



Ten Things You Can Do to Accompany Undocumented Immigrants

This backgrounder provides suggested actions that you can take to support undocumented migrants, in lieu of hosting or providing physical shelter. Included are links to further information, which will assist your effort to launch some of the suggested initiatives.

(1) Share USCCB/MRS' Know Your Rights (KYR) and Related Videos. Our KYR highlights video, produced with assistance from Catholic Charities of Washington DC, offers reminders about legal rights during encounters with enforcement. Available in [English](#) and [Spanish](#). Other [videos](#) focus on how individuals can prepare themselves and their families for encounters with enforcement. All videos are available in English and Spanish, are cell-phone friendly, and only 2-3 minutes in length.”

***ACTION:** Share our KYR video on social media and with immigrants in your community.*

(2) Help Immigrant Children with School Enrollment. Enrolling children into the local public school system can be challenging. They may have trouble gathering the requested documentation, may be discouraged from enrolling due to language barriers or their child's age, or may be denied enrollment if they are a caregiver who is not the child's parent or legal guardian. USCCB/MRS has helped to produce a useful [guide](#) for enrolling migrant youth in the public school system.

***ACTION:** Reach out to local schools to see what resources they offer for immigrant families. Plan an open house event where parents, children, teachers, and the administration can meet and discuss options as community members. Offer to accompany immigrant families to schools to assist with enrollment.*

(3) Accompany Individuals to ICE Check-Ins. Many undocumented immigrants currently either have ankle monitors that require an appointment or they are scheduled to check in with ICE on a semi-regular basis. Attempting to accompany an individual through this process can provide comfort and may also be helpful for the immediate outcome of the check-in. Volunteers who

are neither lawyers nor legal representatives can appear at the ICE check-in as “reputable individuals.” Urge willing parishioners to submit the necessary information (as listed in [G-28 Instructions](#) and in [8 CFR 292.1\(a\)\(3\)](#)) to appear at the appointment.

***ACTION:** Ask local ICE offices to allow you to accompany immigrants to their check-in appointments. Ask undocumented individuals in your parish to let you know if they have an upcoming ICE Check-In and wish to be accompanied. Volunteers in your parish may be able to assist.*

(4) Build Relationships with Local Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Offices. It is important that U.S. citizens nurture relationships with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Field Offices and U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) community relations officers. Engaging local ICE and USCIS offices could help provide immediate points of contact when there is a need to engage in individual case advocacy. Please find contact information for and the location of your local offices on the [ICE](#) and [USCIS](#) websites. Engaging these entities can have long-term benefits for your work with undocumented immigrants.

***ACTION:** If you are a U.S. Citizen, look to attend ICE or USCIS community relations meetings in your area and set up meetings with local DHS Field Office leadership. Please email jfi@uscbb.org for tips on engagement with these offices.*

(5) Provide Transport for individuals to Immigration Court. It is crucial that undocumented individuals who have pending immigration court proceedings consistently attend any legal appearances for which they are scheduled to appear.

***ACTION:** Organize a transportation ride-sharing network in your parish to assist individuals who need a ride to their court proceedings.*

(6) Facilitate Legal Screenings. Recent research suggests that roughly one million undocumented immigrants living in the United States are potentially eligible for an immigration benefit or relief. Unfortunately, many of these individuals are unaware that they qualify or are unable to pursue such options due to financial limitations. Facilitating access to a reputable immigration legal services provider could help eligible individuals access the benefit or relief for which they qualify.

***ACTION:** Organize information sessions at your parish with reputable local immigration services providers. Discuss the availability of legal screenings.*

(7) Help Arrange Legal Services. Immigrants are both more likely to seek and prevail on claims of relief if they have the assistance of legal counsel. One study found that represented immigrants were fifteen times more likely to seek immigration relief than unrepresented immigrants. Consequently, encouraging attorneys to take immigration cases pro bono (free of charge) is incredibly helpful. The Department of Justice (DOJ) provides a list of legal providers across the country, as well as a list of [accredited representatives](#) and recognized organizations, which can be used as a guide for immigrants seeking legal support. [The American Immigration Lawyers Association](#) (AILA) also provides a searchable database of immigration attorneys.

***ACTION:** Distribute these lists to pertinent points of contact within your parish and diocese, as well as to local immigrant rights organizations. Help facilitate meetings with legal representatives for consultations.*

(8) Raise Awareness of Notario Fraud. Notario fraud increases when there are new or anticipated

immigration policy changes. For this reason, it is vital to educate our fellow parishioners on notario fraud and advise individuals to only seek immigration advice from qualified legal services providers, such as a reputable pro bono attorney from the DOJ or AILA lists or a local Catholic Charities agency. These providers can also help with reporting fraud to the Federal Trade Commission or the state agency entrusted with such consumer fraud. For more information, visit www.stopnotariofraud.org.

***ACTION:** Hold an educational event on notario fraud and immigration scams that highlights the importance of finding legitimate legal services providers. Include awareness material about notario fraud in church bulletins and updates. Please email jfi@usccb.org for a sample bulletin.*

(9) Hold Immigration Fee Drives. Filing fees, such as those for citizenship, are a main obstacle to many who are eligible to naturalize.

***ACTION:** Host an event at your home or parish to raise funds for an individual's immigration filing fees. You can also connect with a local immigration service organization to distribute money raised to those in need of assistance with paying their filing fees.*

(10) Pray together, raise awareness, and provide community forums for undocumented immigrants to share their stories and needs. As always, prayer and pastoral support is vital to daily life. You can host a prayer service recognizing immigrants. Doing so will also help to generate awareness within your local community. Additionally, you can consider screening an immigration documentary and invite an immigrant to tell his or her story afterwards.

***ACTION:** Organize a prayer service or educational event at your local parish and invite both native-born and immigrant congregants.*