant-supportive policies. The federal government is slowing the processing of applications at U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, implementing travel bans, and actively dismantling longstanding refugee and humanitarian immigrant-serving programs and pathways. At the same time, families are experiencing the devastating effects of expanded enforcement action and family separation. Together, these conditions contribute to widespread misinformation, instability, and fear within our immigrant communities.

Illinoisans of all backgrounds continue to stand up and with our immigrant neighbors, from local neighborhood rapid response teams and mutual aid efforts, to bold legislative action and statewide Know Your Rights and legal service programs. It has taken action at every level of government in Illinois to confront this moment, as well as responses from the private sector and from community members across the State. Our far-reaching response to the crises of today is made possible by decades of investment, advocacy, and organizing to strengthen our immigrant-serving ecosystem and remain committed to our welcoming values here in Illinois. The Governor's Office of New Americans will continue to lead coordinated efforts across State government to strengthen communication with immigrant communities, expand access to services, and develop responsive strategies that support immigrant families. Through these efforts, Illinois remains committed to promoting stability, inclusion, and opportunity for New Americans now and in the years ahead.

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February, 2026