



# Washtenaw ID Project

By Lindsay Charlie Brink



In our society, an identity card is crucial to daily activities: proving identity at the doctor's office or pharmacy, cashing a check, renting an apartment, notarizing documents, getting a library card, proving your identity at your children's school.

Imagine being limited in how you are able to live and interact with your community by a lack of identification. Although it may seem small, having an identification is a statement that I am a person in this community. Without ID, people are pushed to the margins of the community, unable to benefit from or add to the community. Individuals and families that have immigrated, unauthorized, or otherwise are a part of our community and deserve the ability to participate in it fully. A government issued ID can help residents do just that by validating their identity and residency.

### **Why does Washtenaw County want to make life easier for undocumented immigrants?**

Refusing an ID to undocumented immigrants is a violation of their human rights. Not having ID reduces a person's existence to the margins and limits families' ability to provide basic needs for their children. Many people without ID are more likely to be victims of predatory housing and check cashing services and robbery as people are reduced to carrying large sums of money without a bank account.

### **Myths:**

An ID does not allow people to access government benefits or vote or if they are not citizens. It allows

people to prove their identity and prevent further marginalization and victimization of minorities. The lack of ID impacts more people than just immigrants. Minorities, the elderly, and young impoverished adults are the least likely American legal residents to have an ID. Residents often do not have identification because it requires a birth certificate to get an ID and it requires an ID to get a birth certificate.

The Washtenaw ID Project is a collaboration between the Washtenaw County government and Synod Community Services creating the ID Task Force. Synod has provided an ID support clinic that assist people in getting an ID and conducting outreach to raise awareness about the ID card. If you are working with a client that could use an ID, assistance is always available.

### **How you can be involved:**

In order for the ID card to be accepted as a legitimate ID without question, legal permanent residents must also obtain and use the ID card in large numbers. Without the critical mass of legal permanent residents using the ID card, it is likely that residents who are undocumented would be stigmatized and/or targeted.

- Get an ID for \$25
- Use that ID all over town and insist vendors accept it
- Refer clients to the County Clerk's office to get an ID
- Reach out to businesses and banks to accept the ID as a valid form of ID for their services.

### **For more information go to:**

<http://www.washtenawid.com/home/>

**Or follow them on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/IDiskey/>**

