

Navigating Current U.S. Immigration Policy & Enforcement

A Guide for Asians and Asian Americans

Curated by Simran Sethi, Nova Institute for Health, with
editorial support from Jasmine Chauhan and Susan Yu



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This guide was updated in May 2026 and is for informational purposes only. It is not legal advice and information may not apply to every individual. The guide has been adapted from the Immigrant Legal Resource Center Family Preparedness Plan, Immigrant Defense, and ACLU Know Your Rights with ICE guides, plus information from organizations listed under Additional Resources and conversations with those directly impacted. Additional information can be found in our [Family Preparedness Guide](#).

In the United States, all people are intended to have a range of rights, regardless of citizenship.

Noncitizen Registration

Most noncitizens ages 14 or older who have been in the U.S. for 30+ days must register with the federal government and submit to fingerprinting.

If you are 18 or older, carry proof of your registration at all times. Failure to comply may result in fines or imprisonment. Registration does not grant immigration status or employment authorization.

Many noncitizens are already considered registered. This includes green card holders, those who entered on a visa and received a Form I-94, and those in removal proceedings. Use the [United States Citizen and Immigration Service ARR Determination Tool](#) before taking any action.

Additional information can be found here:

- [Sikh Coalition Community FAQ on Registration](#)
- [NILC FAQs: Non-Citizen Registration Requirement](#)
- [ILRC FAQs on Registration](#)
- [Informed Immigrant: Registration Guidance](#)

Stay Updated on Changing Policies

Before traveling to or from the United States, review updated policies. This [FAQ](#) can help you understand the Entry Ban Proclamations and immigration policy updates issued in December 2025. The [United We Dream guide on Traveling with DACA](#) has additional information for DACA recipients.

Entry bans now affect nationals from numerous countries and change regularly. Consult the following resources, plus any updates, before travel.

- [Asian Law Caucus FAQ on Trump's "Terrorism" Order and Travel/Entry Rights](#)
- [CAIR Community Alert on the Entry Ban](#)
- [NIAC Travel Ban Hub](#) – guidance for Iranian/Persian community members.

Language access: Your right to interpretation still applies in most legal and medical contexts. Review the [ALC KYR on EO 14224](#) and ICE's [Language Access Program](#).

Know Your Rights

In the United States, both citizens and noncitizens have legal 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](#).

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Know Your Rights (continued)

- 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.

Community-language KYR materials to carry or post:

- Find KYR flyers for home in [English](#), [Arabic](#), [Bangla](#), [Simplified](#) and [Traditional Chinese](#), [Hindi](#), [Korean](#), [Punjabi](#), [Tagalog](#), [Urdu](#) and [Vietnamese](#).
- Find DO NOT ENTER door posters in [English](#), [Bangla](#), [Hindi](#), [Nepali](#), [Punjabi](#) and [Urdu](#) that can be printed, laminated and attached to your door.
- The [NAKASEC Know Your Rights App](#) can read your rights aloud to an ICE agent and sends an emergency message to a designated contact. It is available in multiple languages including Bangla, Burmese, Chinese, Farsi, Hindi, Hmong, Khmer, Korean, Nepali, Tagalog, Thai, Urdu and Vietnamese.

Rights in specific situations

- **Airports/travel:** ICE enforcement occurs at airports and those who are undocumented or have temporary immigration status are more vulnerable to arrest. Review Chinese for Affirmative Action's [travel overview](#) in English and Chinese, CAIR's [video](#) and written [guidance on travel and free speech](#), and [CUNY Law's KYR When Traveling](#).
 - Review the [Immigrant ARC Digital Hygiene Checklist](#) and the Electronic Frontier Foundation document [Digital Privacy at the U.S. Border](#) before travel.
 - For undocumented individuals, see [Immigrants Rising travel guidance](#). [According to NILC](#), it is *not* advisable to use the CBP Home app since it shares your location and intention to travel. Do not download or use it without consulting an attorney.
 - Students on an F-1 visa may find the [travel overview](#) from Bates College helpful.
 - If you are a foreign citizen who has been living in the U.S. make sure to review this [travel document checklist](#) before returning to the U.S.
 - To report a civil rights incident at an airport, visit the [CAIR](#) or [Asian Law Caucus](#) websites.
- **Houses of worship (temples, mandirs, gurdwarae, churches and mosques):** ICE can enter publicly accessible areas — lobbies, worship halls — without a warrant. To enter private areas, ICE needs a court-issued judicial warrant. An administrative (ICE) warrant is not sufficient. For more information, review the following:
 - [Hindus for Human Rights: KYR for Mandirs \(PDF\)](#)
 - Sikh Coalition: KYR for Gurdwarae in [English](#) and [Punjabi](#)
 - [Muslims for Just Futures: Sanctuary Spaces Guidance](#)
 - [KYR in Korean](#)
- **Workplaces:** Review information on ICE entering workplaces at [National Employment Law Project](#) and under [Asian Law Caucus Worker Resources](#).

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Support for specific identities:

- **LGBTQ+:** [National Queer Asian Pacific Islander Alliance \(NQAPIA\)](#) for advocacy and resources for queer and trans Asian Pacific Islander immigrants.
- **Disabilities:** See [Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund \(DREDF\)](#) and [Disability Rights California](#) for resources on immigrant rights for people with disabilities.
- **Intercountry Adoptees:** [Adoptees for Justice \(A4J\)](#) for Asian adoptees who lack U.S. citizenship due to a loophole in the Child Citizenship Act. Adoptees can seek legal referrals and mutual aid and access a free monthly mental health support group.

If you are experiencing violence within your home (intimate partner or domestic violence), the [Violence Against Women Act](#) is intended to provide a path to legal status that does not require your abuser's involvement. [U visas](#) are intended to protect crime victims who cooperate with law enforcement.

[Tools and information](#) can be found on the Asia Pacific Institute on Gender Based Violence website. Additional resources include:

- The [NARIKA: National South Asian DV Agency Directory](#) for immediate support. Hotline support and translation resources in Arabic, English, Farsi, Hindi, Urdu and other languages can be found on the [North American Islamic Shelter for the Abused](#) site. Queer and teen support for South Asians can be found through [Kiran](#).
- Hotline and translation resources in Chinese, English, Korean and Mongolian can be accessed through [KAN-WIN](#). [BPSOS](#) supports Vietnamese survivors.
- Those in the Washington, DC area can find support through the [Asian/Pacific Islander Domestic Violence Resource Project](#).
- Additional regional support organizations can be found [here](#).

If your case escalates, you may wish to review the following:

- **Denaturalization:** Proceedings have increased. Review the [Muslims for Just Futures KYR on Denaturalization \(PDF\)](#) and [ALC FAQs on Denaturalization](#) for more information.
- **Post-deportation:** [NIPNLG Post-Deportation Self-Assessment Guide](#)

Secure Your Devices

- Your social media activity may factor into immigration evaluations and devices may be checked during travel or at checkpoints. For digital security, use strong passwords, enable two-factor authentication and be careful what you post and share on social media.
- When traveling, review the [Activist Checklist Travel Security Guide](#) and additional guides listed under "Traveling internationally" above.

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.

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Carry Your Documents (continued)

- 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.

Plan for Medical and Well-Being Needs

Write down and carry important medical information. This should include contact information for your doctors and the name and dosages of any medications you take.

Consider allowing someone you trust to have access to your medical information in case you are detained. You may wish to sign a HIPAA form that gives your trusted contact access to your medical records and allows your doctors to communicate with them about your medical needs.

Review [this NILC webpage](#) if you are a noncitizen and need information about public benefits including access to health care.

Prioritize your well-being. 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](#).

Organize Important Documents and Information in a Preparedness Plan

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 a template here and additional details in our [family preparedness guide](#).

If You Are Approached ...

Review the [IDP guide](#) on how to respond if ICE approaches you in public or at home.

Briefly:

- Remain calm and keep your hands visible.
- Do not lie or show false documents.
- Do not try to physically resist arrest or run away. If you flee, ICE or law enforcement may use this against you.
- You have the right to remain silent about your country of birth, your immigration status and how you entered the United States if you are asked by any law enforcement officials.

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If You Are Approached in Public

ICE agents may wear masks or civilian clothes and/or approach in unmarked vehicles. Review the [IDP guide](#) on how to respond if ICE approaches your car or person.

Briefly:

- When ICE agents arrest someone in public or after stopping a car, it typically happens quickly. They may call your name out loud and ask you to confirm your name and then detain you.
- Before you say your name – or anything else – ask: "Am I free to go?"
- If they say "yes," say "I don't want to answer your questions" or "I'd rather not speak with you right now" and walk away.
- If they say "no," remain silent. Say "I want to use my right not to answer questions" and then "I want to speak to a lawyer."
- Do not answer questions about your immigration status or where you were born. Law enforcement may use any information you share against you.
- Do not hand over any documents such as a passport, consular IDs or expired visas.
- If ICE tries to search your belongings or inside your pockets, say, "I do not consent to a search."

If You Are Approached in Criminal Court or at a Scheduled Check-In

ICE is making arrests at or near courthouses. You should not miss a court date or check-in as it can create additional legal challenges. However, your safety planning may need to account for this possibility.

In anticipation:

- Review the information above.
- Memorize and carry the phone numbers of a trusted person you will call in an emergency. Alert them prior to attending your appointment or check-in so they are aware of your location should you be detained.

Remember:

- You have the right to refuse to sign anything before you talk to a lawyer.
- You have the right to speak to a lawyer and the right to make a phone call.
- Do not sign anything you do not understand and/or agree with. Doing so may compromise your right to speak with a lawyer or have a hearing in front of an immigration judge. This may result in you being deported without a hearing.

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If ICE Is at Your Door

Review the information above and the [NILC Guide](#) on how to respond if ICE approaches you at home.

- Do not open the door for ICE or any police officer without a signed judicial warrant. Once you open the door, you lose certain rights.
- You are not required to open the door unless an agent can show you a judicial warrant with a clear header from a United States District Court, signed by a judge, with your specific and correct name and address, and on or before a certain date range, not to exceed 14 days.
- Note: An administrative warrant issued by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security is not a valid search warrant. It is not signed by a judge.
- If the police or ICE knock on your door, ask them to slide the search warrant under the door or show it through a window or peephole.
- Find Do Not Enter signs, Know Your Rights red cards and overviews of how to respond in the Know Your Rights section above. Keep a Know Your Rights red card on you or by your door at all times. You can slide the card under the door to ICE, show it to the officers or read the English side of the card to them aloud.
- You have the right to remain silent and can refuse to answer ICE's questions.
- Do not give ICE any personal information about yourself or anyone in your family. Say that you want to remain silent until you speak with a lawyer. Do not answer any questions, especially about your birthplace, immigration status, age or how you entered the United States.
- If the agents are looking for someone else, ask them to leave their contact information. You don't have to tell them where to find the person and should not lie or misguide them.

If an Employee Is Detained by ICE

Review [this guide for employers](#) from the National Immigration Law Center. You may want to write up a response plan that can be shared with all employees, compile a list of lawyers or legal support organizations that can provide legal advice, provide a Know Your Rights training for staff and/or post [KYR in the workplace](#) information.

- If ICE agents try to enter a public area of your business, you can say: "I am the employer/manager. You cannot go to other areas of the workplace without my permission."
- If agents try to enter private areas of your business, you can say: "This is a private area. You cannot enter without a judicial warrant signed by a judge. Do you have a judicial warrant?"
- If the agents provide a warrant, make sure it is dated and signed by a judge. You can still decline to give consent for the search.
- If agents try to question you or your employees, remind them that they have a right to remain silent and to ask for an attorney and refer them to the guides below.
- [National Employment Law Project: If Immigration Comes to Your Workplace](#)
- [Asian Law Caucus: Community Education Resources for Immigrant Workers](#)

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♥ If a Loved One Is Detained by ICE

Review [these details](#) from Immigrant Justice and the [NILC Guide on How To Find a Loved One After a U.S. Immigration Arrest](#) that is available in multiple languages.

You can find background information on ICE detention [here](#) and a list of detention centers [here](#). It may be helpful to review [ICE's National Detention Standards and National Detainee Handbook](#) so you know the kind of care your loved one should receive.

Searching detainment databases: The [National Immigration Law Center](#) has a detailed guide on how to use the [ICE Online Detainee Locator System](#) to find loved ones who have been detained.

- In order to locate someone in the system, you need to know their A-number, first and last name, and date and place of birth. The 8- or 9-digit A-number is listed on all DHS and EOIR correspondence.
- You may also need to search the [BOP: Federal Bureau of Prisons website](#). On the dropdown menu, choose "INS number" for the A-number.
- Use [this locator](#) for minors in immigration custody.
- When searching for a loved one in these systems, try different spellings of their name and be patient. It can take time for the system to update. If there are no updates after several days, try contacting the last facility where your loved one was held.

Initial communication: After someone is detained, they should be allowed to make an initial phone call to a family member or friend. They are only permitted to make collect calls, so be prepared to accept a call from an unknown number. If you do not answer the call, the detained person will not be able to leave a message.

Getting funds to detainees: Detention centers offer different methods of getting outside funds to detainees. They can be used in the detention center commissary or for calls. ICE Detention Centers use the [Access Corrections](#) website and app to receive these funds. The Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP) uses MoneyGram.

Ongoing communication with detainees: Some ICE detention facilities give detainees access to a tablet that they can use to call or text through apps from 'Getting Out.' Any non-legal calls may be monitored and/or recorded. The detention center should put any remaining commissary funds onto a pre-loaded debit card that is given to the detainee upon departure.

To see if your detained loved one has an upcoming Immigration Court hearing, check the [EOIR Automated Case Information website](#) or call 1-800-898-7180.

Additional information on how to support people in detainment can be found in the [California Collaborative for Immigrant Justice resource guide](#) and the following resources:

- [NILC: How To Find a Loved One After a U.S. Immigration Arrest](#)
- [NILC: What to Do if Arrested or Detained](#)
- [SEARAC: Resources for Southeast Asian Refugees Facing Deportation](#)
- [Resources for People Detained or Worried About Being Detained.](#)

Care for yourself so you can care for them. As difficult as this situation is for the person being detained, it is critical to also prioritize your well-being. The resources listed above under "Support Your Well-Being" may help.

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If You Are Detained by ICE

ICE policies were updated in February 2026 in an attempt to expand detention by limiting bond eligibility. [NILC has a legal explainer](#) on what this means for noncitizens in immigration proceedings.

- You have the right to a hearing to challenge a deportation order, unless you have waived your right to a hearing, signed a Stipulated Removal Order, or taken “voluntary departure.”
- You have the right to an attorney, but the government does not have to provide one for you. If you do not have a lawyer, ask the court to allow you time to find one.

Securing Legal Counsel: It is very important to work with an experienced immigration attorney. [Immigrant Defense Project](#) offers a free legal email and helpline and a useful list of information to have on hand when contacting legal counsel.

[Asian Americans Advancing Justice SoCal](#) offers phone support in English and multiple Asian languages. [Project Corazon](#) 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 [Muslim Legal Fund](#) also offers legal assistance. [South Asian Legal Defense and Education Fund \(SALDEF\)](#) offers legal education and advocacy for South Asian American communities and [Sikh Coalition](#) gives referrals to Punjabi-speaking immigration attorneys. The [AILA Lawyer Finder](#) is another good source to find counsel.

Release through bond payment: You may be eligible for release with a bond that usually involves paying money to the federal government as collateral for promising to continue to appear for your Immigration Court hearings. However, ICE and the Immigration Courts are increasingly denying people this option.

Habeas corpus petition: Separate from an immigration bond, some detainees may request a release from immigration custody by filing a habeas corpus petition. This is a complicated legal filing but possible to file regardless of immigration status. You may need to proceed with your underlying Immigration Court case as you pursue a habeas case. Information about online immigration proceedings can be found [here](#).

Detainee’s Rights: In addition to the information above, you may want to familiarize yourself with ICE’s [National Detainee Handbook](#) (offered in multiple languages). ICE policy should allow you to hold and wear articles of faith, practice your religion and adhere to dietary restrictions (for religious or medical reasons) while in detention. However, there are numerous reports across faith traditions that these standards are not always honored. Consult your attorney or organizations such as the [Sikh Coalition](#) if your religious rights are being violated. The Sikh Coalition also supplies turbans, gutka and karas through detention center chaplains.

Your Home Country’s Consulate: Have the contact information for the nearest consulate for your country of origin. They are responsible for organizing travel documents for anyone who is deported. Determine if they have a department that assists nationals in distress.

If You Have Been Deported

See the [NIPNLG Post-Deportation Self-Assessment Guide](#) for possible options on returning to the United States.

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Additional Resources

Find community organizations and in-language providers near you on the [Asian Resource Hub](#), plus the following regional in-language helplines:

- Southern California — [Asian Americans Advancing Justice SoCal](#)
- DC Area — [Asian Pacific American Legal Resource Center \(APALRC\)](#) and [Montgomery County Immigrant Rights Collective](#)
- New York / East Coast — [Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund \(AALDEF\)](#)

Other organizations that may be able to offer support include:

- [Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund \(AALDEF\)](#)
- [Asian Americans Advancing Justice SoCal \(AJSOCAL\)](#)
- [Asian Law Caucus](#)
- [Asian Mental Health Collective](#)
- [Asian Pacific American Legal Resource Center \(APALRC\)](#)
- [Asian Pacific Institute on Gender-Based Violence \(API-GBV\)](#)
- [Bhutanese Community of Central Ohio \(BCCO\)](#)
- [Chinese for Affirmative Action \(CAA\)](#)
- [Immigrant Defense Project \(IDP\)](#)
- [Immigrant Legal Resource Center \(ILRC\)](#)
- [Informed Immigrant](#)
- [Muslim Civic Coalition](#)
- [National Employment Law Project \(NELP\)](#)
- [National Immigration Law Center \(NILC\)](#)
- [National Iranian American Council \(NIAC\)](#)
- [National Korean American Service and Education Consortium \(NAKASEC\)](#)
- [National Queer Asian Pacific Islander Alliance \(NQAPIA\)](#)
- [Project Anar](#) for South Asian, Afghan and Persian communities
- [South Asian Coalition Resource Hub](#)
- [Southeast Asia Resource Action Center \(SEARAC\) Community Resources](#)
- [Southeast Asian Freedom Network \(SEAFN\)](#) including a 24/7 Emergency Hotline
- [South Asian Coalition Resource Hub](#)
- [Stop AAPI Hate](#)
- [Tanggol Migrante](#) alliance of Filipino organizations, including [Families of Filipinos in Detention \(FFIND\)](#)
- [Tsuru for Solidarity](#)

Simran Sethi is a media fellow at the Nova Institute for Health.