

Supporting Immigrant Neighbors in Your City



Action Guide and Resources for Synagogues, Clergy & Communities

Revised 5/20/2026

Over the last months and with no end in sight, major immigration enforcement operations are expanding into a growing number of cities across the country. This resource is intended to help you identify ways to support impacted immigrant communities – both during initial emergency stages and for the long-term.

Connect with Local Organizations Supporting Immigrants

It's important to connect with immigrant organizations already doing the work for their own communities and follow their lead. You may also check with local interfaith organizing or clergy networks. We additionally recommend checking these resources to identify organizations in your area:

- Check out the Ethnic Community Based Organizations (ECBO) National Cohort from We Are All America (WAAA) [here](#).
- Access the national ECBO directory put together by the Karen Organization of San Diego (KOSD), organized by state, [here](#).
- Look at recipients of the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR)'s Ethnic Community Self-Help Grants, which can be found [here](#).

Engagement Considerations:

Immigration enforcement in these times is very fluid and subject to rapid change. Flexibility and responsiveness to our immigrant neighbors' needs and requests are key to this work.

- **Organizational Risk**
This guide is not intended to provide legal advice or counsel on any matter, including with respect to the legal representation of or legal assistance for individuals facing imminent deportation or apprehension by ICE in the United States. We strongly advise you to speak with legal counsel to better understand the potential legal risks (if any) and benefits that may be incurred in pursuing any of the actions shared within this document.
- **Individual Risk**
Before volunteering, it is critical to take into consideration your personal level of risk related to any number of factors, including immigration status, and to advise volunteers engaging through your congregation or community to do the same.
- **Understanding the need for trust and verification by immigrant groups.**
ICE and other federal agencies under the current administration are utilizing undercover operations, plainclothes agents, and surveillance to investigate and apprehend undocumented immigrants, including targeting activist groups. Many local immigrant groups have therefore put in place additional verification processes and hoops that need to be jumped through when starting to engage with this work.
- **Communications**
Many local rapid response groups are using Signal to communicate as it is encrypted and doesn't use metadata. If you are starting to use Signal you can find out more about ensuring your privacy by checking

out [this resource](#). It is worth noting that many of our immigrant neighbors continue to use WhatsApp as their regular communication tool, so do make sure you're not leaving out the very folks with whom you need to be in contact.

Support Your Neighbors

Our communities are ecosystems in which every neighbor has a role to play, some of which may require expertise or initial training. Many immigrant serving organizations have specific volunteer opportunities where people can engage directly. While your local leaders may articulate additional specific needs, we have seen the following opportunities offered consistently in providing effective and immediate support:

- **Rapid response networks**
- Join local efforts to respond in real time to immigration enforcement actions by showing up on site and witnessing or video-recording raids, where legally permitted, safe, and appropriate. Connect with mutual aid groups, and immigrant organizations through the links above who may be able to connect you to neighborhood and city rapid response groups.
- **Local organizations providing legal support to immigrant populations** may also connect you to these groups.
- **Emergency food donation and meal delivery for people afraid/unable to leave their homes**
Connect with neighbors, mutual aid groups and local immigrant organizations to better understand needs.
- **Adult accompaniment of children to schools to assist impacted families**
Reach out to schools and districts with high immigrant populations as they may already have developed emergency plans and have ways to deploy volunteers.
- **Protection of worship services for faith communities with significant immigration populations**
Some churches have made their services by registration only and privatized the space to prevent immigration enforcement from entering without a judicial warrant. They have created programs for people not at risk to check-in individuals and provide a witnessing bystander presence.
- **Assistance in creating [standby guardianship plans](#) in case of parental arrest, detention or deportation**
- **Referrals to vetted and credentialed immigration legal service providers, nonprofits or private firms for impacted individuals**
[Here](#) is a list of immigration legal service providers across the country where you can refer individuals who are in need of legal assistance.
- **Find more about HIAS' pro-bono program [here](#).**
- **Accompaniment programs for individuals engaging with the immigration system through ICE check-ins, immigration court, and other public places people may fear going**
 - o [Watch this webinar](#) to learn more about accompaniment.
 - o Because detentions are increasing during once-routine encounters with immigration enforcement, accompaniment programs supporting individuals and Court Watch programs that monitor general court proceedings have been essential both for impacted individuals and for shining light on changed practices. Accompaniment is both an emergency and long-term response that pre-dates this moment and will be needed long after it – and there is a significant cache of resources to guide involvement.

- HIAS has developed an [online Community of Practice](#) for activists in the Jewish community across the country to connect and use in support of their local efforts. We invite you to consider joining.
- **Remote and in-person court observation**
Volunteer with the [Immigration Court Observation & Awareness Project](#) through the ABA Commission on Immigration. This is a **flexible volunteer opportunity with both in-person and remote options**. No prior immigration law experience or language skills are required. Volunteers receive training on how to access hearings, what to expect in immigration court, and how to complete the observation form.

Educate Your Community

- HIAS' [policy platform pledge](#) lays out a vision that values the contributions of immigrants, welcomes refugees, and upholds the safety and dignity of all those who were forced to flee their homes.
- **Know Your Rights (KYR) information is essential not only for impacted populations but for people who find themselves in bystander situations witnessing arrests and detentions.**
Consider hosting and/or otherwise sharing KYR resources and trainings from reputable organizations such as the [National Immigration Law Center](#). Be aware that there may be state- or city-specific variations to particular laws, sometimes based on cooperation agreements with local law enforcement.
- **Reclaiming a religious voice for welcome matters in our public discourse. Equip your community with the Jewish language to speak about the values motivating us.**
HIAS.org includes a robust [Jewish educational resources section](#), with content for most holidays, ready-to-use prayers and liturgical readings, and evergreen text studies.
- **Establish plans for your own community in case of encounters with law enforcement.**
 - Places of worship along with schools and hospitals are no longer treated as “sensitive locations” which means that arrests can now take place on the premises. As of January 2026, ICE is asserting in internal policy guidance that its officers may use *administrative warrants* — not warrants signed by a judge — to make civil immigration arrests, and in some cases to enter private residences without a judicial warrant when executing those administrative warrants. This guidance represents a departure from prior practice and has drawn criticism that it likely conflicts with Fourth Amendment protections.
 - You may wish to identify and implement a resource like [this one produced by the Unitarian Universalist Association](#) as guidance for their congregations.
- However, none of this guidance provided guarantees that ICE will adhere to the law or not engage in aggressive, violent, or retaliatory tactics against individuals who assert their rights. To the extent you are safe, willing, and able, you should still register your non-consent, verbally and calmly, to any legal violation while exercising your rights, as well as do your best to document as many details as possible about the occurrence, so that illegal acts can later be challenged in court and brought to light.
- **Preparing the Jewish Community for Reengaging in Coalitions**
Since October 7th, divisions over Israel and Gaza have damaged or broken many coalitions on domestic issues. While mistrust and feelings of abandonment linger, we are seeing increasing trends of reactivating these networks both from those committed to and critical of Israel. For those wanting to reengage but who remain concerned for communities that feel wounded by these dynamics, we recommend this article: [Rebuilding Coalitions Toward a Just Future for All](#). Those at the forefront of this work have highlighted the importance of building resilience for discomfort and clarity around parameters of engagement.

Consider Long-Term Responses

The threat and trauma done to immigrant communities will not dissipate with lessened media coverage or the conclusion of high-visibility operations. Continuing to be present for impacted populations, fighting to reclaim our national culture of welcome, and advocating to stop harmful policies and implement humane ones is essential to our long-term national identity as a free and fair democracy.

- **Keep advocating for just policies and ensure your elected representatives know where you stand.**
 - o On a federal level it is essential to [tell Congress to rein in ICE](#).
 - o State-level immigration advocacy is essential because it directly shapes the daily lives of immigrants, offering (or restricting) access to driver's licenses, education, and legal protection. Connect with immigrant led and/or multi-faith advocacy organizations to understand the legislation they see as most critical to their communities. There is no one-size-fits-all agenda that applies to all local contexts – it differs from state to state, and understanding your own locale is most important.
- **Join and Participate in the HIAS Accompaniment Community of Practice (COP)**

The COP will be useful to you during this time of increased enforcement and operations as well as on an ongoing basis. We hope that you will stay and share the expertise you gain to support other communities across the country as they experience the same thing.
- Check out and get involved with the range of [HIAS programs that offer ongoing support for our immigrant neighbors](#).
- **Encourage Jewish clergy to join the HIAS Clergy Council.**

The HIAS Clergy Council of more than 500 American Jewish clergy is one of our fastest and most effective advocacy voices. This no-time, no-financial commitment council enables clergy to leverage their moral voices through public letters and statements quickly and collectively.

Prepare Your Leaders

- HIAS staff may be available for non-legal conversations as you think through your larger community response.

If local clergy/organization leaders would like to consult with HIAS staff, please reach out to the HIAS Community Engagement Team at takeaction@hias.org.