

Please SUPPORT SB21-XXX: Colorado Necessary Documents Program Renewal

House Prime Sponsors: Rep. Daneya Esgar

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What do Coloradans need identification documents (IDs) for?

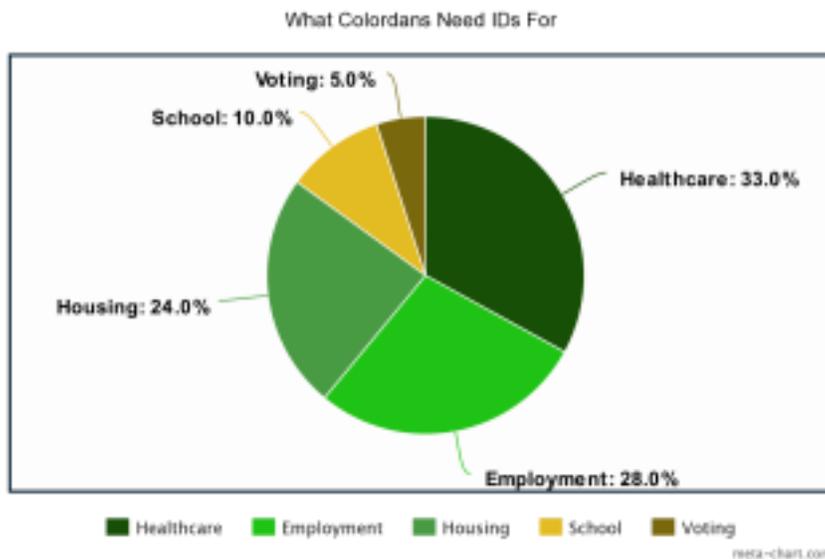
Coloradans need identification documents for many reasons, and generally need several documents proving name, age, identity, and citizenship in order to get a Colorado-issued identification card. Without an identification card, Colorado residents cannot open bank accounts, cash a check, pick up a prescription, board a plane, or access health care, housing, employment, and public benefits.

Who needs help replacing these important documents?

We need our birth certificates and social security cards to demonstrate that we have married or divorced, or that we changed our name. We need drivers' licenses to operate cars and trucks. Colorado residents who have lost their documents due to floods, fires, and other natural disasters; domestic violence victims who have had to leave documents behind when fleeing their homes; seniors who may not ever have been issued a birth certificate because they were born at home; and people who have had their documents stolen, are examples of those who need help replacing their important documents. People who are experiencing homelessness often lose their IDs or are robbed. People seeking a second chance after leaving jail or prison often do not have the necessary documents for an ID.

Why is a voucher program needed?

It takes time and money to secure these documents, and many must be ordered from other states. It costs an average of \$50 a person to get all the documents together necessary to apply, and for low-income people, \$50 is prohibitively expensive and ultimately a barrier to replacing their documents.



What does the current program look like?

Twenty-six organizations statewide have agreed to host the Colorado ID Project. Since initiating the Colorado ID Project grant, **36,159** vouchers have been distributed to participants through **July 2020**. Based on the current growth rate and continued expansion of the program to strategic locations, Metro Caring, the lead agency for the Colorado ID Project, projects to exhaust the current funding of \$25,000 a month, which equates to \$300,000 a year.

Why is more funding needed?

Coloradans are being turned away for vouchers because the supply runs out each month. There isn't enough funding to meet

the current need, which is only expected to grow as we continue to recover from this health and economic pandemic. Last fiscal year, July 2019 - June 2020, we distributed a total of 9,121 vouchers across the state. Metro Caring and their partners run out of birth certificate vouchers halfway into each month, meaning Coloradans are not able to secure needed copies of their birth certificates. We need to be able to cover more Colorado birth certificates, and at a minimum continue the current program funding from the state of \$300,000/year.

Who has been accessing this program over the last three years?

- One in five are military veterans

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- One in four are disabled
- Two in three are experiencing homelessness
- 51% are male, 47% are female, and 2% are nonbinary or genderqueer
- 38% are white, 29% are Black, 23% are Latinx, 5% are other, 4% are American Indian, and <1% are Asian

Are you supporting undocumented Coloradans with this program?

Ninety percent of people seeking document assistance are U.S. Citizens; the other 10 percent are lawfully present aliens.

Is this really a problem in Colorado?

Yes. Colorado residents who lack a valid state identification card can find themselves marginalized and excluded from essential services and assistance, including access to health care, housing, employment, and public benefits. In addition, residents need a photo ID when opening a bank account, cashing a check, picking up prescriptions, boarding a plane, and even entering some government buildings.

Is this a new expenditure?

No. The bill extends a grants program begun in 2015 that helps low-income Coloradans obtain a Colorado ID. The program, administered by the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment through the Office of Health Disparities, allocates funds to non-profit organizations familiar with and experienced in helping people to secure IDs. The funds will continue to be used to assist with fees associated with retrieving birth certificates, divorce and marriage decrees, name change documents, and other documents necessary to secure replacement social security cards and an ID in Colorado.



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