

Toolkit for Faith Communities to Accompany People Seeking Asylum

This toolkit is designed as a resource to faith communities within the interior of the United States to accompany asylum seekers in their journey to find safety and support in the U.S.

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1. THEOLOGICAL GROUNDING FOR ACCOMPANIMENT WORK AND FRAMING OF THE TOOLKIT

Faith communities in the U.S. have a long history of solidarity with asylum seekers and advocating for the rights of refugees. Many of the national faith-based organizations were born out of a deeply rooted faith teaching to love our neighbor and welcome immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers. The models for how we support and accompany refugees and asylum seekers has evolved over the decades, but the commitment remains the same -- to welcome our neighbors and love them as ourselves, especially those who are made vulnerable or marginalized by violence or policies in their home countries.

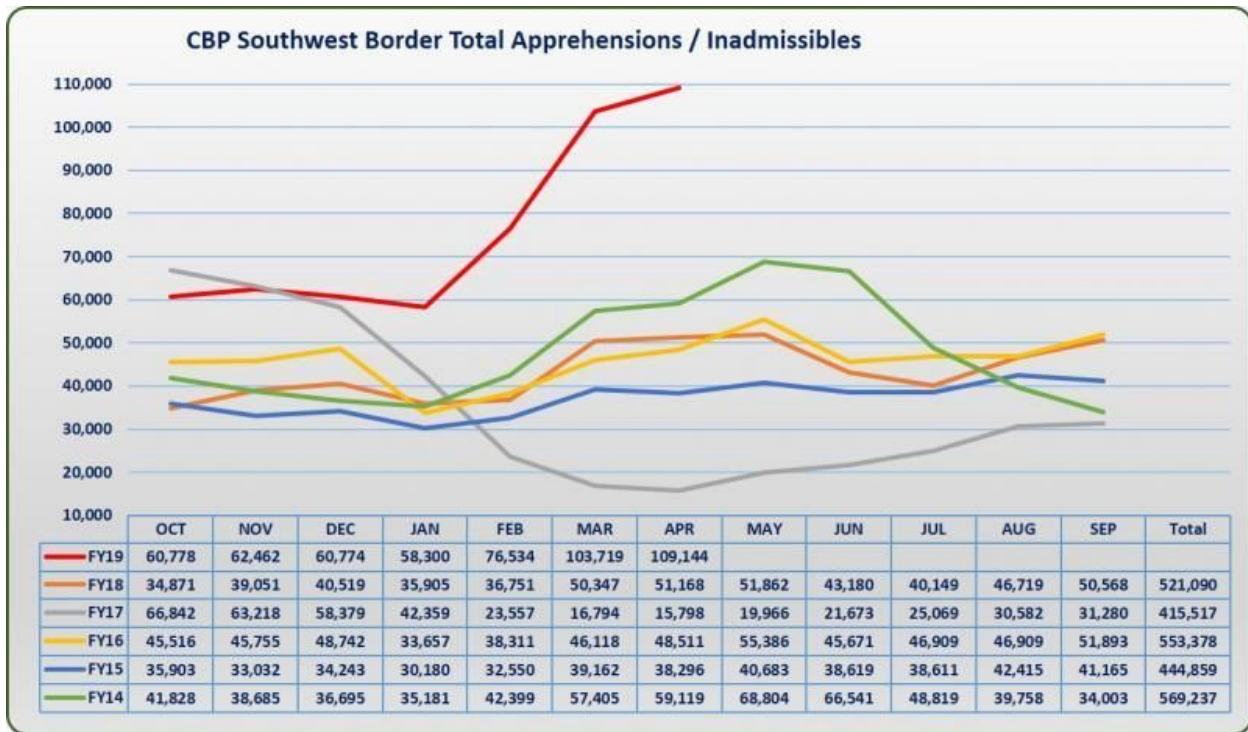
The U.S. and international asylum laws are built upon these same values. Asylum seekers have the legal right to seek protection from persecution and violence under U.S. and international law and should not be detained for seeking refuge. And it is the government's duty to ensure that there is meaningful access to the asylum process. As the number of asylum seekers has grown at the U.S.-Mexico border, instead of developing pro-active mechanisms to ensure an orderly asylum process, the U.S. government has instead implemented policies that seek to inhibit or deter people from seeking asylum, such as:

- Separation of families, including young children from their parents
- Closing of the border ports of entry to asylum seekers or limiting processing
- Criminalizing those who have presented themselves for asylum by crossing the border in between ports of entry
- Sub-standard detention conditions at border stations
- Releasing people from detention into unsafe situations without any resources
- "Remain in Mexico Policy," which deports people to Mexico while they wait for their asylum case to be heard in immigration court
- Asylum Ban
- Safe third country agreement with Guatemala

Please see Interfaith Immigration Coalition website for updated statements from national faith organizations: <http://www.interfaithimmigration.org/media/newsroom/>

Many faith communities mobilized with immigrants' rights coalitions such as Families Belong Together to end the "zero-tolerance" prosecution policies that were ripping families apart. As a result, thousands of asylum-seeking families were released, causing a rapid influx with many social agencies and faith communities supporting at the border without enough infrastructure to house, clothe, feed and assist with transportation for those reuniting with family members.

Despite these measures, the number of asylum seekers continues to grow. While US policies focus on the expanding militarization of the border, little is being done to address the root causes that push people to leave their home countries in the first place.



Source: <https://www.cbp.gov/newsroom/stats/sw-border-migration>

Unfortunately, there are [reports](#) that families are still being separated at the border as CBP is deeming some parents "unfit or a danger to their child" simply because they may have a conviction, likely related to an immigration violation. This is why continued advocacy and public action on this issue is still of the utmost importance.

Both faith-based and secular groups all along the Southwest border region are providing immediate humanitarian assistance. They receive asylum seekers from border patrol stations, immigration detention centers or simply left in the streets to fend for themselves. They offer them a warm welcome and provide them with food, clothing, showers, telephone communication with family or friends, travel assistance and other practical guidance.

Many asylum-seeking families are traveling throughout the United States to reunify with family members or friends, but there is often not enough support in their destination locations to help them find legal support and meet their basic needs. In some cases, there may not be a family member with whom to reunite, which means they have no place to go once released from detention. This is why the accompaniment and solidarity work is so important at this moment.

The situation is extremely dynamic due to both changes to U.S. policies about how to treat asylum seekers and the ups and downs in migration patterns. Please refer to the Resource section in the back to know where to find reliable information on the current situation.

2. OVERVIEW OF THE ASYLUM PROCESS AND RECENT CHANGES THAT PUT ASYLUM SEEKERS IN DANGER

Anyone physically in the United States can ask for asylum and will be granted asylum if they demonstrate past persecution or fear of future persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion as long as they are not subject to any bars. When asylum seekers present themselves at a port of entry or to Border Patrol, they are detained and the process for removal begins. While detained, they are asked if they are afraid of returning to their country of origin. If they express fear about returning, they go through what's called a Credible Fear Interview to assess the level of danger they report.

While asylum seekers flee for safety for the same reasons as refugees, the process in which they seek refuge is different. Individuals seeking asylum do so when they arrive in the US, while refugees go through a lengthy application process before arriving in the US.

Upon presenting themselves at a port of entry or to a CBP officer, asylum seekers are viewed as inadmissible and will be taken to temporary holding facilities. While detained, they go through a Credible Fear Interview (CFI). These interviews were formerly completed by USCIS, but in April 2019 this process was changed to CBP completing the CFI.

Once a person seeking asylum has passed a credible fear interview, they may be released from the holding facility to travel to live with their sponsor (usually a family member or friend) or sent to an immigration detention center. They are given "Notice to Appear" documentation that requires them to go to an ICE office or immigration court. If they are being released, their immigration case is scheduled at the court nearest to their destination city. They are allowed to travel freely in the US as long as they continue through the asylum process. They are required to attend all their immigration court hearings and typically are also required to attend regularly scheduled check-ins with the nearest ICE office. They are required to notify the immigration court and the ICE office of any change of address during the court process. (Many are also released with an electronic ankle monitor which can only be taken off by an ICE officer.)

Release by ICE happens in various ways, often through direct connection with one of the nearby humanitarian shelters. A person must file [Form I-589, Application for Asylum and Withholding of Removal](#), with USCIS within one year of their last arrival in the United States (unless that person qualifies for an exception to the one-year filing deadline)¹.

¹ A diagram of the different asylum procedures is included at the end of the document.

As an asylum seeker leaves detention and considers destination locations, they generally go where they have a family or friend. When possible, it is important to consider which regions have friendlier immigration courts for asylum seekers and which do not. See [TRAC research](#) regarding judges' rates of asylum cases granted and denied. Asylum seekers may also consider which locations have immigration legal services providers that can provide free or low-cost attorneys to assist with their asylum case.

A person seeking asylum may include their spouse and children who are in the United States on their application at the time they file or at any time until a final decision is made on their case. To include their child on the application, the child must be under 21 and unmarried.

There has been an increase in asylum seekers traveling from Central America, particularly from Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador. Root causes forcing people to leave their homes include violence (gang, gender-based, kidnapping), corruption, poverty and climate change (in some rural areas). Most asylum seekers traveling from Central America are families that include young children.

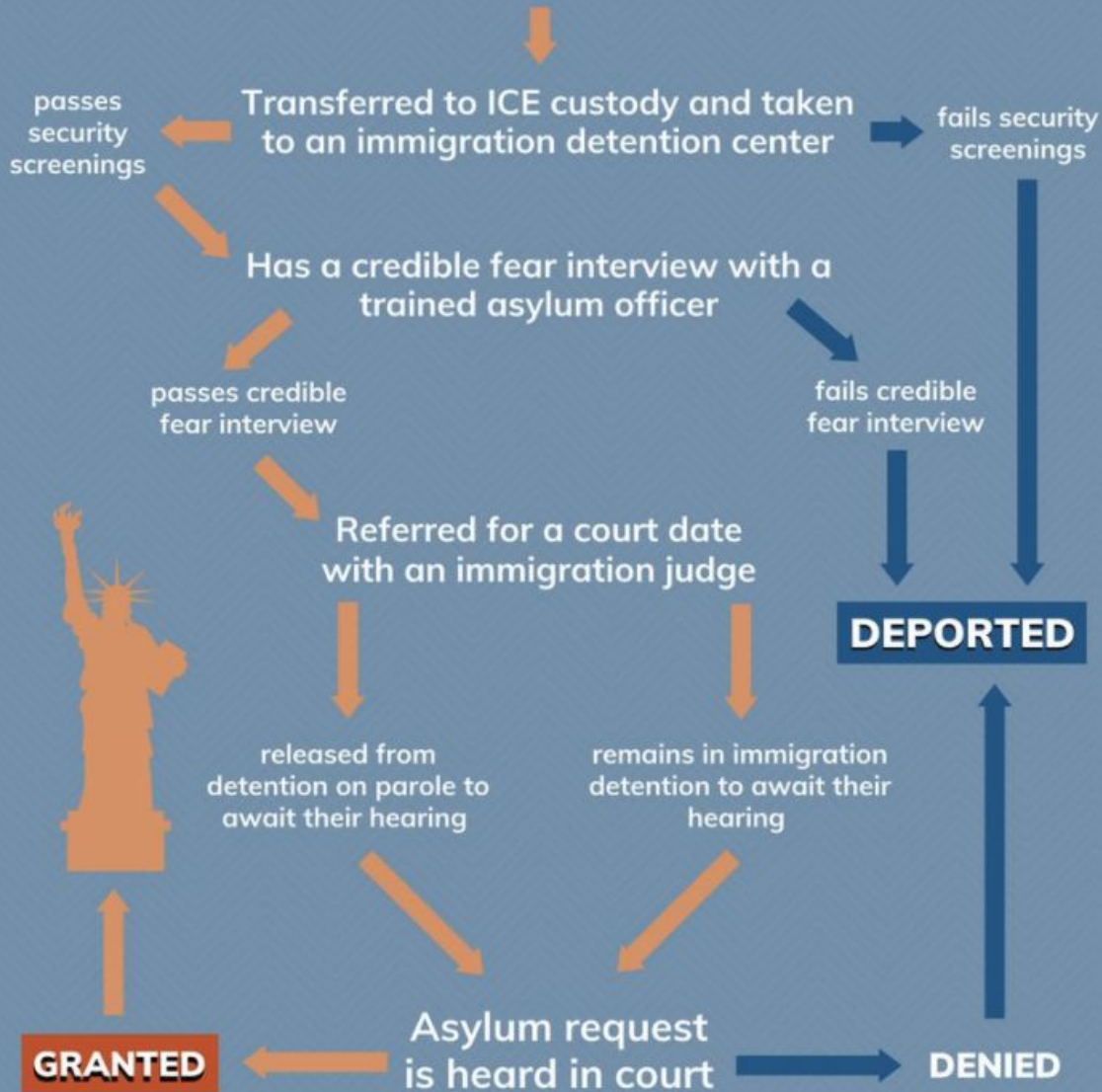
There have been reports that Customs and Border Patrol (CBP) are not following proper protocol on screening asylum seekers. All individuals should be screened, admitted, and offered protection. Their cases should be pursued fairly and humanely. They should be given their legal rights to protection and safety.

Reports of current CBP practices include multiple attempts to block people from seeking safety through asylum. The Trump administration is creating new policies to try to keep asylum seekers out. This includes trying to delay detention of families, detaining people indefinitely, forcing families to stay in Mexico, banning asylum seekers, and attempting to make Guatemala a safe third country which could block claims for those who traveled through Guatemala first.

The Migrant Protection Protocols policy, also known as the "Remain in Mexico Plan," forces certain migrants to stay in Mexico throughout the duration of their US asylum application process. Although an injunction stopped the policy briefly, it has resumed in San Diego and El Paso with plans to bring it to other ports of entry. CBP is selecting certain populations to wait in Mexico. This is not supposed to include people with vulnerable profiles such as pregnant women, but there have been reports that pregnant and other vulnerable groups are in fact being returned through the Remain in Mexico plan. Certain areas of Mexico are not safe for families to stay while seeking asylum, and certain minority groups are especially at risk. People often travel in larger groups or "caravans" to increase their own safety as they travel.

U.S. ASYLUM PROCESS

Fleeing persecution, a person requests asylum at the border from a Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officer



(Source: Human Rights First)

People seeking asylum, especially those facing deportation, have many legal needs. Some may be able to be met by members of a faith community or other organization, as not all tasks must be completed by an attorney. However, all persons seeking asylum should find low-cost or free immigration legal services providers in the area. Legal needs may include:

- Preparing for Credible/Reasonable Fear Interview: Migrants learn how to tell their persecution story in a way that best shows that they meet the requirements for asylum.
- File Requests for Change of Venue: Request for a case to be transferred to the city of final destination. Can be filed pro se (i.e. the (im)migrant files on his/her own behalf).
- File I-589 Asylum Application Pro-Se: Can be filed pro se (i.e. the migrant files on his/her own behalf). It is recommended to first seek legal guidance and assistance with filing (must be less than 1 year after entering the U.S.)
- Employment authorization: In most cases, asylum seekers cannot work when they first arrive and it could take a long time for them to get a work permit. People who have been released on parole are immediately eligible to apply for their Employment Authorization Document (EAD), also referred to as a work permit. Other people seeking asylum are able to apply for their EAD 150 days after their asylum application date. Although eligible to apply for EAD, there is no guarantee of approval. If approved, it can take 3-6 months to receive the EAD.
- Represent in merits hearing: This can only be done by an attorney or fully accredited representative.

Once a person is granted asylum, they are eligible for the following:

- Work authorization (if not already issued)
- Social security card
- Apply for spouse and children to join them in the US
- Permanent Residency (after one year)
- Citizenship (after five years)

If eligible according to income guidelines, they will also be eligible for public assistance benefits including:

- Refugee Cash Assistance or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) if eligible according to income guidelines.
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits if eligible according to income guidelines.
- Medicaid (eight months) if eligible according to income guidelines.

It is important to connect asylees to local refugee resettlement agencies once granted asylum to ensure they can have the opportunity to enroll in additional services, such as applying for public assistance benefits and employment services. Persons granted asylum may also be eligible for additional Office of Refugee Resettlement or privately-funded programs through local refugee resettlement agencies.

Services may include:

- Legal (for status adjustment and family reunification applications)
- Matching Grant (cash alternative to public assistance program)
- Employment readiness and post-employment support
- English language classes
- Youth programs
- Intensive case management programs for additional barriers to integration
- Cultural orientation
- Mental health

Please keep in mind that some programs' eligibility requirements are time-sensitive, so it is important to enroll as quickly as possible once granted asylum. To find a local resettlement agency near you, see Refugee Council USA's comprehensive list [here](#). Even if you do not find a local office in your community, limited services may be available if a person lives within 100 miles of a local office. People who have been granted asylum have the freedom to move anywhere in the US. If they do move to a new location, it is imperative that they update their address with the US Postal Service and with the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) by filing an AR-11 form.

3. DOING THE WORK OF ACCOMPANIMENT

Purpose

The goal of the accompaniment work will be to ensure that asylum seekers can win their cases, adjust status, find work and begin to have a stable life wherein they can support themselves, their families, and participate in the life of their community. All the work that you/your group do in the ministry of accompaniment should be focused on achieving this goal of self-sufficiency and independence.

Accompaniment work can take many forms. As you, your group, or faith community discern whether and how you will engage in the ministry of accompaniment, we offer the following information as an overview to help guide and inform your work. To go deeper on any topic and find additional resources, please refer to the links and footnotes.

What does sponsorship mean?

This is a confusing term because it can have different meanings according to the context. Often, within informal contexts people might use the term "sponsor" as synonymous with accompaniment. If an asylum seeker family has already been released from detention, there is only moral obligation and no legal commitment in the work of "sponsorship" or accompaniment. Sponsorship can have a pejorative and paternalistic tone, which is why this document refers to the work of accompaniment to connote the need for solidarity models in this work.

However, if you are in the process of helping someone get out of detention, there are some formal agreements with ICE/ CBP around formal sponsorship. See Showing up for Racial Justice FAQ ([link](#)) and additional resources for more information. Likewise, if you are sponsoring

a refugee, there are defined set of agreements with the refugee agencies managing the resettlement process.

What is accompaniment?

When we say “accompaniment,” we mean the work of *walking alongside* an asylum seeker or family as they go through the legal process of seeking asylum.

Intake Process

Naturally, lay leaders in the faith community will want to know about the case. It is important to do an intake of the family to assess the situation and understand what the needs are. This will also help your faith community be clear on the capacity to assist. It can also be helpful to know the story of the family making sure to respect parts of the story that might be confidential or traumatic. See [sample intake form here](#).

Developing a Healthy and Just Approach

There are natural power imbalances in the work of accompaniment. For example, asylum seekers may not speak English, may not be literate, and may not understand US systems. Even still, your role is to walk alongside assuring that their voice, opinions, and decisions are respected.

There are many resources that can guide and inform your thinking as you engage in the work of discernment and learning through this process.

Build Partnerships

If your group/faith community hasn't accompanied members of the immigrant community in the past, it will first be important to educate your faith community and develop a leadership team or working group who can engage with other immigrants' rights groups, faith communities, legal service providers or Sanctuary Movement networks in your region before hosting an asylum seeker.[2]

The Work & Volunteer Roles

Accompaniment can entail any or all of these areas of work:

- Legal Services
- Housing
- Clothing, Food, Material Needs
- Language/Interpretation
- Medical and Mental Health
- Education
- Social/Spiritual Needs
- Community Activity
- Job Placement

Volunteer roles and committees can be structured around these areas.

Description of Volunteer/Committee Roles and Tasks

Legal Services & Support: People seeking asylum or facing deportation have many legal needs. All persons seeking asylum should find a low-cost or free immigration attorney. These can be found through non-profit legal services providers in the area. Asylum seekers should avoid businesses where people who are not attorneys offer legal advice (sometimes called “notarios” in Spanish). Some of their legal needs may be met by the asylum seeker and accompaniment team, as not all tasks must be completed by an attorney. This volunteer committee supports the asylum-seeker as he/she works with an attorney and goes through the legal process. This may include accompanying the asylum seeker to court appointments, ICE check-ins, preparation for the Credible Fear Interview, filing requests for change of venue, assisting in filing the Employment Authorization Document, filing the asylum application, etc.²

Housing: Asylum-seekers will need housing while they go through the legal process. The housing volunteer committee would secure long-term transitional housing (housing for a few weeks to more than six months). The committee should be mindful of the group’s/faith community’s capacity (e.g. how long can you afford to pay rent? Or, how long can someone host the asylum-seeker in their home?), be aware of logistical considerations (proximity to public transportation, services/appointments, etc.) and access to social support. There are a variety of approaches to housing which are discussed in more detail below.

Clothing, Food, Material Needs: Until asylum-seekers receive their work authorization and are able to partially or fully financially support themselves, they will need assistance to meet their material needs. A clothing, food, and material needs committee would focus on securing the needed items for the asylum-seeker at the start of the accompaniment relationship, and set up a process of checking-in to identify and meet ongoing or emerging material needs.

Medical and Mental Health: Asylum-seekers will have medical and mental health needs, just like any of us, but also may have heightened medical/mental health needs due to their long journey and past trauma. The medical and mental health team would identify local healthcare providers to provide the needed care for the asylum-seekers.

Education: Asylum-seekers, be they children or adults, will have educational needs. Children are eligible to be enrolled in public school, regardless of status. Adults will benefit from English language instruction, as well as cultural orientation education. The education committee would focus its energies on the educational and cultural orientation needs of the asylum-seekers.

Social and Spiritual Needs: Asylum-seekers have gone through a harrowing journey, and are in the midst of a challenging and uncertain time as they go through the legal process. Opportunities to socialize, build relationships, and receive social and spiritual support are vital. The social and spiritual needs committee would discern with the asylum-seekers how to meet emotional and spiritual support needs, perhaps through connecting with community events or opportunities, regular visits from accompaniment team members they trust, and/or connecting with a religious or spiritual community of their own choosing. It is important to note that

² **Note to add an addendum:** See addendum (or link to external resource)

volunteers, groups, and faith communities cannot proselytize to asylum seekers and must respect their beliefs (or lack of beliefs).

Community Activity: This volunteer committee would offer an invitation to the asylum-seeker to get to know the wider community through activities. This could include visiting the local public library or swimming pool, enjoying a walk or pick-up soccer in a local park, etc.

Best Practices and Important Considerations

Be Clear on Your Capacity

If and when you engage in the work of accompaniment, it is important to be clear on what you/your group can and cannot do. There have been cases where a faith community wants to host an asylum seeker, but is not prepared for the commitment, and has left people in need in limbo. Or in other cases, groups have become “overcommitted” early on and then find themselves overwhelmed.

We encourage you to use this guide to learn what all could be involved in your own work of accompaniment, and then to clearly define what you do and do not have the capacity to do.

If your faith community cannot take on everything, it’s always helpful to develop a network of volunteers through other faith communities or community organizations. Together you can organize yourselves to take on the different necessary responsibilities. Build your team; identify conveners/leaders or “point people.” Communicate clearly and often. Be clear on your capacity, your boundaries, and be willing to say “no.”

Self-Sufficiency: The goal of the accompaniment work will be to ensure that asylum seekers can win their cases, adjust status, find work and begin to have a stable life wherein they can support themselves, their families and their communities. From the very beginning, it is important to help the asylum seekers identify what they can do to work toward that success. A particular challenge for asylum seekers is the amount of idle time once the person is settled in their new home/environment. Finding meaningful outlets for asylum seekers to share their gifts and skills can be helpful in overcoming a sense of helplessness, even depression, with too much idle time and can even help with recovery. This often means creative approaches to volunteering or other ways for the asylum seekers to contribute to their own future and/or be able to give to others.

It is important for asylum seekers to make their own decisions, and take care of their own families in the way they see fit. As they did in their own countries, asylum seekers should take responsibility for shopping, cooking, taking public transportation, and managing their family life.

It is important to realize that asylum seekers cannot legally work until after they have received their Employment Authorization Document, which will take months. Typically, asylum seekers are supported by their family and friends while waiting to work. Some asylum seekers may find work through the “informal” market in order to survive. Doing work without work authorization, and the Employment Authorization Document, is not legal. However, your role in accompaniment is not to police asylum seekers or judge their survival strategies.

Creating a Safe Space: Although it is natural to share with others what is important to you, we firmly require that faith communities not engage in proselytism to asylum seekers. Proselytizing is defined as “inducing someone to convert to one’s own religion.” In all that you do, make sure the asylum seekers understand that your accompaniment is not contingent on their participation in your religion; we don’t want them to feel they have to become like us in order to receive our assistance. Please reflect on the power dynamics that form and work to develop checks and balances within your accompaniment team to ensure that there is ample oversight to ensure a safe space.³

Developing a Healthy, Just, and Anti-Racist Approach

There are natural power imbalances in the work of accompaniment. For example, the asylum seeker may not speak English, may not be literate, and may not understand US systems. Even still, your role is to walk alongside, not to “do for.”

This is easier said than done and requires ongoing discernment, learning, self-analysis, and building a relationship with the asylum-seeker that uplifts their own sense of agency and encourages their independence and self-determination.

Furthermore, while the work and the relationship will be between individuals, it is important to understand and acknowledge the larger cultural matrix in which you are engaging this work. This means learning, deepening self-awareness, and ongoing self-analysis on topics including, but not limited to, the dynamics of US racism, the ever-changing US political and policy landscape, the history and present of US and other countries’ foreign and domestic policies that contribute to forced displacement, and critical thinking about older, paternalistic, “charity” models of service provision and how to engage a more asset and strengths-based approach to accompaniment and other work. For people of faith, this process will undoubtedly connect to the teachings of your faith traditions and your own life of faith, and inspire you to question, reflect, pray, and go deeper in your own spiritual walk.

We recommend the following resources for critical engagement on these issues and questions: Stand Up for Racial Justice (SURJ): [How Whiteness, the Savior Complex, and Power Dynamics Affect the Sponsorship Experience](#)

Sustainability: Asylum seekers arrive with so many needs you may think it’s impossible for you to help with all of them. It is important in your accompaniment that you always remember you are not ultimately responsible for their well-being. The key to serving in a way that is sustainable is maintaining healthy boundaries, which includes having a clear understanding of your responsibilities, identifying whose responsibility it is to help solve a particular problem and recognizing your limits. At times, it means taking a step back to make sure that asylum seekers and volunteers agree about what the problem is and how it should be addressed before taking any actions.⁴

³ CWS Orientation Guide for Faith Communities

⁴ CWS Orientation Guide for Faith Communities

Confidentiality: Respect the privacy of the asylum-seekers you accompany. They may not want to share much of their story with you. Or, they may not want the stories they share with you to be shared with others. Ask them what you may tell others and what they consider to be private information. Don't assume they will tell you their story, and remember that they don't owe you their story in exchange for support. Safeguard the confidentiality of asylum seekers by not making their names, stories, and personal circumstances public in any fashion without their consent. This includes the use of photographs and information in news stories for church bulletins, corporate newsletters, and local newspapers, as well as all forms of online social media, including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc. Information, especially on the Internet, may put asylum seekers at risk if those who persecuted them in their home country are able to identify their current location.

Never share medical information with anyone without the client's explicit consent. The client is the only one who can decide what information they share about their own health. You may be privy to medical information because someone has confided in you or because you were present at a medical appointment, but that does not mean that anyone else (including other volunteers on your team) has a right to that same information. Keep in mind that information that seems sensitive to one person may not be the same for another.

Take great care in exchanging information about the asylum seekers you accompany - including information about where they are residing. In this time of growing anti-immigrant sentiment, this is a safety and security concern.⁵

Models of Housing Arrangements

There are a variety of housing models that have been used to provide long-term transitional housing (ranging from a few weeks to more than six months). Each has its advantages and disadvantages, but critical in selecting appropriate housing is considering the access to transportation in order for the asylum seeker to attend necessary appointments and receive the appropriate support to pursue asylum and integration in the community.

Many faith communities are able to collect funds and help with renting a space for the family. This is an optimal solution for long-term housing so people can start to feel settled in their own home. Transparency around the need for self-sufficiency will be important. Once the parents are able to get work permits, they should start to make rental payments on their own.

Another model for asylum housing is the use of a manse or repurposing part of the faith community's building to provide temporary housing. This is one way that faith communities can see an underutilized part of their property as a blessing (allowing them to do a new ministry) instead of a drain (something to maintain). One of the advantages of this type of arrangement is that it both creates a sense of responsibility in the faith community (as opposed to one individual host) and at the same time offers a certain degree of independence to the asylum seekers.

⁵ CWS Orientation Guide for Faith Communities

Faith community members may often have extra space in their homes or even a home that is vacant for part of the year. These are great opportunities, but make sure that everyone who is willing to provide housing is educated and trained on the matter, and aware of the resources in this toolkit.

How do we identify an asylum seeker who needs support?

If your faith community would like more information on how to welcome asylum seekers in your local community, please contact CWS at resourcecenter@cwsglobal.org and/or additional denominational contacts below.

4. ADDITIONAL RESOURCES AND LEARNING

- **Church World Service**, [Interfaith Talking Points](#), Meredith Owen (mowen@cwsglobal.org)
- **Bread for the World**, “Border Policy: Addressing the Root Causes of Migration” <http://www.bread.org/sites/default/files/downloads/border-policy-fact-sheet-2018.pdf> (jadams@bread.org)
- **Bread for the World**, “Hunger and Migration in Honduras,” <http://www.bread.org/blog/migration-hunger-issue-honduras> (jadams@bread.org)
- Migrant Caravan talking points by the **Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**, **American Friends Service Committee**, Alianza Americas, Kids in Need of Defense, Latin America Working
- **HIAS**, [How to Talk about Refugees with Family and Friends](#), [Jews for Refugees](#) Facebook page
- Presbyterian Church (USA) [Video Clip Violence against Women](#) and [Video Clip Honduran Mom Speaks](#)
- [United Church of Christ Supporting Central American Families](#)
- [Unitarian Universalist Resources on Accompaniment](#)
- [SALDEF FAQ](#)
- [Jewish Family and Community Services - Country Wellness Guides](#)
- [Jewish Family and Community Services - Information Guides](#)
- [Day Labor Rights](#).
- [Immigrant Welcoming Congregation](#) Guide by the UCC
- Updated [Statements from Interfaith Immigration Coalition Groups](#)
- **Disciples of Christ**, [Immigrant and Asylum resources](#), [Immigrant Welcoming Congregations](#) info., and [Deportation Defense Resources](#)
- [Sanctuary Movement](#) Resources
- Sample intake form([link](#))

Showing up for Racial Justice Resources

1. Sample budget ([link](#))
2. Sponsor orientation packet ([link](#))

3. Asylum Sponsorship Project ([link](#))
4. Whiteness, savior complex, and power dynamics doc ([link](#))
5. Congregational sponsorship for immigrants still in detention FAQ ([link](#)) and congregational vetting questions ([link](#))

5. CONTACTS OF NATIONAL FAITH ORGANIZATIONS

Church World Service: Noel Andersen nandersen@cwsglobal.org / Bethany Showalter bshowalter@cwsglobal.org

United Church of Christ: Amanda Sheldon Sheldona@ucc.org

Unitarian Universalist contact: Hannah Hafter hhafter@uusc.org

Presbyterian Church USA contact: Susan Krehbiel krehbiel@pcusa.org

Episcopal Migration Ministry: Allison Duvall aduvall@episcopalchurch.org

Disciples Refugee & Immigration Ministries Sharon Stanley-Rea, sstanley@dhm.disciples.org

6. GLOSSARY OF IMPORTANT TERMS & INFOGRAPHICS

Thanks to the USCIS Website for many of the definitions provided here.

Alien — Any person not a citizen or national of the United States.

Alien Registration Number or Alien Number (A Number or A#) — A unique seven-, eight- or nine-digit number assigned to a noncitizen by the Department of Homeland Security. Also see “USCIS Number.”

Asylee — Someone in the United States or at a port of entry who is found to be unable or unwilling to return to his or her country of nationality, or to seek the protection of that country because of persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution. Persecution or the fear thereof must be based on the alien’s race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion.

Child--Generally, an unmarried person under 21 years of age who is: a child born in wedlock; a child born through Assisted Reproductive Technology (ART) to a non-genetic gestational mother who is also the legal mother under the law of the relevant jurisdiction at the time of birth; a stepchild, provided that the child was under 18 years of age at the time that the marriage creating the stepchild relationship occurred; a legitimated child, provided that the child was legitimated while in the legal custody of the legitimating parent; a child born out of wedlock, when a benefit is sought on the basis of its relationship with its mother, or to its father if the father has or had a bona fide relationship with the child; a child adopted while under 16 years of age who has resided with the adopting parent for at least 2 years and has been in the legal

custody of the adopting parent for at least 2 years ; or an orphan, under 16 years of age, who has been adopted abroad by a U.S. citizen or has an immediate-relative visa petition submitted in his/her behalf and is coming to the United States for adoption by a U.S. citizen.

Conditional resident — Any alien granted permanent resident status on a conditional basis (for example, a spouse of a U.S. citizen or an immigrant investor) who must petition to remove the conditions of his or her status before the second anniversary of the approval date of his or her conditional status.

Customs and Border Protection (CBP) — An agency of the US Department of Homeland Security that is responsible for securing the homeland by preventing the illegal entry of people and goods while facilitating legitimate travel and trade.

DACA — Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, a program launched in 2012. For more information, go to the [Consideration of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals \(DACA\)](#) page.

DAPA—Deferred Action for Parents of Americans and Lawful Permanent Residents, a program launched in 2014. For more information, go to the [Executive Actions on Immigration](#) page.

Deferred action — A use of prosecutorial discretion to not remove an individual from the country for a set period of time, unless the deferred action is terminated for some reason. Deferred action is determined on a case-by-case basis and only establishes lawful presence but does not provide immigration status or benefits of any kind. DACA is one type of deferred action.

Department of Homeland Security (DHS) — Department of the Executive Branch of the U.S. government charged with homeland security: preventing terrorism and managing risks to critical infrastructure; securing and managing the border; enforcing and administering immigration laws; safeguarding and securing cyberspace; and ensuring resilience to disasters.

Department of Justice (DOJ) — Department of the Executive Branch of the U.S. government with the primary responsibilities to enforce the law and defend the interests of the United States according to the law; to ensure public safety against threats foreign and domestic; to provide federal leadership in preventing and controlling crime; to seek just punishment for those guilty of unlawful behavior; and to ensure fair and impartial administration of justice for all Americans.

Department of Labor — Department of the Executive Branch of the U.S. government that fosters and promotes the welfare of the job seekers, wage earners, and retirees of the United States by improving their working conditions, advancing their opportunities for profitable employment, protecting their retirement and health care benefits, helping employers find workers, strengthening free collective bargaining, and tracking changes in employment, prices, and other national economic measurements. In carrying out this mission, the Department administers a variety of Federal labor laws including those that guarantee workers' rights to safe and healthful working conditions; a minimum hourly wage and overtime pay; freedom from employment discrimination; unemployment insurance; and other income support.

Employer sanctions— Series of civil fines or criminal penalties for violation of regulations that prohibit employers from hiring, recruiting or referring for a fee aliens known to be unauthorized to work in the United States, or continuing to employ aliens knowing them to be unauthorized, or hiring an individual without completing Form I-9.

Employment Authorization Document (Form I-766/EAD) — A general term used to describe a card issued by USCIS on Form I-766 with the title “Employment Authorization Card” to aliens who are authorized to work in the United States in order to evidence their employment authorization. The card contains a photograph of the individual and sometimes his or her fingerprint. An alien who has been issued this card usually has open-market employment authorization, but there are exceptions.

Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC)— Agency that enforces federal laws that prohibit discrimination against a job applicant or employee because of race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy), national origin, age (40 or older), disability or genetic information

E-Verify — An Internet-based system that compares information from an employee's Form I-9 to data from Department of Homeland Security and Social Security Administration records to confirm employment authorization.

Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) — The principal investigative arm of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, ICE's primary mission is to promote homeland security and public safety through the criminal and civil enforcement of federal laws governing border control, customs, trade, and immigration.

Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) — An Act of Congress that, along with other immigration laws, treaties, and conventions of the United States, relates to the immigration, temporary admission, naturalization and removal of aliens

INS — An abbreviation of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, which was abolished in 2003. Its functions are now performed by three agencies of the Department of Homeland Security— U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), ICE and CBP.

Labor certification— Department of Labor certification required for U.S. employers seeking to employ individuals whose immigration to the United States is based on job skills or nonimmigrant temporary workers coming to perform services for which qualified authorized workers are unavailable in the United States. Labor certification is issued by the Secretary of Labor and contains attestations by U.S. employers of the numbers of U.S. workers available to undertake the employment sought by an applicant, and the effect of the alien's employment on the wages and working conditions of U.S. workers similarly employed. Determination of labor availability in the United States is made at the time of a visa application and at the location where the applicant wishes to work.

Lawful permanent resident (LPR) — Any person not a citizen of the United States who is residing in the U.S. under legally recognized and lawfully recorded permanent residence as an

immigrant. Also known as "Permanent Resident Alien," "Resident Alien Permit Holder," and "Green Card Holder."

National of the United States— A national of the United States or a person who, though not a citizen of the United States, owes permanent allegiance to the United States (e.g., persons born in American Samoa or Swains Island).

Nonimmigrant — An alien who is admitted to the United States for a specific temporary period of time. There are clear conditions on their stay. There are a large variety of nonimmigrant categories, each exists for a specific purpose and has specific terms and conditions.

Nonimmigrant classifications include: foreign government officials, visitors for business and for pleasure, aliens in transit through the United States, treaty traders and investors, students, international representatives, temporary workers and trainees, representatives of foreign information media, exchange visitors, fiancé(e)s of U.S. citizens, intracompany transferees, NATO officials, religious workers and some others. Most nonimmigrants can be accompanied or joined by spouses and unmarried minor (or dependent) children.

Office of Special Counsel for Immigration-Related Unfair Employment Practices (OSC) — A section within the Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice that enforces the anti-discrimination provisions of the Immigration and Nationality Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1324b, which protects U.S. citizens and employment-authorized individuals from employment discrimination based on citizenship or immigration status, or based on national origin with respect to hiring, firing and recruitment or referral for a fee, and discrimination during the employment verification process.

Parole in place — Immigration and Nationality Act section 212(d)(5)(A) gives the Secretary the discretion, on a case-by-case basis, to “parole” for “urgent humanitarian reasons or significant public benefit” an alien applying for admission to the United States. Although it is most frequently used to permit an alien who is outside the United States to come into U.S. territory, parole may also be granted to aliens who are already physically present in the U.S. without inspection or admission. This latter use of parole is sometimes called “parole in place.”

Permanent Resident Card (Form I-551)— Also known as the green card or alien registration card, this card is issued by USCIS to aliens as evidence of their lawful permanent resident status in the United States. For Form I-9, it is acceptable as proof of both identity and employment authorization. Although some Permanent Resident Cards contain no expiration date, most are valid for 10 years. Cards held by individuals with conditional permanent resident status are valid for two years.

Port of entry — Any location in the United States or its territories that is designated as a point of entry for aliens and U.S. citizens. All district offices and service centers are also considered ports, because they become locations of entry for aliens adjusting to immigrant status.

Provisional waiver — Waiver for individuals who are otherwise inadmissible due to more than 180 days of unlawful presence in the United States, based on a showing of extreme hardship to certain U.S. citizen or lawful permanent resident family members, which allows the individual to return after departure for an immigrant visa interview at a U.S. embassy or consulate. For more information, go to the [Provisional Unlawful Presence Waivers](#) page.

Refugee— Generally, any person outside his or her country of nationality who is unable or unwilling to return to that country because of persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution. Persecution or the fear must be based on the person’s race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion. In the US, “refugee” is typically used to describe someone who is identified as a refugee outside of the United States and is admitted to the country through the United States Refugee Resettlement Program. An “asylee” or “asylum seeker” is someone who has left their country for the same reasons, but enters the United States on their own and then seeks to be approved as an asylee. Outside of the United States, most countries don’t differentiate in this way, and refer to all such individuals as refugees. For a legal definition of refugee, see section 101(a)(42) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA).

Temporary protected status (TPS) — The Secretary of Homeland Security may designate a foreign country for TPS due to conditions in the country that temporarily prevent the country's nationals from returning safely, or in certain circumstances, where the country is unable to handle the return of its nationals adequately. USCIS may grant TPS to eligible nationals of certain countries (or parts of countries), who are already in the United States. Eligible individuals without nationality who last resided in the designated country may also be granted TPS. The Secretary may designate a country for TPS due to the following temporary conditions in the country: ongoing armed conflict (such as civil war); an environmental disaster (such as an earthquake or hurricane); or other extraordinary and temporary conditions. Grants of TPS are initially made for periods of six to 18 months and may be extended.

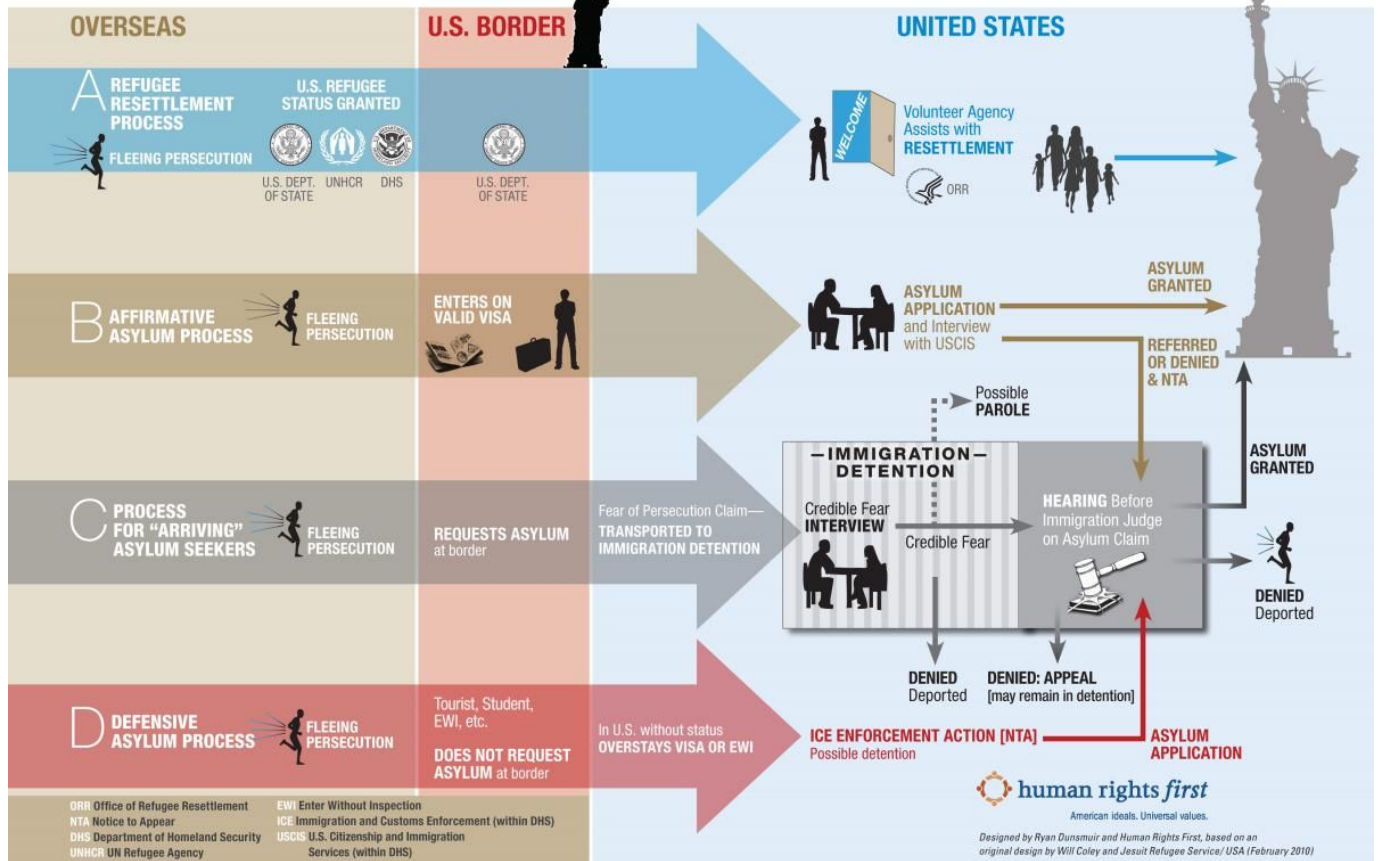
USCIS Number— A unique, 9-digit number assigned to a noncitizen by the Department of Homeland Security that is listed on the front of Permanent Resident Cards (Form I-551) issued after May 10, 2010. See also Alien Registration Number or Alien Number.

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) — A federal agency that oversees lawful immigration to the United States. Its functions include, but are not limited to, granting employment authorization to eligible aliens, issuing documentation of alien employment authorization, maintaining Form I-9, and administering the E-Verify employment eligibility verification program

Visa -- A U.S. visa allows the bearer to apply for entry to the U.S. in a certain classification (e.g. student (F), visitor (B), temporary worker (H)). A visa does not grant the bearer the right to enter the United States. The Department of State (DOS) is responsible for visa adjudication at U.S. Embassies and Consulates outside of the U.S. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS), U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) immigration inspectors determine admission into, length of stay and conditions of stay in, the U.S. at a port of entry. The information on a

nonimmigrant visa only relates to when an individual may apply for entry into the U.S. DHS immigration inspectors will record the terms of your admission on your Arrival/Departure Record (I-94 white or I-94W green) and in your passport.

How Refugees Get to the U.S.



Group, Women's Refugee Commission, Washington Office on Latin America

