Navigating Immigration Detention

If a family member or loved one finds themselves in detention, the following suggestions can assist you as you accompany that individual.

1. What preparations should an individual have lined up if they are in danger of being detained?
   a. Assist the individual in working through the Family Care Plan/Preparation Plan to assure them they have taken care of vital family decisions before anything should happen.
   b. Set-up a response team [instructions below]. Be sure that the individual at risk of detention has the phone number of an emergency contact. Have the emergency contact than start the phone chain to respond.
   c. Certain detention centers, jails, or correction facilities that detain immigrants require that detainee list the individual(s) who can visit them. Be sure they have the names of a loved one and their attorney, if that has already been arranged.

2. How do we set up a response team?
   a. Ask a few key members to be a part of this team—individuals’ family members (their choice), member to interact with church session and congregation, member to care for family, pastor, attorney (if already selected), member to interact with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), and member to share the story (work with local media, local organizations, formulating public response).
   b. Be sure that someone on the response team has access to previously completed Family Care Plan/Preparation Plan.

3. How do I find the individual when they are detained?
   a. Begin this process as soon as you know the person is detained. They can be moved quickly through the system or to another facility for a variety of reasons.
   b. Each person in detention is given an A-number (Alien number). You can search for that individual by their A-number at the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Detention Locator System.
   c. There are times when the system lags or you do not have the A-number. You can also go to the ICE Detention Locator System and search the person via personal information (first and last name and country of birth).
   d. The ICE Community Helpline is also available to reach an ICE public advocate at the hotline 1-888-351-4024, between the hours of 8 am–5 pm, ET, Monday–Friday.
   e. Some individuals are detained at local jails or correctional facilities. Call local offices if you believe the person is there to find out how to help and to schedule a visit.
   f. If the loved one is under eighteen years of age, you must contact the ICE Enforcement and Removal Field Office nearest you.
   g. If you are unable to find your loved one, please contact Freedom for Immigrants, a national organization that mobilizes and trains for immigration detention visits. They can assist you in finding the person in detention. Call CIVIC at 385-212-4842.

4. How do we support the detainee and her/his family?
   a. Speak with the detainee’s legal counsel and designated ICE deportation officer as quickly as possible.
   b. Legal counsel can assist with guiding next steps in the detainee’s immigration case.
   c. The ICE officer should help with contacting the detainee, setting up visitation, and assisting with sending necessary items to the detainee. Be careful, price gouging is
common. **Do not share personal information about the detainee beyond their name and A-number. That information can be used as evidence in their deportation case.**

d. Financial assistance is often necessary. The church may want to establish a fund to which church members can donate to help the detainee with detention costs, to assist the family members with living expenses, to help cover legal fees, or to post bond. *Freedom for Immigrants* also provides assistance to families and detainees through grants and a bond fund.

e. Visitation is important for the loved one in detention. Set up a visitation schedule to provide support while this person is detained. Check in on the detainee’s health, and be sure the facility is providing adequate healthcare (they have a right to demand adequate care).

f. Providing ongoing emotional support for the family is key. You may want to set up a team of individuals who cares for the family members. Be mindful that each member will have different needs, especially adults and children.

g. Keep the detained individual and their family on the church prayer chains. This keeps the reminder on alert.

h. Garner public support. Contact local organizations involved in migrant and immigrant advocacy. Set up a call to action asking people to call ICE on the individual’s behalf—you will need to list the detainee’s name, A-number, ICE field office covering their case, and a sample script. Invite people via Facebook to make calls. Inform the Office of Immigration Issues of the PC(USA) about the public call to actions (Teresa.Waggener@pcusa.org or Amanda.Craft@pcusa.org). They can send out the information to their networks, inviting others to join the effort.