



Berkshire Immigrant Center
A Program of Berkshire Community Action Council
88 South Street, Pittsfield, MA 01201
Tel: (413) 445-4881, Fax: (413) 445-4802
Email: info@berkshireic.com

Outreach 101- How to Reach the Immigrant Population and Others

Outreach- Reaching out to immigrants is just good outreach in general. I started this position as the outreach coordinator and for the first 6 month at the immigrant center I called every social service in the United Way Human Resources Handbook and set up dates to leave materials, talk about my program and learn more from theirs.

Immigrants are just members of our communities who happen to be foreign born and as such come from many different countries around the world, all walks of life, backgrounds, educational levels, socio-economic statuses and religions and live in ALL pockets of the county.

I have tried to broadly generalize what I see as useful for outreach to immigrant populations and difficult to reach pockets of the community. As many of you might see this as what my biology teacher called the “shotgun approach.” Use what is helpful to you and leave the rest.

Good General Tips:

Outreach in different languages... I wish I had a tee shirt saying this.... You cannot underestimate how many clients you are missing who are LEP if you do not. If you build it they will come though so please have a plan for what happens when they call or show up needing more information about your services. Finding bilingual workers and getting competent translation is an entirely separate workshop so I digress.

You might not have to translate information into all languages right now... The top language in the Berkshires is Spanish. Other popular languages are Portuguese, French and Russian. Although we will find interpreters if necessary, most of our materials are translated into Spanish only and then done later on a “as needed” basis. Find out who’s in your area and the top languages spoken- take it one step at a time. Don’t let the perfect be the enemy of the good or being overwhelmed keep your agency from taking ANY action around this!

The immigrant community can be tightly knit- reaching some will help spread your message by word of mouth.

Use email lists run by other providers to reach social service providers and clients. Ask other agencies to spread the word about your services.

Ask current immigrant clients and other social services for suggestions on how they would outreach.

Advertise your services in other languages. This is so important that it bears repeating!

Visit organizations that specialize in working with immigrants or ones that are particularly adept at providing services to them- ask to post flyers, have your info distributed by their email lists, and if you can give talks to their clients or table at their activities:

Tap into organizations working with access to health care issues. They have walked this path before and can tell you how they got started etc.

Contact community based orgs that help newcomers and those who may struggle financially.

Visit immigrant owned and operated businesses like ethnic restaurants, (especially those owned by immigrants.)

Visit businesses immigrants might frequent like: Grocery stores, Laundromats etc. Stores with good deals like dollars stores, Walmart, Target, TJ Maxx etc. (Immigrants, like anyone else, like a good deal!) This is especially important as they are often supporting a family here and abroad while trying to save for their American dreams which may include property ownership here and/or abroad.)

Post with Employers; Large employers, employment agencies and larger employers of immigrants. Talk to HR people about where you could post ie in employees' break rooms etc.

Reach out to Colleges: many have immigrant students, (meaning they immigrated and are not here on a student visa) as well as a larger international student population, (who are here on student visas). At other colleges talk to the International Student Coordinators. Our local colleges also employ many foreign born in a variety of jobs.

Work with Childrens' and Family Organizations as well as Schools:

Talk to tutors and ESOL coordinators. Can you reach out to parents by attending their meetings and/or sending something home in backpacks etc.?

Outreach at Hospitals: Ask if there is a place to post visible to visitors as well as staff. Also you can contact medical interpreting courses and medical interpreting coordinators who may have additional ideas.

Attend, Table and Sponsor major and minor events benefiting the immigrant community, (or other events known to attract large crowds.)

Talk to affordable housing advocates.

Visit anywhere money orders are sold. Many immigrants support families here as well as abroad.

Try Multicultural Entertainment Sites: Bars with Latin theme nights, parties with African or other themes, concerts, etc.

Take out a bilingual ads or reach out to local ethnic media (radio, TV, blogs and print)

Work with the faith based community: Talk to them about how to reach their congregation, leaving flyers to be distributed at services etc.

Post with legal assistance organizations.

Talk with or email your message to the leaders of the immigrant communities. Keep in mind that being a community leader is not a paid position and a small group of people are repeatedly asked to speak/give their time etc.

Hang things near public transportation sites like bus stations/stops etc.

Advertise at libraries.

Work VERY closely with ESOL/Adult Basic Education services. They are often the front lines for newcomers and can give great advice in addition to often helping your outreach efforts.
