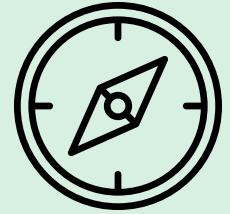


Helping Families Navigate Uncertainty: Resources for Planned or Unexpected Departures from the United States



Purpose and Guiding Principles

A key responsibility of direct service staff is to empower individuals and families by upholding their right to self-determination and ensuring they have access to information and resources to make informed decisions and to address their own needs with dignity and autonomy. This guide is designed to help direct service staff respond to a range of concerns related to detention, deportation, departure from the U.S., and the threat of unexpected family separation.

Client-Centered Support

Individuals and families may be experiencing varying circumstances. For example, staff may work with those who do not intend to return to their country but are directly facing potential detention, or others who have upcoming immigration check-ins or court hearings and fear being detained. Similarly, some families may be seeking guidance to manage uncertainty and safeguard their families and assets in the event of an unexpected incident of detention or deportation.

Some individuals and families may express interest in developing their own plans to relocate themselves or their families to their country of origin or another country—perhaps following termination of their status or preemptively, given the challenging situation for immigrants in the US. They may seek resources and information to plan their return carefully.

Each discussion should be tailored to the needs expressed by the individual or family. We advise caution in using this as a standard resource shared with every client, as its application may vary depending on current policy landscape.

Referral to Legal Services

A prerequisite to providing support is having strong referral partnerships with immigration legal service providers. Organizations should include local legal services in the table below. Pay special attention to group clinics or pro se support, e.g. Family Preparedness Clinics offered by local legal service providers and make these known to your clients as needed. Access to legal services can help clients to:

- Understand their and their dependents' **immigration status** in the US
- Understand whether they and/or their dependents have **any viable options** to remain in the US
- Understand the **implications** that departing the U.S. may have on their immigration case
- Understand their legal options with respect to **caregiver arrangements** in the event of departure from the US (forced or voluntary) and the future legal implications of developing caregiver arrangements through the legal system

Operate within Professional Scope

Organizations and staff must operate strictly within the boundaries of their professional role. Only those who are qualified should provide legal, medical, or immigration advice. When outside of scope, staff should refer individuals to qualified professionals to offer guidance in those areas. This ensures that families receive accurate, reliable support while maintaining ethical and professional standards.

Utilize Trauma-Informed Approaches

Each organization plays a vital role in creating safe and supportive spaces for families who may be navigating overwhelming uncertainty about their legal status, family safety and future. This uncertainty can heighten stress and retraumatize individuals; therefore, it is important to use trauma-informed approaches. These strategies help build trust, reduce stress and ensure that conversations are supportive and centered on the client's well-being.

- Be aware of the emotional and psychological impacts these topics may have on clients
- Check in to ensure clients feel comfortable, noting non-verbal cues or signs of distress
- Use direct and clear language without jargon to reduce confusion or stress
- Listen with empathy and patience, allowing space for silence and questions
- Provide accessible information and support individuals in making informed choices for themselves and their families

Suggested Script for Caseworkers

- “These are really difficult questions, and I want to make sure you get the right support for your unique situation. I’m not an expert in this area, but I have a checklist that can help you identify your needs. Each section includes resources so you can learn more.”
- “I understand that you may have concerns about your family’s future, and I’m here to help you navigate through these challenging times. Our goal today is to discuss some important topics and connect you with resources that can help you feel better prepared for potential departure from the US.”
- “I want to assure you that this conversation is confidential, and my role is to provide you with information and resources. I am not an expert in legal, medical, or immigration matters, but I can guide you to the right professionals who can help with those specific needs. I encourage you to seek legal consultation before finalizing your plans.”

Resource List

The accompanying list provides practical, accessible resources to effectively support those expressing fears, concerns, or questions, and maps out available resources that help individuals and families plan their departure or prepare for immigration enforcement-related emergencies. The resources are grouped by topic with available language translations. This list may be used:

- **During Discussions:** Staff can refer to relevant sections of the checklist in real-time to provide resources and referrals for clients when concerns or questions arise.
- **As a Resource:** The checklist may be shared directly, to empower families to better understand their rights and options, and to take informed action. Staff can help to simplify list by highlighting resources that may be most relevant given client situation.



Resources for Planned or Unexpected Departure from the United States

Staff should refer to accompanying guidance above to ensure client safety.

- **Topic Areas:** Resources are grouped by need or topic area, for example, caregiving and medical.
- **Guidance Materials:** All can be accessed via links, QR Codes and when downloadable in the [CARRE resource](#) folder.
- **Local Resources:** Complete section with local contact information for community organizations and legal providers.

Emergency Readiness



- ☐ Establish a trusted emergency contact and inform them of any plans they should be aware of should you be detained, as well as where to locate important documents and information.
- ☐ Store important documents in a safe place.
 - Examples include immigration paperwork, marriage licenses, domestic partnership certificates, leases, and power of attorney documents.
 - Consider creating a binder with copies of information, documents and contacts
- ☐ Have contact information for legal representation written down or saved in your phone.
- ☐ See *Children and Caregiver* section if applicable

Guidance Materials



[ReadyNow! App](#)

(Human Rights First)

Sends one-click emergency alerts to pre-selected contacts, developed by Human Rights First. Available for free download at Apple Store and Google Play.



[Step-By-Step Family Preparedness Plan](#)

(Immigrant Legal Resource Center – ILRC)

page 17-19



[AILA Know Before you Go: Immigration Court Hearings and ICE Arrests](#)

English and Spanish

Local Resources

Children and Caregiving



If you are a caregiver for a child, adult or household pet who is dependent on you.

Planned and Unexpected Family Separation

- ☐ Identify people who will take care of children and others that are dependent on you.
- ☐ Plan for caregiving in your absence, including care instructions for medications, school contacts, and other important information for children, dependent adults or pets.
- ☐ Seek legal assistance on how to allow for a trusted adult to care for and make decisions on behalf of your child (or dependent adult) in your absence in your state. Note that in some states, caregiver arrangements require filing petitions in state courts and require legal advice/ representation.

Planned Family Relocation

- ☐ See sections on Education and Medical if applicable.

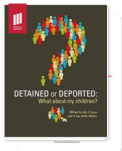
Guidance Materials



[Deportation Preparation Manual for Immigrant Families](#)

(Appleseed)

Child Custody, Page 14-22, Page 14-22



[Detained or Deported: What about my children? Parental Rights Toolkit](#)

(Women's Refugee Commission)

in English and Spanish



[Step-By-Step Family Preparedness Plan](#)

(Immigrant Legal Resource Center- ILRC)

Important children's Information, page 16

Local Resources

Finances



- ☐ Create a list of bank accounts, retirement funds, and other assets and provide information including any required passwords to trusted emergency contact.
- ☐ Document automatic and recurring bill payments.
- ☐ Provide guidance to a trusted emergency contact on managing safety deposit boxes, storage units, and home safes.
- ☐ Decide on the future of any owned businesses (appoint a legal representative, dissolve, or sell).
- ☐ Plan for the management of possessions such as vehicles.

Guidance Documents



[Deportation Preparation Manual for Immigrant Families](#)

(Appleseed)

Includes chapters with additional information and checklists

Checklists:

- Managing, Accessing and Closing your Bank Accounts – page 62
- Credit Cards, Prepaid and Debit Cards – page 71
- Cars, Car Loans, and Leases – page 124

Local Resources

Housing



- ☐ Review lease or mortgage terms and ensure others can pay rent or mortgage if your income is not available.
- ☐ Document utility accounts and provide instructions for payment, closure, or transfer.

Guidance Documents



[Deportation
Preparation Manual
for Immigrant
Families](#)

(Appleseed)

Checklist for Residential
Leases - page 129

Local Resources

Education



- ☐ Ensure school emergency contact information is up to date.
- ☐ Know how to request copies of school records if needed.

Guidance Documents



Requesting your
Child's Education
Records ([English/](#)
[Spanish](#))

Parent Resource Hub

Local Resources

Medical



- ☐ Keep copies of medical records and prescriptions for all family members.
- ☐ Have contact information for current medical providers.
- ☐ Carry any critical medications with you when you leave your home.
- ☐ Ensure you have a monthly supply of medications in case of urgent travel.
- ☐ Complete a Release of Information (ROI) for a designated individual to access and communicate with medical providers about your health history or healthcare needs.

Guidance Documents



[Guide to Getting & Using Your Health Records](#)

(The Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology – ONC)



[How to get Medical Care while you are in ICE Detention](#)

(Florence Project)

Local Resources

Psychological



- ☐ Try to find ways to have conversations with loved ones about fears and anxieties related to uncertainty.
- ☐ Be familiar with how you and others (including children) experience and express stress.
- ☐ Practice coping skills to mitigate stress and encourage or teach children how to use age-appropriate coping skills.
- ☐ Seek support when needed.

Guidance Documents



[Deportation Preparation Manual for Immigrant Families](#)

(Appleseed)

Managing the Psychological Aspects of Deportation and Child Custody, page 47-56



[Undocu-Immigrant Mental Health Grounding and Reflection Toolkit](#)

(Immigrant Rising)



[Wellness Without Words](#)

(Community Refugee and Immigrant Services – CRIS)



[When children are afraid of a parent's deportation](#)

(Minnesota Association for Children's Mental Health)
in English and Spanish



[Children Books](#)

(CARRE)

List of Picture Books to Teach Kids about Family Separation, Borders and Immigration.

Local Resources