Tips for Safeguarding Data

In order to provide a safe and welcoming environment for immigrants who visit our programs, it is best to avoid asking invasive questions and collecting unnecessary personal information. It can sometimes make it easier for staff or volunteers to enter information into a database to simply ask for various pieces of ID, but we should be thoughtful about imposing additional requirements. We should always strive to create the lowest barrier possible for the participant rather than what is most convenient for us. As we determine what practices we would like to implement at our programs, we should be sure to remember the following:

- Double check your reporting requirements to ensure you are not collecting unnecessary information
- In the case of federal funding sources, questions relating to immigration, refugee status, race, and ethnicity are almost always optional. Participants can be reminded that they are not required to provide this information to receive services
- ID is not required to benefit from TEFAP or EFAP. All that is required is a date, name, signature, and a self-identified address
  - Programs should allow participants to use any address, even if they suspect it is made-up
- Ensure you are taking steps to keep the information you do collect secure, and do not share it except when required by law
- If an enforcement official ever arrives with a subpoena, demanding that you share your records, it is important to understand that this is not the same thing as a search warrant
  - The subpoena should be signed by a judge, give you a time frame and instructions describing how you are supposed to comply, and does not give agents the right to enter your property and retrieve records immediately