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COLLABORATIVE
FOR IMMIGRANT JUSTICE**

COMMUNITY RESOURCE GUIDE

First Steps After Someone You Care About is Detained by Immigration



The hours and days after someone you care about is detained by immigration can be very difficult, scary, and confusing. These moments are also very important, and there are things you can do right away to support your detained loved one. This guide will help you take immediate steps to locate your loved one, communicate with them, and support them in finding a lawyer and gathering important documents. While this guide focuses on information for people who were arrested by immigration in California, a lot of the information and links is relevant to people detained anywhere in the U.S.



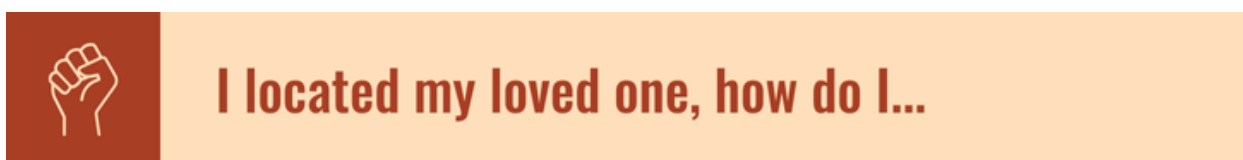
My loved one is detained, what should I do now?

Get your community member's A number and locate them.

- If you don't know their A number, ask your loved one right away for their A# when you hear from them. It should be on any papers received from ICE or an immigration court, as well as on their detention facility ID card and/or bracelet.
- What is an A#?
 - It is an identification number with 9 digits.

- ICE will give them this number upon arrest.
- If your friend/family member filed a previous immigration application, it's likely they will already have an A# on any documents from immigration.
- If your friend/family member was arrested at the border and/or had a CBPOne appointment and was allowed to enter, it's likely they will already have an A# in their immigration documents.
- Use this link to locate your friend/family member if they have been detained by ICE: <https://locator.ice.gov/odls/#/search>. Search by either A# & country of birth, or person's biographical information. Note that you may need to try different variations or spellings of their name, such as adding a hyphen between two last names.
- Click on name of facility hyperlink for more info on facility and controlling ICE office. Click "More Information" to link to ICE page for facility, including visitation info
- Here are direct links to the facility pages for detention centers in California and where California residents are frequently sent:
 - [Adelanto](#) (Adelanto, CA)
 - [Desert View Annex](#) (Adelanto, CA)
 - [Golden State Annex](#) (McFarland, CA)
 - [Imperial Regional Detention Facility](#) (Calexico, CA)
 - [Mesa Verde](#) (Bakersfield, CA)
 - [Otay Mesa](#) (San Diego, CA)
 - [Northwest Detention Center](#) (Tacoma, WA)
 - [Aurora/Denver Contract Detention Facility](#) (Aurora, CO)

ICE has information (including location and contact information) for the detention centers it uses on its website: <https://www.ice.gov/detention-facilities>



Contact my loved one in detention

- [GettingOut](#) is the platform used by ICE facilities for community members to contact their loved ones in detention. You will need to (1) create an account on GettingOut and (2) add your loved one on GettingOut in order to send them messages.
- GettingOut has a video tutorial on how to send a message on their platform [here](#) (in English).

- Una guía en español [aquí](#).
- Notes about GettingOut
 - Your loved one's "Booking ID" is their A number.
 - The system can be finicky! When you search a person by their name on GettingOut, you may need to enter their first name where it asks for last name.

The naming conventions for facilities vary. For example, if your loved one is detained at Golden State Annex, the facility is listed as "GEO Golden State Annex" on GettingOut.

Send money for their commissary account

- People in detention are not allowed to carry cash on their person. A commissary account is a special funds account that allows people detained to use money to purchase items or minutes for phone calls. It is important you have your loved one's A number and the correct facility in order to successfully transfer funds
- **There are 4 different ways to deposit funds into a commissary account:**
 - **Electronically via GettingOut** - recommended because it's the most straightforward and secure!
 - Video tutorial by GettingOut on how to deposit funds [here](#).
 - Una guía en cómo depositar dinero en español [aquí](#).
 - **Money Order by mail**
 - **Cash is NOT accepted. You must send a money order or cashier's check and have your loved one's A number on the memo.** It is encouraged to mail this money order via certified mail so you can get confirmation of when the facility has received the envelope.
 - A money order can be purchased at a U.S. Post Office (or a store; however, it's easier to return a money order to a post office). Please note that there is a small processing fee for obtaining a money order.
 - If the person is released after the mail was opened by the mailroom, the facility will send a check. If the person was released before it gets opened, the money order will be returned (and you can take the MO back to the post office to get the funds back).
 - Please note that you will need to properly put a valid return address on the upper lefthand corner of the envelope for the money order to be accepted.
 - DO NOT include any letters or other documents with the money order. These items will NOT be forwarded to your loved one.
 - **You will have to address the envelope accordingly:**

[NAME OF DETENTION CENTER]

[First Name] [Last Name(s)], [A Number]

[Address of the detention center]

- **In-person** - call in advance to confirm because it varies by facility!
 - IF the facility offers in person deposits, go during their visitation hours and inquire at the intake desk on how to deposit funds. If they have an onsite ATM, they will direct you to it and the guard attending the desk will be able to walk you through how to deposit the money into your loved one's account. It is important you have your loved one's A number.
 - Please be sure to ask when you call the detention facility whether the machines are in operation. Some community members have reported the existence of machines that haven't been in service for years and it may be a better use of your time to deposit funds a different way.
- **Direct Deposit** - use this option if time is of the essence i.e. your loved one is scheduled to be removed and there's not enough time for the other options!
 - **Every detention center uses a different platform to process direct deposits, call in advance to confirm which platform to use.** You will need to create an account with the corresponding platform to complete the transaction. Please note there is a processing fee for direct deposits, and the fee goes up the higher the sum of money.
 - Golden State Annex uses [CorrectPay](#)
 - Mesa Verde uses [JPay](#).
- Please note that accounts are closed sometimes two days before a person is released or deported, so you cannot deposit money for them once an account is closed.

Visit in person

- Select the facility your loved one is detained at [here](#), and go to the visitation tab for instructions. For most facilities, you will need to ask your family member their housing unit to determine what day and time you can visit them. If you do not know their housing unit, you can try calling the facility to ask.
- **Please note that people who are undocumented should NOT be going to detention centers to visit loved ones.** Consult with an attorney if you have questions about whether it is safe for you to visit a detention center.
- All visitors should remember to bring a form of ID. Visitors are subject to a security screening. Capacity varies per facility in terms of space available for visitations, so

anticipate a wait. It is encouraged to arrive at least 15 minutes before a visitation window to ensure you can see your loved one.

- Please review dress code rules carefully before visiting the facility as people have been turned away if they had, for example, yoga pants or ripped jeans. Most facilities have dress code rules listed under the visitation tab. If in doubt, here is a sample of compiled dress code rules [here](#).
- **Review the visitation tab for the detention facility carefully for other restrictions.** Please note that the majority of facilities have a limit to the number of people allowed into a visitation session. Most facilities also limit how many visitation sessions a person detained may have within a day and week.

Minor children are allowed to visit the facility. Minor children who are visiting the facility must be accompanied by an adult guardian (18 years or older). Minors must not be left unaccompanied in the waiting room, visiting room or any other area. Children may also count towards the limit of persons in a visitation session, so please review the visitation page for the facility and call in advance to confirm visitation rules and limits including for children.

Mail a letter

- **DO NOT MAIL ORIGINAL DOCUMENTS TO YOUR LOVED ONES**, always mail a copy. All correspondence, except confidential legal mail sent by an attorney, are subject to a security screening. Some facilities may review the mail, make a copy of it to provide to the detained loved one, and shred the original.
- Note that all mail sent to people in ICE custody are subject [content restrictions](#). If your correspondence is in violation of those restrictions, it will be destroyed.
- **Do not mail passports to someone in ICE custody.**

A note about Golden State Annex: do not send mail to the physical address; instead use PO Box 1577, McFarland, CA 93250.

Send items to your loved one in detention

- The first step to send an item, such as a book, will be for your loved one to submit a KITE request that details with specificity what item(s) they are requesting.
- **Do not send items to your loved one without the request being approved first.**

If the request is approved, the facility typically has pre-approved or preferred vendors to purchase the item from (like bookshop.org or Amazon). Be sure to use the preferred vendor and have the vendor ship the item directly to your detained loved one at the facility. The items must be the exact same as the kite request the community member has

submitted. For example, if you're trying to send a book, the author's name, title of book, and even publisher (depending on the facility) must be an exact match.

Prepare a small suitcase for them to take in case they must leave the United States

- Note that detained people being removed from the United States are allowed one small piece of luggage. Such luggage can be sent/delivered after receiving approval from a Supervisory Deportation Officer.
 - The first step is for the detained person to submit a KITE request on their tablet. If they want you to include an electronic item like a prepaid phone, they should include in their request a description of the special circumstances that make it necessary for them to have the item in their luggage. Please note that requests for a specific item can be denied. Do not send any items that are not pre-approved.
- After the KITE request has been approved, call the detention facility to confirm the best address to send the luggage if you are unable to drop off the luggage yourself. All packages are inspected, so do not include any items that were not previously approved.

For people detained at Golden State Annex or Mesa Verde, deportation luggage should be dropped off at the ICE office at 800 Truxtun Ave, Bakersfield, CA 93301.

Get a document notarized with my loved one's signature

- Some people might need a document signed by their loved one with a notarized signature for specific needs unrelated to their immigration case. For example, if you need a signed and notarized [Power of Attorney form](#), then you must follow the steps outlined by the facility your loved one is detained at.

Please note that your loved one will need to make the request for notarization through their tablet. This then goes up to ICE for approval. IF the request is granted, a service fee will be withdrawn from their account.



How can I help my loved one find a lawyer and get ready to fight their legal case, if possible?

It is always best to consult individually with an immigration lawyer as soon as possible after someone is detained. Not everyone will have viable legal options, depending on their unique situation and history. But, to have the best chance to fight their case, you

can help them gather important documents and find a trusted immigration attorney to consult with as soon as possible.

1. Help them gather important documents!

- Remember: If your loved one ultimately needs to receive any records from you directly, mail **ONLY** copies of the documents and keep the original documents somewhere safe.
- **Prioritize gathering the following documents:**
 - Copies of any documents relating to past immigration cases, including notices from immigration court or the Board of Immigration Appeals, or forms family member may have filled out or filed with USCIS and receipt notices
 - If your loved one may have immigration records (e.g. they were in court or filed a petition or application in the past), help them file a FOIA with USCIS.
 - Link to USCIS FOIA guide [here](#).
 - Any documents related to contact with law enforcement
 - If your loved one has ever been arrested by the police, start requesting copies of their criminal history documents as soon as you can.
 - Examples of criminal history documents: police reports, charging documents, dispositions, and sentencing documents
 - If your loved one or one of their immediate family members (minor children or spouse) was the victim of a crime, get a copy of the police report.
- If your loved one has medical conditions, help them advocate to get the care they need by obtaining their medical records
 - Suggestions on how to advocate: log in together on a patient portal, ask a care provider to write a letter giving a summary of the medications needed, or file a medical records request.
 - Guides by FIRRP on how to access medical care in ICE detention:
 - [English](https://firrp.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Medical-Tool-Kit-20131.pdf): <https://firrp.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Medical-Tool-Kit-20131.pdf>
 - [Spanish](https://firrp.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Medical-Tool-Kit-2013-SPA-JF1L.pdf): <https://firrp.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Medical-Tool-Kit-2013-SPA-JF1L.pdf>
- **A note regarding other documents, including letters of support:**
 - **We suggest you prioritize gathering immigration and criminal history documents listed because they are important to assess your loved one's case and can be time consuming to gather.** The more important documents you have ready, the easier it will be for an attorney to give a thorough legal consultation and advise you on what to do next!

- It might also be helpful to gather copies of any identification documents the community member may have, as well as their birth certificate.
- It might also be helpful to gather copies of evidence of lawful status of immediate family members (spouse, parents, children), such as copies of birth certificates, certificates of naturalization, LPR cards, U.S. passports.

It is advisable to wait to speak to an attorney before you gather other documents not listed above, like letters of support, because many cases will not benefit from letters of support. In the event your loved one's case does need letters of support, an attorney can help you advise on what the content of the letters should include so they are helpful for your loved one's case.

2. Encourage the detained community member to sign up for legal clinics and/or legal orientation programs (LOPs) and to familiarize themselves with their rights.

A common term you may hear when discussing legal clinics or LOP programs for unrepresented people is “pro se.” Pro se translates directly to “on one's own behalf.” Given the majority of people do not have a right to a free attorney, many community members in removal proceedings appear pro se and file applications on their own behalf.

- How to sign up for legal assistance at the following detention facilities:
 - **Adelanto (AIPC)**
 - Esperanza Immigrants Rights Project (EIRP) only has the capacity to hear from detained community members, not their family.
 - **Call the LOP Toll Free number, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, & Friday, 9 am – 4 pm.** Through the telephone, EIRP can provide Individual Orientations and Pro se Assistance to fill out the applications if they do not write or read English. This service is for ANY language and is not limited to Spanish.
 - Note: The detained community member can call from the wall phones and use the free 45 minutes they're entitled to. In the alternative, they can call the LOP Toll Free number on their tablets; however, they will have to pay for their minutes.
 - **Desert View Annex (DVA)**
 - Formats:
 - In Person: Group Orientations, Pro Se Workshops, Individual Orientations, (7:30 am – 11 am). **Must sign up in advance.**
 - Frequency: One day per week on either Monday or Wednesday and the dorms seen depend on the day EIRP is at the facility.

- It is encouraged for people to come to group sessions to ask questions so the toll free line can be reserved for pro se assistance.
- Note regarding Third Language Speakers: only one phone is available at the facility to use an interpreter, so expect a wait.
- Virtual Sessions Via Zoom: Group Orientations, Pro Se Workshops (7:30 am – 11 am) twice per week. Mondays or Wednesdays and Fridays. EIRP speaks to all the dorms during virtual sessions.
 - Through the telephone, EIRP can provide Individual Orientations and Pro se Assistance to fill out the applications if they do not write or read English. This service is for ANY language and is not limited to Spanish.
- **Golden State Annex (GSA)** - CCIJ offers a limited legal clinic here!
 - **Sign-ups required on dorm sheets posted the weekend before a visit.** CCIJ cannot see people who did not sign up for the clinic and cannot see everyone who signs up each month.
 - Format: In-person clinics on the First Friday of each month (or occasionally on the 2nd Friday due to holidays).
 - Brief consultations, referrals, and written self-representation guides are offered. CCIJ generally cannot provide forms completion or briefing assistance.
- **Imperial Regional Detention Facility (Imperial)**
 - Al Otro Lado (AOL) serves community members detained at Imperial. AOL offers Group Orientations and Individual Orientations on Mondays and Tuesdays. Pro Se Workshops happen on Thursdays over Zoom.
 - Sign ups are required. Please refer to the contact sheet provided by AOL [here](#). There are two ways to sign up:
 - Via Talton Tablet - preferred method
 - Your loved one will need to send a message to AOL through their tablet expressing what service they would like or what topics — e.g. fear interview, bond, parole — they have questions about.
 - Note: They can change the tablet settings to their preferred language, and the system will do the translating via the requests. They should indicate what their preferred language is to better schedule services.
 - Via Phone
 - AOL has a free hotline at Imperial accessible for Spanish and English speakers. Your loved one only has to dial 1120#.

- Your loved one should leave their name, A number, and a brief message expressing what service they would like or what topics — e.g. fear interview, bond, parole — they have questions about.
- **Mesa Verde (MV)** - *CCIJ offers a limited legal clinic here!*
 - **Sign-ups required on dorm sheets posted on Thursdays** (removed on Tuesdays). CCIJ cannot see people who did not sign up for the clinic.
 - Format: Ongoing remote clinics.
 - Brief consultations, referrals, and written self-representation guides are offered. CCIJ generally cannot provide forms completion or briefing assistance.
- **Northwest Detention Center (NWIPC)**
 - The Northwest Immigrant Rights Project (NWIRP) serves community members in person every afternoon, Monday through Thursday. There are group information sessions held in Spanish on Thursdays as well.
 - Sign-ups are required. There are multiple ways to sign up for legal assistance at this facility, so please refer to the contact sheet provided by NWIRP [here](#). This sheet is also available throughout the facility for detained community members to access.
 - Please be sure to include in the assistance request (1) the detained person's full name, (2) their A number, and (3) a message explaining what type of assistance they need.
 - If you are contacting NWIRP on behalf of your loved one, please be sure to make it clear you are doing so with their consent and include the information asked.
 - There is a waitlist for individual legal orientation assistance. It is encouraged your loved one take advantage of the group orientation sessions. If your loved one has an urgent deadline or medical need, for example a one-year filing deadline for an asylum application or a prior deportation order, please be sure they mention this in their initial request for assistance.
- **Otay Mesa (Otay)**
 - The American Bar Association Immigrant Justice Program (ABAIJP) serves community members detained at Otay Mesa. ABAIJP also provides group information sessions one to two times a week **by appointment**.
 - To be placed on the waitlist, please contact ABAIJP in one of the following ways:
 - Phone call: (619) 255-8817
 - Email: contact@abaijp.org

- If you are contacting ABAIJP via phone or email, please leave your name, A#, and the type of support you're requesting in the message.
- Many organizations have excellent guides for understanding one's rights in immigration proceedings and for learning how to prepare your own case for relief from deportation and/or to be released. Here are some of our favorite guides:
 - [Know Your Rights Toolkit for Detained Community Members](#) by the National Immigrant Justice Center (NIJC) – Overview of different types of immigration proceedings, ways one may be released, and applications of relief from deportation.

[How to Defend Your Own Case](#) by the Florence Immigrant & Refugee Rights Project (FIRRP) – Specific self-representation guides for different applications you might be eligible to file. (Spanish version [here](#))

3. Help your community member look for an attorney and support them in this fight.

- **The immigration court system does not guarantee you a free lawyer if you cannot afford one.** Below are some tips for finding free or private lawyers who can help you.
- **If you do not have an immigration attorney or DOJ Accredited Representative, you or your loved one should ask the immigration judge for time to find a representative.** It can be difficult to find someone with availability, so reach out to several offices at once and keep following up.
- **Be careful of fraud or false promises.** Notarios are not always lawyers in the United States and cannot necessarily practice law or appear in immigration court. In addition, immigration law is complicated so look for a lawyer experienced in immigration law and ideally with experience doing detained cases. Be cautious of believing anyone who promises you a certain result for your loved one's case. Someone who promises results is probably not being honest with you.
- **Here are some resources to help you find an immigration attorney or representative.** CCIJ cannot guarantee that any of the organizations or private lawyers listed will be able to represent you, and CCIJ is not responsible for services rendered:
 - **FREE OR LOW-COST LAWYERS:**
 - **Immigration Court's list of free attorneys and representatives:**
<https://www.justice.gov/eoir/recognized-organizations-and-accredited-representatives-roster-state-and-city>

- Immigrant Advocates directory:
<https://www.immigrationadvocates.org/legaldirectory/>
- PRIVATE (PAID) LAWYERS:
 - American Immigration Lawyers Association directory: <https://ailalawyer.com/>

State Bar of California Resource Page: <https://www.calbar.ca.gov/Public/Free-Legal-Information/For-Immigrants/Proveedores-de-Servicios-Legales-de-Inmigraci%C3%B3n>

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS & FOOTNOTES

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Other resources referenced are the following:

- National Immigrant Justice Center - [Know Your Rights: What to Do if Your Loved One is Detained](#)