



Welcome the stranger.
Protect the refugee.

Humanitarian Parole for Ukrainians Toolkit

Last Updated: July 29, 2022

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About HIAS

There have never been more people seeking safety and so few places willing to protect and welcome them. Nearly 80 million people are fleeing persecution. Governments should be taking responsibility to support them, but instead, their responses are unacceptable. Founded in the late 1800s, HIAS is there for refugees when and where they need help most. We are a Jewish humanitarian organization that works in the United States and 15 other countries, providing vital services to refugees and asylum seekers of all faiths so they can rebuild their lives in safety, and with dignity. With the Jewish community beside us, we also advocate for the rights of forcibly displaced people globally. Over our expansive history, we've confronted—and overcome—formidable challenges facing refugees. Today, we are a leader with the expertise, partnerships, and values necessary to respond to the global crisis. Refugees deserve a world in which they find welcome, safety, and freedom. With you, we can create it. Join us.

- **Learn** about the global refugee crisis and how to make our world more safe and welcoming.
- [Visit HIAS.org](https://www.hias.org) to learn about our work in the U.S. and 15 countries around the world.
- **Donate to HIAS**, or directly to [HIAS' Legal Team](#). Your gift will make an immediate impact in the lives of refugees and asylum seekers.
- [Take action](#). Speak up, show up, or organize your community to advocate for the rights of refugees and asylum seekers everywhere.
- [Volunteer](#) your time and talents directly to help refugees and asylum seekers near you.
- **Welcome the Stranger**. Learn about the Jewish values we bring to our work and how you can live them out every day.
- **Follow HIAS on social media** ([Facebook](#) – [Instagram](#) – [Twitter](#)) to stay informed on refugee news and ways to help.

About Humanitarian Parole

Humanitarian Parole is a tool used by the U.S. government to grant certain foreign nationals entry to the United States notwithstanding that they do not have a visa or other lawful basis to enter. Individuals who are outside of the U.S. may request parole into the United States based on urgent humanitarian need or significant public benefit reasons. Parole is considered on a case-by-case basis, and if granted, it is authorized only for a temporary period, specifically noted by DHS. Although parole allows an individual to lawfully enter and remain in the United States, the parolee technically remains an “applicant for admission.” Essentially, parole functions as a legal fiction, acting as if the foreign national has remained at the U.S. border despite having entered and resided within the territory of the United States.

A parolee is not eligible to work immediately after arrival in the U.S., but can apply for employment authorization based on their parole status.

Importantly, parole does not confer any independent immigration status, and parole alone does not provide a path to permanent residency or other lawful immigration status. However, a parolee may be able to obtain lawful status in the United States through other means. See below for “What Comes Next.”

Applying for Humanitarian Parole as a Ukrainian National

Generally, a foreign national seeking Humanitarian Parole must prove that their entry to the U.S. is based on an urgent humanitarian need, and that they have a U.S. sponsor (also referred to as a “supporter”) who will receive and provide for them in the United States.

On April 21, 2022, the Biden Administration announced a special process for Ukrainians under its “Uniting for Ukraine” program, which creates a special pathway for Ukrainians to enter the United States on a temporary two-year period of parole.

Ukrainians who are seeking parole under this program **do not** have to complete the full Humanitarian Parole application form. Notably, they do not need to complete and file USCIS Form I-131, Application for Travel Document (Humanitarian Parole), which does need to be completed by nationals of other countries who may be seeking humanitarian parole. If you are seeking humanitarian parole for a national from any other country, please refer to HIAS’ standard [Humanitarian Parole Pro Bono Toolkit](#) for additional information, as the information below will not apply to your case.

Ukrainians who want to enter the United States on parole status via the “Uniting for Ukraine” program must have a sponsor in the United States who agrees to provide them with financial support for the duration of their stay in the United States. The U.S. based sponsor will prepare

and file a Form I-134, Affidavit of Support on behalf of the Ukrainian beneficiary. See below for more information.

Throughout the rest of this toolkit, we will use the term “sponsor” to refer to the U.S. based individual or organization who is completing the Form I-134, Affidavit of Support. The U.S. government is also using the term “supporter” to refer to the person playing this role.

We will use the terms “applicant for parole” or “beneficiary” to refer to the Ukrainian national seeking parole status.

Completion of Form I-134, Affidavit of Support

The goal of the Form I-134, Affidavit of Support (“[Form I-134](#)”) is to establish that the beneficiary/applicant for parole will not become a “public charge” upon arriving in the United States. The Form I-134 should be accompanied by proof of the sponsor’s income, and include bank statements, employment letters, and/or U.S. tax returns. Sponsors applying on behalf of Ukrainian nationals must file the [Form I-134 online](#).

Who Applies: The Form I-134 is completed and signed by the person sponsoring the Ukrainian national, the “sponsor.” The Ukrainian national seeking to enter the U.S. is considered the “beneficiary,” and does not sign this form. Unlike other Humanitarian Parole applicants, Ukrainians seeking parole through Uniting for Ukraine are not permitted to sponsor themselves.

Filing Fee: There is no filing fee for the Affidavit of Support.

How to file

Once you have created your [online account](#) with USCIS, you will be asked to begin the form. First, you will be asked if you are an applicant/petitioner or a legal representative. If you are the person serving as a sponsor, then you should select the first option.

Account Type

Select an account type:

I am an applicant, petitioner, or requestor.


- USCIS only offers certain benefit types for online filing. Please refer to uscis.gov for further guidance.
- You may use this account type to file Form I-134 as an individual agreeing to financially support a beneficiary.
- You cannot file an H-1B Registration with this account type.

I am a Legal Representative.


- I am an attorney eligible to practice law in the United States.
- I am an accredited representative of a qualified organization that is recognized by the Department of Justice in accordance with 8 CFR part 1292.

[Submit](#)


You will be taken to a page where you can begin your online form:




Add a paper-filed case
View your case status and case history by adding your case to your account



File a form online
Start a new form, upload evidence, and pay and submit online



Enter a representative passcode
Review and sign forms prepared for you by your attorney or representative



Verify your identity
Answer questions about your immigration history to verify your personal identity

Select I-134 from the drop-down menu:

Select the form you want to file online.

I-134, Declaration of Financial Support

I-90, Application to Replace Permanent Resident Card

I-130, Petition for Alien Relative

I-134, Declaration of Financial Support

And then click “Start Form” at the bottom of the page.

You will be asked to fill out basic demographic information about yourself and the individual(s) (aka – beneficiaries) that you are seeking to sponsor. These questions will include confirming your current and past legal names, the names of the beneficiaries, how many dependents the primary beneficiary has, and financial information, including supporting evidence.

If there are questions you are unsure how to answer, refer to the instructions available from DHS [here](#) (on pages 3 and 4).

Adjudication of Form I-134, Affidavit of Support

Once the I-134 has been submitted to USCIS via the online platform, USCIS will review the Form I-134 and supporting evidence to ensure that the sponsor has sufficient financial resources to support the Ukrainian beneficiary for the duration of the parole period. USCIS will also conduct background checks on the sponsor. USCIS may need to request additional information from the sponsor prior to making a decision on the application.

If the Form I-134 is Denied

If USCIS decides that the Form I-134 is insufficient, they will deny the application. That decision is final and cannot be appealed. The Ukrainian beneficiary will receive an email from USCIS notifying them that USCIS determined the Form I-134 filed on their behalf was insufficient. The sponsor may file a new Form I-134 on behalf of the same or another Ukrainian beneficiary, or a different sponsor may file a Form I-134 on behalf of the beneficiary.

If the Form I-134 is Approved

If approved, the Ukrainian beneficiary will receive an email from USCIS with instructions on how to set up an account with myUSCIS and other next steps. Per the USCIS instructions, Ukrainians who are awaiting information about a pending Form I-134 filed on their behalf should regularly check their email, including spam and junk folders, for important messages from USCIS.

The Ukrainian beneficiary will be required to confirm their biographic information on myUSCIS and attest to completion of all requirements including:

- An attestation to certify understanding of the family relationship requirements for children under 18 for Uniting for Ukraine; and
- An attestation to certify that they have completed vaccine requirements or are eligible for an exception to vaccine requirements for measles, polio, and the first dose of an [FDA approved or authorized COVID-19 vaccine](#) or a [WHO-Emergency use listed \(EUL\) COVID-19 vaccine](#).

Upon arrival to the United States, the beneficiary will also need to attest to receiving a medical screening for tuberculosis within 14 days. Additional information about vaccine requirements is [available here](#).

Authorization to travel to the United States

Once the Ukrainian beneficiary has confirmed their biographic information and attested to completing all other requirements, their case will be further processed. Ukrainian beneficiaries will receive an email instructing them to check their myUSCIS account for the result of their authorization to travel. If the individual has been authorized to travel to the United States to seek parole under Uniting for Ukraine, they will be responsible for arranging and funding their own travel. This authorization is valid for 90 days. They will be granted a 2-year parole status upon their entry into the U.S.

After Entry on Humanitarian Parole: What Comes Next?

Humanitarian Parole is not a “visa,” and is not considered a “valid immigration status.” It’s a provision that provides for a temporary period of authorized stay notwithstanding that a person otherwise does not hold valid immigration status. So, what should noncitizens granted humanitarian parole keep in mind about what comes next?

Parole Validity

U.S. immigration authorities can grant humanitarian parole for any period of validity. Ukrainians seeking humanitarian parole under the Uniting for Ukraine program will receive a 2-year parole period.

Employment Authorization

An individual granted humanitarian parole is eligible to apply for employment authorization from USCIS. That application is completed on [Form I-765](#). Humanitarian parole applicants for employment authorization apply under category (c)(11). They can apply for their Social Security Card via Form I-765, and are encouraged to do so. They must include the required fee of \$410, or apply for a fee waiver.

The period of validity of employment authorization should match the individual's period of parole (i.e., the employment authorization card should expire the same day as the parole document).

Address Updates

If a parolee is residing in the United States longer than 30 days, they must report their physical address in the United States. They can change their address online and update their address on any pending applications and petitions at the same time using the [USCIS Online Change of Address](#) system. They must report a change of address within 10 days of moving within the United States or its territories.

Travel Abroad

Humanitarian Parole typically authorizes only one entry to the United States. If someone who enters the U.S. on Humanitarian Parole thereafter leaves the U.S. and travels abroad, they would need to hold another visa or immigration status to be able to re-enter the U.S. For this reason, travel abroad is highly discouraged for individuals who enter with humanitarian parole.

Alternative Pathways to Lawful Status

Given that humanitarian parole is only a short-term remedy, individuals entering the U.S. with humanitarian parole should consider all opportunities for pursuing permanent lawful immigration status in the United States. Some options may include:

Asylum: Asylum is a form of legal protection for an individual who meets the definition of a refugee, but is applying for such status from inside the U.S. A refugee is someone who suffered persecution in the past, or fears persecution in the future, due to one of five protected grounds: race, nationality, religion, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group. They also must show that their government is unable and unwilling to protect them from persecution. Not everyone who suffered or fears harm can meet the legal definition of a refugee. The asylum process often takes years to complete. An individual granted asylum may apply for Lawful Permanent Residency (a green card) after holding asylum status for one year, and may petition to confer asylee status on their spouse and minor children. For more information about applying for asylum, visit the [USCIS website here](#).

Family-Based Immigration: U.S. citizens and Lawful Permanent Residents (LPRs or green card holders) in the U.S. may file petitions to afford immigrant visa petitions to certain family members. This petition is filed on [Form I-130](#). Many foreign family members of U.S. citizens and LPRs, however, are subject to numerical caps on family-based migration, and thus must wait for long periods before a visa is available for them. Who is subject to a waiting period, and

how long the wait may be, can be discerned by looking at the [U.S. Department of State Visa Bulletin](#), which is updated each month. More information about family-based immigration can be found [here](#).

U Visas: Although a person who enters on humanitarian parole won't automatically be eligible for a U visa, many immigrants unfortunately find themselves in situations in which they later become eligible for this form of relief. When a person is the victim of certain type of crime inside the U.S., they may become eligible for a U visa, a special form of protection for victims who collaborate with law enforcement and prosecutors. If your client is a victim of crime in the U.S., encourage them to report it to law enforcement. More information about U visas can be [found here](#).

Refugee Admissions Program: Ukrainian Jews, Evangelical Christians, Catholics, and some members of the Ukrainian Autocephalous Church, can reunite with family members in the U.S. under what's known as the Lautenberg program. The Uniting for Ukraine plan included the administration's intent to prioritize the Lautenberg caseload, however, at this time, we do not have information about the administration's plan for admitting Ukrainian Lautenberg cases. To qualify for the Lautenberg program, the person must be the child, parent, sibling, grandparent, or grandchild of a U.S. resident, asylee, refugee, or citizen. To start the application process, the U.S. relative must apply through a resettlement agency located near where the U.S. family member lives. We also do not yet have confirmation about the implications for Lautenberg applicants who decide to come through the parole program rather than waiting for Lautenberg processing. It is possible that people who come through parole will lose their eligibility for refugee status. HIAS is advocating for this not to happen. Mark Hetfield, HIAS CEO, has asked this question of the Department of State, among others. As of May 4, 2022, we have not heard their formal reply.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. How much money does the sponsor need to make/have to sponsor my client?

Generally, there is not a clear rule on what "sufficient" income or resources are under immigration law for the I-134 form. However, USCIS has indicated that they are looking at 100% of the [Federal Poverty Guidelines](#) for I-134s filed pursuant to the Uniting for Ukraine program. The sponsor's "household size" should include those actually residing in their household (self plus spouse and/or children, and/or other dependents) as well as any individuals being sponsored. For example, John is seeking to sponsor his cousin, Iryna. John is married and has two minor children (family of 4). Iryna is married with one minor child (family

of 3). John is seeking to sponsor Iryna and her family. John will want to show that his annual income is at or above 100% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines for a family of 7.

2. Who can be a sponsor/supporter?

An individual who holds lawful status in the United States or is a parolee or beneficiary of deferred action or Deferred Enforced Departure (DED) who has passed security and background vetting and demonstrated sufficient financial resources to receive, maintain, and supports the individuals whom they commit to support for the duration of their stay in the United States.

Examples of individuals who meet the supporter requirement include:

- U.S. citizens and nationals;
- Lawful permanent residents, lawful temporary residents, and conditional permanent residents;
- Nonimmigrants in lawful status (that is, who maintain the nonimmigrant status and have not violated any of the terms or conditions of the nonimmigrant status);
- Asylees, refugees, and parolees;
- TPS holders; and
- Beneficiaries of deferred action (including DACA) or Deferred Enforced Departure.

[See here](#) for more information.

3. Can individuals join together to sponsor a Ukrainian individual or family?

Yes! As noted on the USCIS Uniting for Ukraine website, “multiple supporters may join together to have the financial ability to support 1 or more Ukrainian beneficiaries. In this case, a primary supporter should file a Form I-134 and include in the filing supplementary evidence demonstrating the identity of, and resources to be provided by, the additional supporters and attach a statement explaining the intent to share responsibility. These supporters’ ability to support Ukrainian beneficiaries will be assessed collectively.

The Form I-134 requires an individual to sign the form; organizations may not serve as the named supporter on a Form I-134. However, if an organization or other entity is providing financial or other services to the named individual for the purpose of facilitating support, this information should be provided as part of the evidence submitted with the Form I-134 and will be taken into account in determining the supporter’s ability to support the named beneficiary.

4. Can an organization sponsor a Ukrainian individual or family?

See above.

5. Is Form I-134 enforceable against a sponsor by either the beneficiary or by a federal or state agency?

While there is some guidance to suggest that Form I-134 is not enforceable, this question has not been addressed by our courts. We would strongly urge you not to sign form I-134 if you are not willing to meet certain obligations. We also recommend that you review [CLINIC's Frequently Asked Questions about Form I-134](#), which includes a helpful overview of this question.

6. If I am sponsoring a family, can I include them all on one application or do I need to submit a separate I-134 for each individual?

Each family member needs their own I-134.

7. Does the Ukrainian beneficiary need a passport?

Yes. [See here](#) for more information.

8. How long will it take for the Humanitarian Parole application to process with USCIS?

It is currently unclear how long the processing will take; however, the U.S. government has committed to expediting these applications. You can check your case status and respond to requests for additional information by returning to your online account portal [here](#).

9. What do we do when the parole period expires?

There is not a process to “renew” parole. One must file a new parole request (also called “re-parole”). An applicant may request re-parole by:

- Filing a new Form I-131, Application for Travel Document;
 - Checking box 1.e or 1.f in Part 2 of the form; and
 - Writing “re-parole” across the top of the application.
- Filing a new Form I-134, Affidavit of Support;
- Including required fees (or request for fee waiver);
- Submitting materials and evidence to support re-parole, including an explanation, and providing supporting documents on the need for an additional authorized parole period.

The request should be filed at least 90 days before the expiration of the authorized parole period to allow for sufficient processing time and to avoid the potential for accruing time in unlawful status.

10. Can Ukrainians be resettled as refugees in the U.S.?

The Uniting for Ukraine plan, announced on April 21, prioritizes the use of humanitarian parole. Parolees are not admitted with refugee status, so they will not have access to the same resettlement services that refugees can get without an act of Congress (as did occur for those from Afghanistan). The announcement also mentioned the use of the US refugee admissions program.

Ukrainian Jews, Evangelical Christians, Catholics, and some members of the Ukrainian Autocephalous Church, can reunite with family members in the U.S. under what’s known as the Lautenberg program. The Uniting for Ukraine plan included the administration’s intent to prioritize the Lautenberg caseload, however, at this time, we do not have information about

the administration’s plan for admitting Ukrainian Lautenberg cases. To qualify for the Lautenberg program, the person must be the child, parent, sibling, grandparent, or grandchild of a U.S. resident, asylee, refugee, or citizen. To start the application process, the U.S. relative must apply through a resettlement agency located near where the U.S. family member lives.

11. If a Ukrainian national is Lautenberg eligible (pending or prospective) can that person still pursue refugee status under Lautenberg when they are in the US as parolees?

We also do not yet have confirmation about the implications for Lautenberg applicants who decide to come through the parole program rather than waiting for Lautenberg processing. It is possible that people who come through parole will lose their eligibility for refugee status. HIAS is advocating for this not to happen. Mark Hetfield, HIAS CEO, has asked this question of the Department of State, among others. As of May 4, 2022, we have not heard their formal reply.

12. Are Ukrainian parolees who enter under the Uniting for Ukraine program eligible for any federal benefits?

Yes. Ukrainian humanitarian parolees paroled into the U.S. between February 24, 2022, and September 30, 2023, are eligible to apply for certain federal “mainstream” benefits, as well as certain resettlement benefits offered through the Office of Refugee Resettlement, until the end of their parole term. These individuals’ spouses or unmarried children under the age of 21 who are paroled into the U.S after September 30, 2023, are also eligible to apply for these benefits.

Federal “mainstream” benefits include cash assistance through Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Supplemental Security Income (SSI), health insurance through Medicaid, and food assistance through Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

Refugee resettlement benefits include cash assistance, medical assistance, employment preparation, job placement, English language training, and other services that are offered through the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR). Ukrainian parolees are **not** eligible for services via the initial resettlement program customarily referred to as Department of State’s Reception and Placement program.

Additional information is [available here](#).

13. Do you have any tips on how to complete the online form?

Yes! Here are some practice tips:

- The online form uses conditional logic, meaning the questions it asks in the later portion are determined by the answers you give in the earlier portions. Therefore, it is encouraged to fill out the form in chronological order, answering as many questions as possible.
- The form automatically saves each time you click “next”
- In the section to collect information about the sponsor:

- If you do not have a relationship with the beneficiary, you can select “not specified” for the relationship.
- Where you are asked if there is any specific support you will be providing for the beneficiary, it is alright not to fill anything in if you are providing full support. If your support is limited, then you can write the specifics of those parameters.
- In the evidence section, you will be prompted to upload specific documents based on your earlier answers
 - Rename the documents before you upload them with easy to understand names (for example, rename documents with titles like “12345doc.pdf” to more descriptive titles like “Bank Statement”, “House Deed”, “Tax Return”, etc).
 - Some pages in this section may show up with a yellow or a red alert. A red alert must be corrected before you move forward. A yellow alert is a suggested consideration that can be overridden if you do not feel it applies to you.
- After submitting your petition, be sure to sign back into your account regularly to check for alerts, requests for evidence, notices, etc.

14. How do eligible Ukrainians apply for resettlement benefits?

Beginning on May 21, 2022, or the date humanitarian parole was granted (whichever is later), eligible Ukrainian parolees can apply at the state government benefits office or closest resettlement agency in their state. For a state-by-state listing of local resettlement agencies, view the ORR state program directory, which also includes a link to ORR state contacts: <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/map/find-resources-and-contacts-your-state>.

Ukrainian parolees should bring proof of their nationality and proof of their status as a parolee, including the date they received humanitarian parole. Each individual in a family applying for ORR benefits and services should bring their own proof and the date their humanitarian parole (or other ORR-eligible status) was granted.

15. Do resettlement benefits expire?

Yes. ORR-funded cash and medical assistance are limited to a maximum of 12 months from the date of eligibility (May 21, 2022, or the date they received humanitarian parole, whichever is later). Most ORR employment services and other services aimed at economic self-sufficiency will be available until the end of the parole term.

Cultural Humility and Working with Immigrant Clients

Cultural humility is a complex issue that requires continuous work. These materials are meant only to provide an introduction to this topic. HIAS encourages those in our Pro Bono Attorney network to seek additional training opportunities on this and other topics related to Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice.

When working with clients with a different cultural identity, we must be aware of our own biases and preconceptions and continually work towards a place of understanding, inclusivity, and advocacy. **Cultural humility** is defined as the ability to maintain an interpersonal stance that is other-oriented (or open to the other) in relation to aspects of cultural identity that are most important to that person. In contrast to the framework of cultural competency, which assumes that learning and understanding of other cultures can reach a successful end-point, cultural humility involves a humble awareness that we will never stop learning and growing as we connect with others.

When we talk about "cultural humility," we are inherently talking about "culture," which, in practice, is multifaceted and diverse:

"Culture," according to one account, is "a system of shared beliefs, values, customs, behaviors, and artifacts that members of a society use to cope with their world and with one another, and that is transmitted from generation to generation through learning." Cultural groups can be based on a range of different identities including race, religion, age, sexual orientation, gender, immigration status, social status, language, and geography. No single characteristic will determine a person's "culture"-we are each a part of several cultures, and each culture generates its own norms. A person's behaviors and values are thus driven, in part, by a complex confluence of cultures and by the way in which society treats members of different groups. Culture is closely bound up with identity; it may be understood as an expression of group identity.¹

In approaching our work with immigrant clients with cultural humility, we encourage our pro bono attorneys to:²

1. **Adopt a lifelong commitment to self-evaluation and self-critique.** Be humble and flexible about what we know and what we have yet to learn. Recognize that one can never really master another's culture. Strive towards self-awareness about one's own values and beliefs and realize that we all bring those notions (consciously or unconsciously) to our work with others. (This is sometimes referred to as "[implicit bias](#) or [unconscious bias](#)"). We must understand ourselves before we can overcome difference and build successful relationships.

Questions for Self-Reflection:³

- What do I think about my client's cultural group(s)? How do I know this to be "true"?

¹ Debra Chopp, "[Addressing Cultural Bias in the Legal Profession](#)," 41 NYU Rev. of L. and Soc. Change 367, 371 (2017).

² See [Hook, Davis, Owen, Worthington and Utsey \(2013\)](#).

³ Adapted from "Race Matters: The Impact of Race on Social Justice," National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers (Jan. 2019), available at <https://www.nacdl.org/getattachment/8d685d93-86f4-40b5-849b-39eb495302ee/practicing-cultural-humility.pdf>

- We all have biases; this is normal and not inherently bad. What are my biases? What are my biases based on?
 - What are the consequences in my relationship with this person, this community, if I act on my biases?
 - What can I learn here? And how?
 - What is my own cultural identity? How do I bring this identity into interactions with my client? How do I bring identity, power, and privilege to my work?
2. **Incorporate a desire to fix power imbalances.** Our job as lawyers is to bring a unique education and expertise to assist our clients with a particular legal challenge. Though our clients do not typically possess this particular base of knowledge, our clients do have valuable knowledge and experience in other areas. We strive to recognize our different experiences without assigning value to one over another. We are each the expert of *our own* experience. We encourage pro bono attorneys to see their clients as the experts of their own experience.

*Questions for Self-Reflection when Working with Clients:*⁴

- Can I practice curious, respectful inquiry when discussing client matters?
 - How can I encourage, rather than presume, pre-empt, or obstruct, my client's telling of their own story?
 - What are my client's goals for this representation? How can I best use my skills and expertise to meet my client's goals and needs? How can I meet my client where they are?
3. **Develop partnerships with people and groups who advocate for others.** As lawyers, we do not just represent and support our individual clients; we can be (and often, as a result of our representation, are) advocates for these communities and issues at large. However, we know that we are not the experts of our clients' lived experience. To that end, we should continue to advocate for others but respect the advocacy priorities as defined by the community – not necessarily what we think their priorities are or should be.

*Questions for Self-Reflection:*⁵

- How can I be an effective student of and partner for this community?
- How does my advocacy build upon the community's existing strengths?
- Does my work serve what the community sees as important?

Tips for Working with Survivors of Trauma

⁴ Id.

⁵ Id.

Understanding Trauma: Trauma occurs after a particular event causes an intense reaction or stress (be it physical, psychological, etc.). Traumatic memories are stored in the body's "limbic system" (fight/flight/freeze part of the brain), not in the "frontal lobe" (thinking part of the brain). Thus, traumatized individuals may struggle to recall traumatic memories and contextualize the events in a coherent chronology. Traumatic memories may be triggered by sensory events, including smells, sounds, images, fear, and stress.

Manifestations of Trauma: An individual who has suffered a traumatic event may show symptoms of this trauma in diverse or various ways, including:

- Physical ailments: Scars, burns, internal injuries, brain injuries/headaches, jaw pain, reproductive/fertility issues, developmental delays
- Relational ailments: Distrust of others, lack of interest in relationships, isolation, lack of appropriate boundaries with others
- Psychological ailments: Depression, anxiety, suicidal ideation, low self-esteem, drug/alcohol addiction/dependency, difficulty concentrating, difficulty remembering, poor habits (self-care, grooming)
- Flooding: details of similar traumatic events get confused or mixed up.
- Flashbacks: uncontrollable and vivid memory of a traumatic event. May cause heart racing, sweating, shortness of breath.
- Dissociation: mentally transported back to a traumatic incident, as if re-living it. They may appear to be "spaced out" or may be reacting to the situation in their memory.
- Minimization: flat affect, makes it seem as if "wasn't as bad as it could have been."

Working with Survivors of Trauma:

- Try to create a safe space: Manage expectations of what the meeting will be about, explain if you are taking notes, what they are for; Be aware of children present, the client may not be able to be as forthcoming about details; (if possible) Have tissues, water, snacks available. If not possible, encourage the client to bring tissues, water, and/or snacks.
- Understanding Each Other: Explain the roles of the attorney and the client and attorney/client privilege; Encourage the client to ask questions and advocate for themselves (if they don't understand if they need a break).
- Who has the control? Is the client's comfort considered? Is the client's physical/emotional/psychological safety being considered? Is the client able to (or does the client feel empowered to) ask for a break? **Remind the client that this is their case and their process, and they are an important part of the preparation of their claim.** To that end, encourage the client to ask questions if they don't understand. As the attorney, take time to ask the client, "does this sound okay to you?" or "did I explain that in a way that makes sense? can I explain that better?"

Discussing Sensitive Topics:

- Warn the client before asking a sensitive question and explain why the question is relevant/necessary.
- Consider the client's reaction – are they giving you clues about how they are feeling, or whether there is something they're not comfortable sharing right now?
- Keep your own reactions in check – your intense reaction may make the client feel judged or uncomfortable.
- Use open-ended questions: Try not to interrupt too much (unless the client is flooding); Record your questions and go back later to ask clarifying questions
- Ask only what you need to know
- Be careful with labeling/word choice – try to mirror the language that the client uses.
- Use context to build a timeline
 - What was the weather like?
 - Was it near a holiday?

If the Client is Triggered:

- If the client is triggered, work to get back to the present moment: Take a break; Suggest a walk; comment on surroundings to re-center the client to the present moment
- Your goal is to contain the traumatic memory and return to a calm state

Ending the Meeting:

- Don't end the meeting immediately after the re-telling of a traumatic event
- Remind your client that everything they shared will remain confidential
- Thank your client for sharing their story
- Give the client a clear understanding of what's next and who to contact if they have questions

Appendix A: Questionnaires, Templates, and Samples

HIAS Resources

- [I-134 Questionnaire](#)
- [I-134 Samples](#)

Other Resources

- [FAQ for Sponsors](#) (Penn State Law Clinic)

- [FAQs about Form I-134](#) (CLINIC)
- Additional resources are [available here](#)