

Tackling Enrollment Barriers

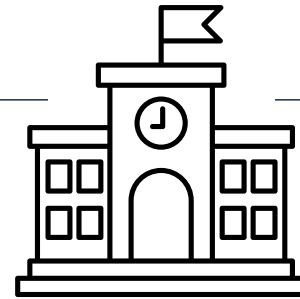
All children in the United States have the right to an education, regardless of immigration status. Nevertheless, children of immigrants, especially newcomer students, still encounter significant barriers to public school enrollment.

By all accounts, enrollment barriers may appear to be straightforward issues to address. Yet, these issues can quickly become overwhelming obstacles for parents. That is especially so when stakeholders fail to work collaboratively. Our engagement with local service providers in the greater Houston area on the topic reveals that partners strongly believe successful school enrollment should be a shared responsibility amongst all school and district level staff.

Moreover, comprehensive training ensures all staff are equipped to engage with and assist families effectively. Spring ISD addresses these growing needs by training every district employee to recognize and address the real barriers that students and their families face. Similarly, Alief ISD has introduced resource fairs, ESL classes for parents, and connections to faith communities. These strategies proactively address family needs, significantly improving the chances of students' academic success and access to education.



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- **55%** of students served experienced enrollment barriers.
- **52%** of students served lacked proper documentation.
- **42%** found a language barrier as the top barriers to enrollment.

Findings from community engagement of service providers in the Greater Houston Area who work closely with immigrant families.

Enrollment barriers disproportionately affect immigrant families due to:

- Language barriers and lack of multilingual staff.
- Insufficient all-staff awareness of immigrant family challenges, leading to disengagement.
- Complex registration requirements and lack of streamlined processes.
- Distrust of systems due to immigration status or trauma.

Best Practices:

- **Spring ISD:** Addresses enrollment barriers by training all staff to recognize and mitigate challenges faced by immigrant families.
- **Pflugerville ISD:** Offers ESL academies for educators to improve outreach and communication with immigrant families.
- **Alief ISD:** Hosts resource fairs and ESL classes for parents, the goal is to build trust and simplify the enrollment process.