

IMMIGRANT DETENTION VISITATION PROGRAM

::: being a visitor :::

TRAINING MANUAL

WHY

The main goal of visiting someone being held in the Aurora immigrant detention center is to be a friend, be a listener, be present, be a link to the outside world... just be. Showing up, having a conversation, and being there for the person you are visiting is huge.

The people we visit do not have any other visitors. Maybe they are being detained away from their home or perhaps their family and friends are undocumented and cannot enter the facility. Becoming friends and affirming the humanity of someone who feels isolated, alone, or disconnected has the ability to transform both the detainee and the visitor.

YOU ARE

A volunteer visitor is a friend and companion. By sitting down and talking, we help alleviate some of the isolated feelings most people experience. We listen and ask questions. Feel free to share what you're comfortable with about your life.

When you hear alleged cases of abuse, please report them to the program director. We can bring awareness of the situation to GEO. You may connect detainees to available legal, medical or psychological resources. List of resources in back of manual.

Your visits provide a boost to morale, a smiling face, a source of hope!

YOU ARE NOT

You are not a lawyer, providing legal counsel, helping to get them out of detention, a mental health professional, social worker, reporter, missionary, or source of financial support.

QUALIFICATIONS

- Valid government issued identification with photograph. The guards do ask about immigration status. It is not recommended that undocumented people visit as they could be detained.
- Over age 18. Minors can visit if accompanied by parent or legal guardian.
- Fluency in English to take directions from the detention center's officers

EXPECTATIONS

- Visit twice a month. Your visits are a source of constancy in a turbulent time, so be consistent. When concluding a visit, always indicate when you will be back and keep that commitment. If you cannot make a visit, please let Sarah know before your scheduled time.
- Visit for at least three months. This is enough time to establish a good connection with your new friend.
- Respect confidentiality. Detained immigrants are in sensitive legal proceedings. Many may fear for their own lives and the lives of family members. A high level of confidentiality is a sign of respect. Strict confidentiality protects both the detained immigrant and you. With this in mind, follow these guidelines.
 - Do not discuss or communicate information regarding a case with other volunteers, detention facility employees, other detained immigrants or deportation officers. We encourage you to document this information in the post-visit form.
 - We encourage you to attend our volunteer dinners to share your experiences with visitation and receive advice from other volunteers.
 - To cope with your emotions following a visit (if you've heard disturbing details of a personal story), we suggest using the post-visit form to reflect on the visit and be mindful of how you are feeling.
- Communicate any concerns to the program leaders, such as not being able to make a scheduled visit, having trouble setting boundaries with an individual, issues with GEO staff, etc.

FACILITY

- GEO Immigrant Detention, across the street from Casa de Paz
- Street Parking

DRESS CODE

Modest, at discretion of officer. No sleeveless tops, short shirts, low-cut shirts.

BRING

- Name and A # of detainee
- Government issued photo ID
- Pen and paper (put in pocket)

VISITING DAY

Leave everything in your car except the above listed items. Check in at front desk. Identify yourself as a friend of the person you are visiting. You will be given a visitor badge which you will wear during the visit. The guard will ask for everyone with a red badge to come up. Follow the guard through the metal detector and into the visiting room. When you have a seat, your visitor will come to the window. And now you're ready to meet your new friend!

Visits typically last thirty minutes, but depending on time constraints you may have more or less time.

After the visit turn in your red visitor badge for your ID.

CONTACT INFO

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719.510.7747 (text is best)
Casa Lockbox: 4458

CIVIC (Community Initiatives for Visiting Immigrants in Confinement)
www.endisolation.org

MUSINGS OF A FIRST TIME VISITOR BY MARTHA

Before arriving at the Detention Center I wondered if my conversation with “my” detainee would lag, and I was concerned that the staff might be unfriendly or worse. I arrived quite early, which was good as they had moved the entrance way around to the other side of the building, viz., 3130 North Oakland.

Though that parking lot is reserved for employees, I had no trouble finding street parking. The desk person who greeted me was both friendly and funny, which lightened up the experience significantly. At around 3:15 we were called forward and followed a guard down a long hallway to the visiting room. As soon as I started speaking with my new friend I realized that I need not have worried about carrying the conversation as she was very talkative. She expressed a wish that their library provide more Spanish-language materials, especially Bible commentaries. No one came to unlock our door for an hour. Since I was seated on a hard metal stool, I will know to bring a jacket next time to provide some relief while sitting! All in all this was a very positive and rewarding visit.

Additional note: When I returned for a second visit, a new desk person told me that my friend might not meet me, as she had refused an earlier visit. Shortly I was told that she was sick that day, so I was grateful for the forewarning.

THE FACTS

TERMS

Lawful Permanent Residents (LPRs) – Lawful Permanent Residents are immigrants with “green cards” who have been lawfully admitted to the United States for permanent residence. An immigrant can become a permanent resident in several different ways. Most individuals are sponsored by a family member or employer in the United States. Other individuals may become permanent residents through refugee or asylee status or other humanitarian programs. LPRs essentially have the same rights and obligations as U.S. citizens with the exceptions of voting and holding certain public offices and civil service positions. However, LPRs can be detained or deported for certain offenses, including misdemeanors punishable by one or more years in jail, detention, or deportation. After five years, an LPR can apply for U.S. citizenship.

Legal Immigrants – Another term for lawful permanent residents.

Legal Non-Immigrants – Legal non-immigrants have been lawfully admitted to the United States for a specific purpose (e.g. work or study) for a temporary stay that will end when its purpose has been accomplished and the visa expires.

Migrant Workers – Migrant workers move from one region or country to another in search of employment. Many migrant workers are undocumented.

Illegal Immigrant, Alien, and Undocumented Immigrant: We denounce the use of degrading terms, such as “alien” and “illegal immigrant,” to describe undocumented immigrants because it casts them as inhuman outsiders who come to the United States with questionable motivations. “Alien” is a term used in the Immigration and Nationality Act to refer to non-citizens, but it should be avoided unless used in a quote. The term “illegal immigrant” stereotypes undocumented persons who are in the United States as having committed a crime. Under current U.S. immigration law, entering the United States without inspection or overstaying a visa is not a crime; it is a civil violation. Although “undocumented immigrant” is not an ideal nomenclature, we use it and ‘non-citizen’ for lack of better terms.

Refugees – Refugees are persons outside their homeland who are unable or unwilling to return because of past persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution on account of their race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group. Each year, a certain number of refugees are selected by the U.S. State Department to undergo several security screenings and enter the United States through the Refugee Resettlement Program. One year after arriving in the United States, a refugee can apply for Lawful Permanent Residency (LPR), and after five years, an LPR can apply for U.S. citizenship.

Asylum Seekers – Asylum seekers are seeking refuge in another country due to persecution faced in his/her native country for the same reasons as refugees. People who apply for asylum at an airport or other point of entry into the United States are often detained. The difference between refugees and asylum seekers is that asylum seekers are physically present in the United States or at a U.S. border and are seeking permission to remain in the United States, while refugees are outside of the United States and are seeking resettlement in the United States.

Asylees – Asylees are people who have been granted the legal status of asylum in the United States due to fear of persecution faced in his/her native country for the same reasons as refugees. Immediately after being granted asylum, asylees are authorized to work in the United States. One year after arriving in the United States, an asylee can apply for LPR status, and after five years, an LPR can apply for U.S. citizenship.

Parolees – Parolees are non-citizens to whom the Attorney General has granted a temporary stay for humanitarian or public interest purposes and who can be detained at any time. Parolee status expires after one year (renewable at the U.S. government's discretion), and most parolees are prohibited from applying for LPR status or citizenship.

Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) – Immigration and Customs Enforcement is the bureau within the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS), which enforces immigration laws and administers the apprehension, detention and deportation of immigrants. ICE was known previously as the INS.