

A SPECTRUM OF EMPOWERMENT:

Services & Supports for Immigrants with Neurodevelopmental Disabilities

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How do immigrants view and interact with the state?

Before the law: The law is happening to you, but you cannot happen to it. The law feels authoritative and distant. You feel powerless over it and may be hyper-aware of it.

Example: You are an undocumented young person with ID/D who escaped your home country due to family violence, and who faces threat of deportation in the US. You qualify for Medicaid until you turn 19, when you age out of state coverage for your healthcare. You qualify for Specialized Child Health Services until age 21. You are waiting for your asylum application to be approved, so that you can have a pathway to immigration and a continuity of care. You receive social services from an immigrant rights agency but know their resources are limited. If your asylum application is not approved, you will be deported. You are experiencing **liminal legality**.

With the law: You can draw on resources and human capital to interact with the law. You do not vilify it. You may benefit from it, and recognize how to navigate its constraints.

Example: You are a refugee family resettling in the US after fleeing war in your home country. The first several months of your resettlement are challenging, but you have a refugee resettlement agency to locate your housing and employment. You can utilize Refugee Cash Assistance, Medicaid, and SNAP for your basic needs, and without the repercussion of a public charge. Within a year of your resettlement in the US, you can apply for a green card.

Against the law: You utilize resources for acts of advocacy and resistance, either against the law or to subvert the harm that the law can cause. You have an active approach to the law, and activate personal agency to shape its practice.

Example: You are a person of any immigration status. You wield **legal consciousness** of your unique positionality (as undocumented, refugee, asylee, work visa holder, student visa holder, legal permanent resident, citizen, or other) and a cultural humility toward others' to affect change. You might engage in a policy coalition, action/protest, neighborhood committee, interprofessional collaboration, or simply, a conversation.

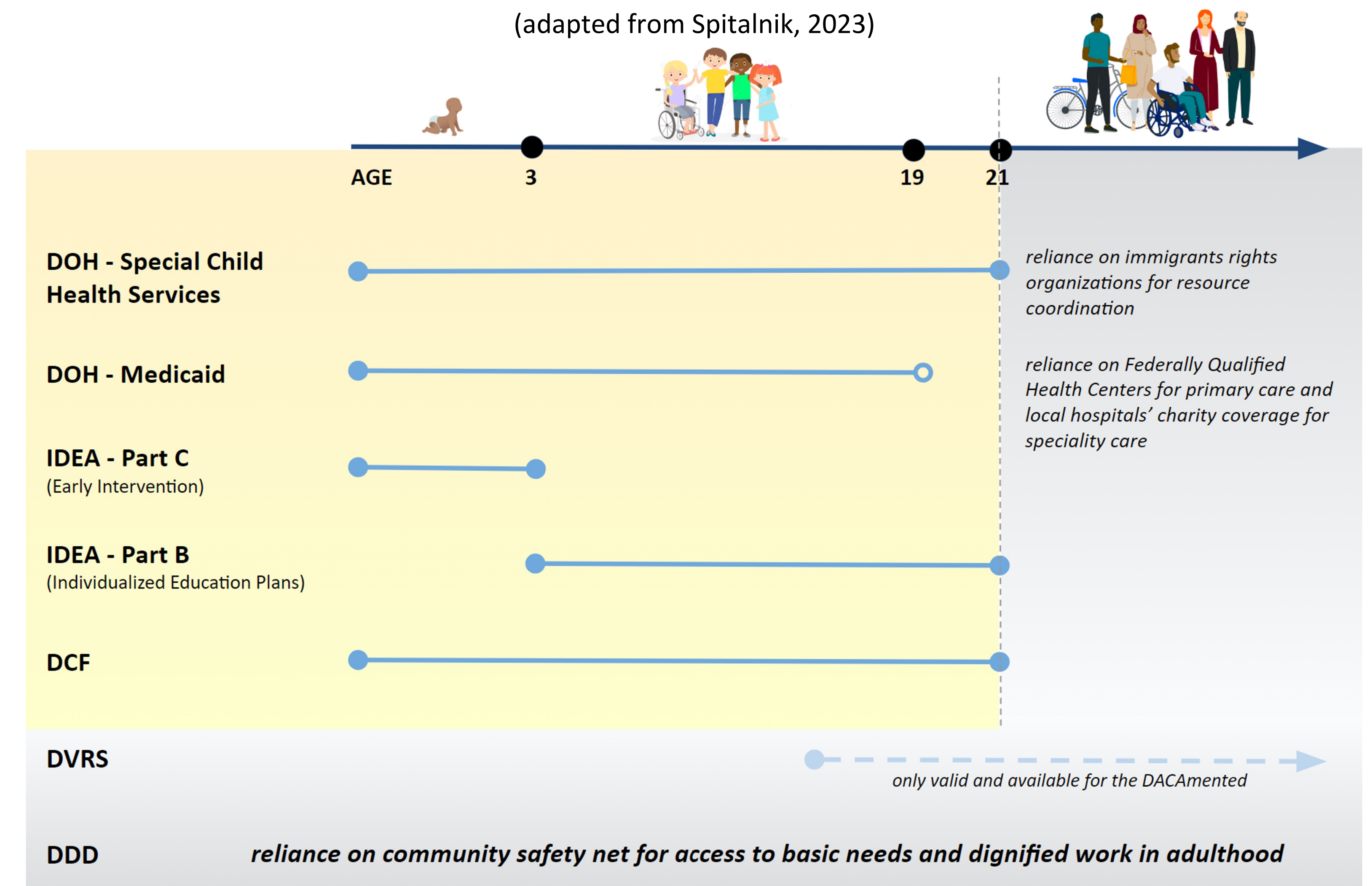


How does the state interact with immigrants?

Access to citizenship operates within tiers of deservingness (i.e. age categorization, severity and nature of trauma history, or education and skill set) translated through the immigration policy stance of different presidential administrations.

Safety net for undocumented individuals with ID/D across the life course

(adapted from Spitalnik, 2023)



References

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