

Immigration Messaging Brief



The Colorado
Health Foundation™

This brief helps you talk to people who aren't sure about supporting your cause. It offers tips on how to frame your message so it resonates with them and makes them more likely to help. Think of it as a toolbox of ideas, not a complete instruction manual. It's based on what we already know about effective communication. If you want a more in-depth look at crafting your message, check out the [“Heartwired Strategy Guide”](#).

Purpose

- Build familiarity and common ground with people who are immigrants
- Create a broader “we”
- Calm concerns and increase support
- Create the vision for a better future

Messaging Principles

- Lead with shared values
 - » Make a human connection with emotions and lived experience before diving into legal arguments
- Know your audience
 - » Local dynamics matter
 - » Focus messaging on those who can be moved toward your position—our supporters are already with us.
 - » Not everyone is moveable and that's okay - most people are
 - » Recognize that many individuals don't have a personal relationship with someone who is undocumented
 - » Avoid acronyms or jargon
- Center your vision and outcomes
 - » Do not repeat false information—even to refute it. Repeating misinformation only reinforces the messages behind the false information
 - » Highlight assets and solutions over deficits and problems. Our communities are strong, resilient and resourceful – tell that story
 - » Paint a clear picture of the future you envision
- Meet emotions with emotions first, then follow with facts and information

Current Common Narratives

- Misinformation and disinformation about immigrants and the immigration system
 - » Flawed understanding of the immigration system
 - Perception that the immigration process is simple and straightforward
 - Assumption that individuals without legal documents entered the U.S. illegally
 - Belief that remaining undocumented is a choice
- The “good immigrant” vs. “bad immigrant” narrative
 - » Immigration is often wrongly linked to crime because of the term illegal. Immigrants are unfairly portrayed as dangerous
 - Belief that immigrants from some countries (mostly Global North) are valuable while immigrants from other countries (mostly Global South) are dangerous
- The scarcity mindset
 - » Us vs. Them thinking
 - » The belief that when one group gains rights or resources, another loses.
 - » Many people, including U.S. citizens, have unmet needs, leading to the perception that immigrants receive housing, civil rights, jobs, healthcare, or education at the expense of others.
 - » Fear that immigrants are a drain on resources.
- Distrust of government and institutions to enact necessary change

Change the Narrative: Show Don't Tell

- Show how immigrants are part of our shared community
 - » Our friends, neighbors, coworkers, families, etc.
- Show misunderstandings of the immigration system
 - » Share stories rather than just listing facts
 - » Name and acknowledge the complexity of the immigration system
 - » Talk about your own journey in understanding the complexity of the immigration system
- Show how this issue is local
 - » Take the conversation out of the partisan, polarized and political context
 - » Focus on how the inclusion of immigrants positively impacts your community
- Show concrete, actionable steps
 - » Avoid leading with harms and discriminations
 - » Offer a spectrum of ways people can participate in creating change

Common Shared Values

- Family values
- Do no harm
- Fairness
- Community care
- Liberty and freedom
- Faith

Sample Messages

- The U.S. is a nation of values, founded on the ideal that all are created equal. Any order that violates a person's right to due process and equal treatment violates our constitution and cannot stand. Everyone means everyone, no exceptions. This is why we must [call to action].
- People move to create a better future for themselves and their families. Our neighbors who are immigrants came here for the promise of freedom and opportunity. Any order that strips away their right to remain and contribute to our communities erodes the freedom we all cherish. That's why we must [call to action].
- Most of us believe that family comes first. But today, certain lawmakers want to forcibly separate parents from children, grandparents from grandkids, and siblings from each other. Any action that tears our families apart threatens our nation. In opposing this executive order, we reaffirm that "family values" means keeping families together and honoring the contributions our immigrant neighbors make to our country and community. That's why we must [call to action].

Acknowledgements:

- [Center for Community Change's Messaging this Moment: A Handbook for Progressive Communicators](#)
- The Ultimate Messaging Guide to Winning the Immigration Narrative

About The Colorado Health Foundation:

The Colorado Health Foundation is bringing health in reach for all Coloradans by engaging closely with communities across the state through investing, policy and advocacy, learning and capacity building. For more information, please visit www.coloradohealth.org.



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