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A Content Analysis Of U.S. Sanctuary Immigration Policies: Implications For Research In Social Determinants Of Health

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Restrictive immigration policies are important social determinants of health, but less is known about the health implications and health-related content of protective immigration policies, which may also represent critical determinants of health. We conducted a content analysis of types, themes, and health-related language in 328 "sanctuary" policies enacted between 2009 and 2017 in the United States. Sanctuary policies were introduced in thirty-two states and Washington, D.C., most frequently in 2014 and 2017. More than two-thirds of policies (67.6 percent) contained language related to health, including direct references to access to services. Health-related themes commonly co-occurred with language related to supporting immigrants in communities, including themes of antidiscrimination, inclusion, trust, and privacy. Our work provides foundational, nuanced data about the scope and nature of sanctuary policies that can inform future research exploring the impacts of these policies on health and health care.

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Authors: Ortiz R, Farrell-Bryan D, Gutierrez G, Boen C, Tam V, Yun K, Venkataramani A, Montoya-Williams D

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