FAMILY PREPAREDNESS GUIDE



What is Family Preparedness?

- Family preparedness is about making legal, financial, and caregiving plans in advance. This way, if someone is detained or deported, their children, loved ones, and important affairs are protected.

Why it Matters?

- Without preparation, families face greater risks of disruption — children may be separated from their parents, savings may become inaccessible, or loved ones may struggle to navigate the system. While no preparation can eliminate these risks, Family Preparedness equips loved ones with essential information and tools to better protect one another.

Know your Rights

- Understanding your rights and how and when to use them could help you avoid detention. Learn more here.

Know Your Rights Guide

Find Emergency Contact(s)

- Your emergency contact should be a trusted adult who you know will act quickly and responsibly if something happens to you. It's important to consider your contact's immigration status. If they are also at risk of detention, they might not be the best person to rely on. Remember, you can have more than one emergency contact, which gives you flexibility and extra protection in case one person isn't available when needed. Make sure that your emergency contact is able to pick up the phone quickly. They should have access to your A#, date of birth, and country of origin to be able to locate you in the detention system. Below are examples of common responsibilities of an emergency contact:
  - Gather your important documents.
  - Notify your family members.
  - Contact an immigration attorney and submit documents for your defense.
  - Notify your employer.
  - Take care of your pets and home necessities during your absence.
  - Take care of your children.
  - Take care of your finances.

What is an A#?



Find a Person to Take Care of Your Kids

- Unfortunately, ICE raids and arrests often separate children from their parents. Naming a caregiver ahead of time gives your children a better chance of receiving care even if you are separated. One of the easiest forms that allows you to appoint a caregiver is the Parental Designation Form (OCFS-4940), which allows a person of your choice to handle basic educational and medical needs, such as picking up a child from school or taking them to a doctor's appointment. Parents keep all their rights when they sign this form.

Look Up Your Case

- Learn how to look up your case in the court system. Go to acis.eoir.justice.gov or call (800) 898-7180 and give your A# and country of origin to confirm your next court date and if you were ordered to be removed.

What is a Removal Order?

NYIC

This guide is for informational purposes only. It is not legal advice. If you have questions about your rights, your family situation, or your immigration case, you should speak with a qualified immigration or family law attorney, or an accredited representative.

New Americans Hotline:
1-800-566-7636
MULTI-LINGUAL AND ANONYMOUS
Monday – Friday, 8 AM – 8 PM EST
Saturday – Sunday, 9 AM – 5 PM EST

NEW YORK STATE | Department of State
Office for New Americans

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Organize Your Documents



- Make several copies of all your important documents. Create digital copies of these documents as well (you can take pictures of the important documents with your phone).
- Store the originals and at least one physical copy in a safe place.
- Make copies of your children's documents and make them accessible, e.g., place them in a folder in the child's backpack.
- If you need to show a document to law enforcement, avoid handing over your phone, which can contain more personal information than you intend to share.

Get Travel Documents of Your Home Country

- If it is safe and possible to do so, you may want to apply for a passport or travel document for yourself and your children. This can help with travel and may prevent problems if you need to leave the U.S. But for some people, like asylum-seekers, getting or renewing a passport from their home country can be risky. Talk to a trusted legal provider before taking this step. To learn more about obtaining a travel document from your home country, you would need to contact your consulate or visit their website.

Enable Access to Money

- Keep your savings in a bank account rather than relying on cash. In detention, you might need money to make a phone call or buy necessities.
- Make sure your bank account is linked to a debit card so you — or someone you trust — can withdraw funds quickly if needed, even from abroad.
- Have online banking access set up in advance. That way, you can access your funds remotely.
- You might also want to add a trusted person to your account as a joint account holder, so your family can access the money if you're unable to.
- Save money whenever possible — even a small emergency fund can make a huge difference.

Consider Preparing the Following Forms

- Important Information about You
- Important Information about your Child
- Permission to Pick Up a Paycheck
- Permission for a Child to Travel
- Standby Guardianship
- Parental Designation Form
- U.S. Passport Application for Children



To learn more about these forms, see our Guide to Family Preparedness Forms.

Notarization Reminders

- Some forms require notarization. In New York State, notary fees are capped at $2 per signature. Families can find notary services at public libraries, banks, some UPS or FedEx offices, and Walgreens. We urge families to beware of fraud: notaries in the U.S. are not automatically attorneys and cannot give immigration advice.

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Interested in Family Preparedness Services?

- The NYIC provides remote assistance with family preparedness documents. If you would like help with these documents, please fill out this form. Please note that this is not a referral for help with your immigration case.

