

**ARCHDIOCESE OF SEATTLE – IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE MINISTRY**  
*Resources and Guidelines for How to Respond when  
You Encounter an Immigrant Seeking Help*

Many immigrants, especially those who are Catholic, see local parishes as places of safety and support. They are often desperate to find help and have been turned away from other places due to eligibility and/or capacity issues. While they all have basic and other needs, encountering a pastoral presence from you can ease their suffering.

### **Looking for housing**

- Finding shelter, transitional, or long-term housing is very difficult. There is likely little you could do beyond covering a hotel stay if you have the funds.
- Helping someone get into a shelter will require calling around to the various local shelters to see if there is space and what the eligibility criteria are for each. This can take a considerable amount of time. You can search for shelters in your area by going to the 211 Washington website at <https://search.wa211.org/>

### **Legal Assistance for Immigration Issues**

- Please avoid referring to a specific immigration lawyer, as this is easily taken as a recommendation which should only be made by accredited legal service providers.
- The immigration system is complex and misinformation is rampant.
- You may hear people saying that they have a lawyer, but they are not doing anything. While fraud is a real concern, it is also true that much of the process is a waiting game and there's nothing a lawyer can do while waiting.
- Places to refer include the following. All of these legal service providers are constantly inundated. It is vital callers leave voicemails.
  - Patrick Suhrbier, Immigration Legal Coordinator, St. James Cathedral. Patrick is accredited by the Department of Justice to provide immigration legal assistance. Patrick helps people who are seeking citizenship, and provides guidance to others needing a different type of immigration legal assistance. Patrick is fluent in Spanish. 206-382-4374 or [psuhrbier@stjames-cathedral.org](mailto:psuhrbier@stjames-cathedral.org)
  - Northwest Immigrant Right Project handles a wide variety of immigration law. They sometimes have in-person clinics for people need a consultation and referral. It can be difficult to reach them in person so its very important to leave a voicemail. See <https://www.nwirp.org/get-help/> for contact and other information for offices in Seattle and Tacoma.
  - Colectiva Legal del Pueblo (People's Law Collective) provides immigration legal assistance primarily to the Hispanic population. They are located in Burien and can be reached at 206-931-1514 or [info@colectivalegal.org](mailto:info@colectivalegal.org)
  - Catholic Immigration Legal Services is a program of Catholic Community Services that provides a variety of immigration legal services. They have an online form to determine eligibility for services at [Immigration Services Inquiry](#). Call first before referring people. In Seattle at (206) 323-633 and in Mount Vernon at (360) 416-7095. Visit their website at [Catholic Immigration Legal Services](#)

## How immigrants can check their immigration case status and find processing times

- Use the case status online tool to check for updates about an immigration case. You will need the 13-character receipt number from the application or petition. [Immigration-Case-Status](#) or search "tracking my US immigration application. If calling from the U.S., contact the USCIS National Customer Service Center at 1-800-375-5283 or TTY 1-800-767-1833.

## Looking for work

- Immigrants need an Employment Authorization Document (EAD) to legally work in the United States. Citizens and legal permanent residents (Green Cards holders) do not need an EAD. Undocumented immigrants are not eligible for an EAD. After arriving in the U.S., it can take up to a year to obtain an EAD.
- Working without an EAD can seriously jeopardize asylum applications. If your parish is considering offering employment, you must obtain proof of eligibility to work. To do otherwise would put the immigrant at risk of deportation.
- Casa Latina serves Hispanics and helps people to find work. They are well-versed in employment issues and are a good source for Hispanic immigrants trying to find work or looking community connections. Contact: Marco Antonio 206-686-2625 or Yuliana 206-686-2624. <https://casa-latina.org>

## Sponsoring to Come to United States

- There are multiple sponsorship pathways for Ukrainians, Cubans, Haitians, Nicaraguans, Venezuelans, and refugees. Sponsorship requires certification, a financial commitment, and help once the refugee arrives with housing, employment, school, public benefits, etc.
- The Archdiocese's Immigrant and Refugee Ministry [Welcome Circles](#) program helps parishes through the entire process of sponsorship. Contact Amy Nash, Welcome Circles Coordinator, at [Amy.Nash@seattlearch.org](mailto:Amy.Nash@seattlearch.org) to learn more.
- Here is our standard response. We get requests almost daily now.  
*"Thank you for reaching out to me. I have read through your message and I am very sorry for the difficult situation you are in. Please know of my concern and prayers for a good outcome for your family. The Archdiocese of Seattle receives many requests for sponsorship. We encourage you to keep looking for assistance elsewhere. If you find a sponsor in the greater Seattle area, The Archdiocese would be happy to connect them to resources and services you might need. Our prayers are with you and your family."*

## Reference Letter Template

How to write a letter on good moral character. You will want to address both qualities and actions. Describe any volunteering or other participation in community life, how they are a good parent or neighbor, etc.

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to tell you of the many fine qualities of (name), whom I have known for (length of time) through (ways in which you know them).

I have had the chance to get to know (name), and can say without a doubt or reservations that this person is of very good moral character. (Describe a couple of the qualities you have observed).

On a personal level, may I just say that I really like (name), (add details about why you like them). (He/She) is an upstanding member of our parish community and I wholeheartedly recommend them to you.

Thank you,

(Name)

(Job Title)

(Parish)

(Address)

(City, State, Zip)