

FAQ: Senate Bill 81 (Arreguín): Safe Spaces in Health Care

OVERVIEW

On September 20, 2025, California Governor Gavin Newsom signed Senate Bill (SB) 81 (Arreguín) into law, **ensuring that healthcare spaces — including hospitals, clinics, health centers, and other facilities — are safe from unlawful immigration enforcement actions.** The law is effective immediately, with a 45-day deadline for health facilities to comply. The California Immigrant Policy Center (CIPC), California Nurses Association (CNA), Latino Coalition for a Healthy California (LCHC), and Service Employees International Union (SEIU) co-sponsored SB 81.

Which Health Facilities Does SB 81 Cover?

Facilities Covered by SB 81	Facilities Not Covered by SB 81
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Hospitals¹ ✓ Clinics² ✓ Surgery Centers³ ✓ Urgent Care Centers⁴ ✓ Skilled Nursing Facilities⁵ ✓ Psychiatric Health Facilities⁶ ✓ Doctor Offices / Medical Groups⁷ ✓ Student Health Centers at Public Colleges⁸ ✓ Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCS)⁹ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Military Hospitals ✗ Veteran Affairs (VA) Hospitals & Clinics ✗ Faith-based recovery programs without clinicians ✗ Alternative Medicine Centers (unlicensed providers) ✗ Native American (Indian) Health Facilities (federally operated) ✗ Mobile Health Units / Vans (if independently run and unlicensed) ✗ Retail pharmacies ✗ Telehealth providers out of state without presence in California ✗ Wellness Centers, Gyms, Spas

¹ Section [1250](#) of the Health & Safety Code

² Sections [1200](#), [1200.1](#), [1204](#), [1206](#) of the Health & Safety Code

³ Section [127500.2](#) of the Health & Safety Code

⁴ Sections [1200](#), [1204](#), [1206](#) of the Health & Safety Code

⁵ Section [1250](#) of the Health & Safety Code

⁶ Section [1250](#) of the Health & Safety Code

⁷ Section [127500.2](#) of the Health & Safety Code

⁸ Section [1206](#) of the Health & Safety Code

⁹ Sections [1204](#), [1206](#), [127500.2](#) of the Health & Safety Code

FAQ: Senate Bill 81 (Arreguín): Safe Spaces in Health Care

What does SB 81 do?

Scope	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✔ Strengthens patient protections and privacy from unlawful immigration enforcement actions at health care facilities.
Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 🏠 Prohibits health care providers from granting access to non-public areas of health care facilities for immigration enforcement – unless required by a valid judicial warrant or court order.
Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 💻 Prohibits health care entities from disclosing people’s medical records and immigration status or place of birth or information for immigration enforcement purposes – unless required by a valid judicial warrant or court order.
Protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 📝 Requires health care entities to establish policies and procedures for monitoring, documenting, and verifying any requests to access the health care facility, a patient, or a patient’s medical information for immigration enforcement purposes.
Safe Spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✔ Requires health care entities to designate areas as “non-public” where patients are receiving treatment or care and discussing protected health information, and to designate these areas through mapping, signage, key entry, and/or policy.

FAQ: Senate Bill 81 (Arreguín): Safe Spaces in Health Care

What does SB 81 NOT do?

- ❌ SB 81 does NOT prohibit immigration enforcement actions in any public* areas of health care facilities, such as lobby areas or parking lots. State laws cannot prohibit federal agents from making immigration arrests or raids in public areas or public streets.
 - *Note that health facilities can designate areas such as lobbies and waiting rooms as private through visible signage and restrictions on entry, such as a buzzer system or security personnel that confirms appointments upon entry. Adopting these practices would turn previously public areas into private areas that require immigration enforcement showing valid documents before entering.
- 🚫 SB 81 does NOT prohibit federal agents, or law enforcement agents, from entering non-public areas of health care facilities to receive care for themselves or someone in their custody. However, Health Insurance Portability and Accountability (HIPAA) rules regarding the privacy of medical information still apply to people in custody.
 - Note that health facilities can adopt additional protective policies for people in immigration custody. CIPC has a model policy that addresses this issue and will share it upon request.

How Will SB 81 Be Implemented and Enforced?

- The new law applies to all health care entities that receive public funding, and they are required to comply with these new policies by **November 4th, 2025**.
- SB 81 requires health care entities to **inform health care staff on how to respond to immigration enforcement-related requests**.

FAQ: Senate Bill 81 (Arreguín): Safe Spaces in Health Care

How Will SB 81 Be Implemented and Enforced? (Continued)

- SB 81 requires health care entities to **designate an administrator or legal counsel to verify a judicial warrant** if presented by federal law enforcement agencies.
- To ensure that health facilities comply with SB 81, the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) will review health facilities' immigration policies and procedures as part of its responsibility in licensing and regulating health care facilities.
- Advocates are tracking instances of ICE presence at health facilities as well as the overall implementation of SB 81. To report ICE presence or a failure to comply with SB 81, contact info@caimmigrant.org.

Why Is SB 81 (Arreguín) Necessary?

Everyone deserves to safely access health care without fear of being racially profiled, arrested, surveilled, or deported by our federal government.

On the first day of the Trump administration, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) rescinded its [“Sensitive Locations” Memo](#), which was an internal policy that restricted immigration enforcement at hospitals, schools, and places of worship. As a result, there have been cases of masked federal agents entering or seeking to enter health facilities across California without a valid judicial warrant.

The presence of federal law enforcement agencies in public spaces, at work sites, and in sensitive locations, such as hospitals or clinics, incites widespread fear and deters people from seeking medical care due to the potential of immigration raids and arrests. **SB 81 encourages people in California to safely access health care without fear of immigration arrests.**

FAQ: Senate Bill 81 (Arreguín): Safe Spaces in Health Care

Isn't California a "Sanctuary" State?

In 2017, California passed Senate Bill 54 (De Leon), the California Values Act, or the state's "sanctuary law," which took effect on January 1, 2018. As described below, SB 54 led to model policies regarding immigration enforcement at health facilities but did not require that hospitals put into place SB 81's specific protocols.

SB 54 (2017)	SB 81 (2025)
<p>Limits local and state law enforcement agencies from using local and state resources to assist immigration enforcement.</p> <p>Requires the California Attorney General to publish "model policies" limiting assistance with immigration enforcement at healthcare facilities operated by the State or a state government entity.</p> <p>Requires public health care facilities to adopt and implement "model policies" to limit participation with immigration enforcement.</p>	<p>Prohibits immigration enforcement actions at health care facilities unless required by a valid judicial warrant or court order.</p> <p>Puts Attorney General's policy guidance into law, including prohibiting the sharing of patient's immigration information and restricting access to non-public areas of health care facilities.</p> <p>Requires health care entities that receive public funding to adopt specific policies in response to immigration enforcement, including requiring a valid judicial warrant from immigration agents before they enter or attempt to interrogate or arrest anyone.</p>

FAQ: Senate Bill 81 (Arreguín): Safe Spaces in Health Care

Where Can I Find More Information?

You can visit California Immigrant Policy Center's website (caimmigrant.org), where we will post updated information and community materials. We are working with health facilities to develop policies and implement SB 81. You can contact us at info@caimmigrant.org if you would like to receive a copy of our model policy or would like us to provide a training to health care staff.