

How Immigrant Families Can Prepare for Immigration Encounters

A Guide for Asians and Asian Americans

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This guide was updated in May 2026. It is for informational purposes only and should not be considered legal advice. The guide has been adapted from the Immigrant Legal Resource Center Family Preparedness Plan, Immigrant Defense Know Your Rights with ICE guide, plus information from organizations listed under Additional Resources and conversations with those directly impacted. It does not cover every aspect of family preparedness, but is intended to be an informative starting point. Additional resources can be found in our [**Navigating Current U.S. Immigration Policy & Enforcement guide for Asians**](#).

To start, review this [Step-by-Step Family Preparedness Plan](#) from the Immigrant Legal Resource Center. Additional family preparedness guides from the Asian American Resource Workshop and NAKASEC can be found [here](#) and [here](#).

Explore Immigration Options

Organizations that offer immigration assistance can be found below. More detailed information can be found in our [general resource guide](#).

- [Immigrant Defense Project](#) offers a free legal helpline and list of information to have on hand when contacting legal counsel.
- [Asian Americans Advancing Justice Southern California](#) offers phone support in English and multiple Asian languages.
- [Project Corazon](#), part of Lawyers for Good Government, offers free legal help to asylum-seekers.
- [The Immigration Advocates Network](#) lists nonprofit organizations that can provide free or low-cost immigration legal services.
- [The Acacia Center for Justice](#) offers a range of support services ranging from legal support for unaccompanied immigrant children to legal education for people in immigration proceedings who are not in detention.
- [Asian Law Caucus \(ALC\)](#) offers KYR guides in Chinese, Vietnamese, Korean, Tagalog, Hmong, Khmer, Bengali, Punjabi and Urdu, plus resources for Southeast Asian and Bhutanese refugees.
- Find a licensed immigration attorney on the [AILA Lawyer Finder](#).
- Find community organizations and in-language providers near you at the [Asian Resource Hub](#).

Know Your Rights

In the United States, citizens and noncitizens have a range of legal rights. Make sure you, your family and chosen family – regardless of immigration status – know your rights. These rights include the right to remain silent if ICE/the police come to your home or workplace or stop you in public.

- Review information on who may be investigated by ICE and how to respond. Videos can be found [here](#) and [here](#) and written information can be found in the Asian Law Caucus [Know Your Rights: Guide for Immigrant Communities](#).
- Carry a [Know Your Rights red card](#) that explains your right to remain silent. They are available in multiple languages including [Arabic](#), [Simplified](#) and [Traditional Chinese](#), [Korean](#), [Pashto](#), [Punjabi](#), [Tagalog](#) and [Vietnamese](#).
- If you are a green card holder, review these specific [Know Your Rights guidelines](#).
- Download the [Know Your Rights app](#) and the [ReadyNow! app](#) that can alert your lawyer, loved ones and employer if you are detained.
- Read this National Immigration Law Center KYR guide on [Five Things Parents Detained by ICE Should Know](#).
- [The education providers guide](#) from the National Immigration Law Center informs teachers about their rights and students' rights.

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Carry Your Documents

- U.S. citizens are not required to carry identification or documentation. However, if you wish to carry proof of citizenship for added safety, carry a color photocopy of your passport page or a passport card (not valid for international travel) rather than a digital copy that would require you to give ICE access to your phone. Let a trusted person know where your passport is located in case it has to be retrieved.
- Under federal law, a lawful permanent resident 18 years of age and over “shall at all times carry...any certificate of alien registration or alien registration receipt card issued.” Make sure to carry your valid work permit (EAD), green card or visa documentation.
- If you have applied for an employment authorization document or have a pending immigration case, carry a copy of your receipt from U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).
- If you have undocumented status and have lived in the United States for two or more years, proof of time spent in the country may help ensure you receive due process. Recommended documents include tax filings, rental agreements, utility bills and other documents that demonstrate residency. Additional information on documentation can be found on [The Legal Aid Society website](#).
- Memorize and carry the telephone number of someone who can contact your immigration attorney, access your important documents and enact any contingency plans, if needed. Make sure you have shared your A-number, date and place of birth, and full legal name with your attorney and trusted contact.
- Carry contact information for the nearest consulate for your country of origin. They are responsible for organizing travel documents for anyone who is deported and may have a department that assists nationals in distress.

When Traveling

Before travel, review information in our [general resource guide](#).

Organize Important Documents

Keep a file of the documents below in a fireproof box or safe place. Tell your children, family members, and emergency caregiver where to find this information in case of an emergency. Find templates in English and Korean [here](#) and Vietnamese [here](#).

- Passports
- Birth certificates
- Marriage license (if applicable)
- Caregiver's Authorization Affidavit (if applicable)
- Any Restraining Orders you may have against anyone (if applicable)
- A-Number (Alien Registration Number), date and place of birth, and any immigration documentation (work permit, green card, visa, etc.)
- Documents demonstrating your residence in the United States and the amount of time you have been physically present in the United States
- Driver's license and/or other identification cards
- Social Security card or Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN) number
- Registry of birth for U.S.-born children registered in parent's home country (if applicable)
- Important children's information, including school information, medical history, health insurance, medication list, and doctor's contact information
- Emergency numbers and important contacts
- Proof of alien registration, if you are subject to the new requirement.

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Review Financial Information

Immigrant Justice's [Financial Wellness Guide for Immigrants in the U.S.](#) and Families for Freedom's [Financial Handbook for Families Facing Detention & Deportation](#) are dated but helpful for noncitizens thinking about how to protect assets and benefits, especially if facing possible detention or deportation.

Register Your Child's Birth

If your child was born in the United States, register your child's birth with your country's government. In some cases, this may grant your child benefits, including citizenship in your country of origin.

Make Sure Your Children Have Their Passports

If your children were born in the United States, visit [Travel.state.gov](https://travel.state.gov) for more information on obtaining U.S. passports.

This guide was published in advance of the final ruling on the Supreme Court decision regarding Trump v. Barbara, the Birthright Citizenship case that was argued before the Supreme Court in April 2026. The Asian Law Caucus has continuously updated information on [their website](#) in the event of any changes to birthright citizenship.

Make a Child Care Plan

If there is a possibility that you may be detained or deported, decide whether you want your child to accompany you to your home country or stay in the United States in the care of another trusted adult. Begin by compiling a list of emergency numbers and important contacts and a file with important documents. The Immigrant Legal Resource Center has a [Step-by-Step Family Preparedness Plan](#).

List Any Medical Conditions and/or Medications

- Write down any medical conditions or allergies your children have and any medications they take, as well as doctor and health insurance information.
- Keep a copy in your important documents file. Give a copy to your children's school and the adult you designate to care for your children.

Designate an Emergency Caregiver

If possible, designate a U.S. citizen or someone with immigration status who does not face the threat of detention or deportation as the person who can care for your children in case of emergencies. Memorize this person's phone number and have your children memorize it, too.

Make sure your children know who can – and cannot – pick them up from school and care for them. Regularly update all school, afterschool, day care, summer camp and other programs' emergency contact sheets and release forms.

Make sure your emergency contact knows how to access your important documents and information, including your A-Number and date and place of birth (information that can be used to access the [ICE Detainee Locator](#) in the event you are detained). Find detailed information on locating detainees in our [general resource guide](#).

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Explore Extended Caregiving Options

If you plan for your children to remain in the United States with another caretaker in the event you are detained or deported, decide whether to prepare a formal or informal childcare plan.

Verbal Agreements: The most informal arrangement. The other adult will not have legal authority to make medical or school-related decisions on behalf of your children.

Caregiver's Authorization Affidavit (CAA): The better arrangement. A CAA will allow your contact to make certain school and medical decisions on behalf of your children.

Guardianship: The most formal arrangement — a court appoints a guardian. Talk to an attorney before taking this step.

Although geared toward child refugees, it may be helpful for any potential caregiver to also review the [traumatic separation guidelines](#) from The National Child Traumatic Stress Network.

Talk to Your Children About Your Plans

When talking to children about ICE, be honest about what you don't know while reminding them that you and others care about their well-being and safety. When children express fear, validate those feelings. Welcome questions. Share your own emotions. Assure your children they will be taken care of if you are unable to care for them, even for a short period of time.

Seek Emotional Support

Family separation is incredibly difficult. Make sure you tend to your well-being, as you also support your child. The [Informed Immigrant guide on mental health](#) is a great place to begin. [Asians Do Therapy](#) gives an overview on what therapy is and how to find a therapist. Therapists who support Asian community members and free therapy options can be sourced through the [Asian Mental Health Collective](#), [South Asian Mental Health Initiative & Network](#) and [National Queer and Trans Therapists of Color Network](#).

The [UndocuHealth Resilience and Community Care Toolkit](#) is also a helpful resource, as are the [Stop AAPI Hate Health and Wellness Collection](#) and [Immigrant Wellbeing Toolkit](#).

Protect All Children

ICE has detained minors who are both U.S. citizens and noncitizens. Under the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the Office of Refugee Resettlement has established the ORR National Call Center Helpline to help locate unaccompanied migrant children. Find all details [here](#). This guide from the [Children's Immigration Law Academy](#) and the [United We Dream educators toolkit](#) are helpful for both educators and school support staff.

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