

A GUIDE FOR VISITING IMMIGRANT DETAINEES

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**BLACK IMMIGRATION NETWORK**

# **DETAINEE SUPPORT PROGRAM**

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**TOOLKIT RESOURCE**

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**[www.blackimmigration.net](http://www.blackimmigration.net)**

# **BLACK IMMIGRATION NETWORK DETAINEE SUPPORT PROGRAM :: PART 1 a guide for visiting immigrant detainees**

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The Black Immigration Network (BIN) is a national network of people and organizations serving black immigrant and African American communities who are focused on supporting fair and just immigration, as well as economic and social policies that benefit these communities and all communities of color in order to create a more just and equitable society.

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This toolkit was designed to engage and educate BIN members, directly impacted people and allies with information needed to navigate visits to immigrant detention centers in the United States and to help black-led organizations start visitation programs.

**“Each year, over 400,000 people are detained in a network of over 200 detention facilities across the country.” -Detention Watch Network**

The detention of hundreds of thousands of immigrants per year is an occurrence that takes place within the context of mass incarceration, which disparately affects Black communities in the United States. According to a 2016 report released by the Black Alliance for Just Immigration and New York University’s Law Immigrant Rights Clinic titled, *The State of Black Immigrants*, “Black immigrants are disproportionately represented among detained immigrants facing deportation in immigration court on criminal grounds.” Detainees are frequently transferred to centers around the country, often times a good distance from their families and communities, creating physical and emotional isolation. Visitations reinforce bonds and connections with loved ones and the outside community. Immigrants are provided with a link to their lives before detention and/or the general outside world. The presence of visitors may also aid in preventing human rights abuses because they can document and report conditions in these facilities.

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## first steps

### 1. Get informed.

If you or a loved one is facing deportation, check out this comprehensive guide by BIN member organization Families for Freedom, [Facing Deportation](#).

### 2. Get details.

Make sure you obtain the detainee's Alien Registration Number (A#). This can be found on any document that immigration provides. This is usually an eight or nine digit number. (A# XXXXXXXX).

### 3. Be accessible.

Remove any blocks on your phone for collect calls. You may need to enroll in a pay program to receive and make calls.

### 4. Locate your detainee.

When visiting a family member/friend, first locate where they are being detained by using the government website: <https://locator.ice.gov/odls/homePage>. You can also contact your Consulate; some Consulates are required by law to be notified when one of their nationals is detained.

### 5. Contact I.C.E.

If the detainee is located in an ICE facility, your next step is to try to call his or her deportation officer. You will likely need to explain who you are and your relationship with the detainee. The officer can tell you how to call or visit the detainee – or pay for the detainee to be able to call you - and how you can send any needed items. Be careful about what you reveal to the officer, however. Say nothing about the person's country of citizenship or immigration in the United States, as anything you say can be used as evidence against the detainee in immigration court.

### 6. Contact local jails.

If the person is not in ICE-operated detention facility, he or she may have been taken to a local jail or correctional facility. You'll want to start calling all the ones in the area. Explain who you are, and ask for information on what's going on and how to visit or help.

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## planning your visit

### Do Bring

1. A form of identification
2. The "Alien Number" also known as "A Number" of the person you will be visiting
3. Full name of the person you're visiting
4. Change-quarters. Many facilities offer coin operated lockers to store your items

### Don't Bring:

1. Leave all non-essential items in your car (sunglasses, phone, camera) and expect to store the rest of your essential items in a locker (keys, ID).

### What to Expect Upon Arrival of the Facility

1. You will need to check-in with the front desk and fill out a visitation form with your personal information, name and "alien number" of the person you are visiting and the make and model of your car if you arrived by personal vehicle.
2. When asked about the relation to the person you're visiting, you should say you are a "friend."
3. Be prepared to wait. Visiting hours depend on a variety of factors, therefore expect the possibility of a lengthy waiting period.

### Why Visits Are Important

1. To combat the isolating experience of immigration detention and provide emotional support to detainees.
2. Help to ensure that persons in immigration detention can maintain family and community ties.
3. Visits are often the only consistent community presence in immigration detention facilities and can provide civilian oversight to a system that has little public accountability.

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If you are interested in learning more about visiting people in detention, how to locate a loved one or beginning a visitation program, you can contact [info@BlackImmigration.net](mailto:info@BlackImmigration.net).

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# **BLACK IMMIGRATION NETWORK DETAINEE SUPPORT PROGRAM :: PART 2 a guide for starting a visitation program**

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**“The United States has the largest immigration detention infrastructure in the world where people are isolated for months and sometimes years in county jails and for profit prisons.”**

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## the need for visitation

Detention does not only represent the loss of freedom. For many immigrants in the United States, it can also lead to isolation and alienation from loved ones and/or their home communities. Organizations like Community Initiatives for Visiting Immigrants in Confinement (CIVIC) work to end U.S. immigration detention by coordinating volunteer-based, detention visitation programs and monitoring human rights abuses. If your organization is interested in starting a detention visitation program here are some steps you can follow.

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## first steps

1. Find a detention center.  
Find out if there is a nearby detention facility you can visit: <https://www.ice.gov/detention-facilities>
2. Determine your program type.  
Generally, there are two types of Community Visitation Programs: those that operate with the formal approval of ICE and detention center/jail staff and those that operate informally without this approval. To learn more click [here](#).
3. Recruit, screen and train volunteer visitors.
  - a. Recruit: Determine volunteers who are willing and able to be the first visitors representing your organization at the detention facility.
  - b. Screen: Decide whether or not your program will run background checks on all volunteers. If you will, disclose this intent on your interest form or application. Interview applicants in person or by phone to get a clearer sense of each applicant's motives and interest level. For more basic steps check out this module by the Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service.
  - c. Train Volunteer Visitors: training is critical to your program's success. Orient new volunteers to the "ins and outs" of the particular detention center and train them on the program's expectations. Review this training designed by the Community Initiative for Visiting Immigrants in Detention for more details. CIVIC staff is also available to conduct in-person trainings. Send an email to [info@endisolation.org](mailto:info@endisolation.org) for more information.

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## Become A Pen Pal

While there are over 40 visitation programs across the country, there remains over 200 detention facilities without a visitation program. CIVIC's Pen Pal Program is designed to connect volunteers in any part of the country with people in immigration detention who do not yet have visitors. To become a volunteer with CIVIC's Pen Pal Program, you must be 18 years or older. The Pen Pal Program is open to non-U.S. citizens and undocumented individuals.

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