

5-Minute Briefing ...

*A periodic issues briefing on healthcare's hottest topics
from the New Jersey Hospital Association*

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Undocumented Immigrants

An analysis by the Pew Hispanic Center of recent U.S. Census figures shows about 6.2 percent of New Jersey's population is made up of illegal immigrants.

With an estimated 550,000 illegal immigrants, New Jersey ranks fifth among the states with the largest illegal immigrant populations, behind California, New York, Florida and Texas.

While New Jersey's undocumented population is fifth highest in total numbers, the Garden State ranks fourth in terms of the percent of undocumented immigrants in relation to the state's overall population. Roughly 6.2 percent of the state's population is comprised of undocumented immigrants. Nevada, California and Texas have larger shares, while the national average is 3.7 percent, the report stated.

The Pew study also finds New Jersey third among the states with the largest share of illegal immigrants in the work force, behind Texas and California, with illegal immigrants constituting about 8.6 percent of the Garden State's work force. Immigrants represent a higher percentage of working age people than the general population, the study said.

Nationally, about 350,000 newborns born between March 2009 and March 2010 had at least one unauthorized parent. These newborns represented 8 percent of all births during this period, the same share as for the previous year. Unauthorized immigrants represent about 4 percent of the U.S. population but are relatively young and have high birthrates, which is why their newborns make up a higher share of all births.

What does this mean in terms of healthcare? For New Jersey, the most obvious impact is that this population of 550,000 is uninsured; these individuals rely on charity care when they visit any of New Jersey's hospitals. State law requires that N.J. hospitals provide any medical care necessary for these patients. Using the costs of caring for Medicaid patients as a proxy, NJHA's Health Economics department has estimated that the cost of caring for undocumented immigrants reaches about \$625 million per year.

As healthcare reform proceeds with insurance exchanges and the expansion of Medicaid, it's important to understand that undocumented immigrants will not be covered under any of these initiatives. Hospitals will continue to bear the cost of providing healthcare to this population.

MICRO-UPDATE

- *New Jersey is home to 550,000 undocumented immigrants.*
- *New Jersey ranks fifth in the country with the largest unauthorized immigrant population.*
- *The cost of hospital care for this population reaches an estimated \$625 million annually in New Jersey.*
- *Undocumented immigrants will not be covered under the Affordable Care Act.*

NJHA is an education and information resource for New Jersey's elected leaders. For more information on this briefing or other healthcare issues, contact NJHA's Randy Minniear at 609-275-4119 or Jessica Cohen at 609-275-4192.