

Family Preparedness Guide for Immigrant Families in Pennsylvania



This guide was prepared for educational purposes only, it is not intended as legal advice.

These resources have been prepared by HIAS Pennsylvania in collaboration with other organizations.

WHY IS A FAMILY PREPAREDNESS PLAN IMPORTANT?

- A Family Preparedness Plan does not eliminate the risk of deportation but helps you and your family access information and tools to better protect one another.
- A family preparedness plan should help you:
 - Make a plan for your children.
 - Make a plan for your finances.
 - Organize your personal information and immigration documents.
 - Help you create an emergency contact list.
 - Help you find a trusted immigration attorney.
- Without preparation, it may be difficult for your loved ones to navigate the legal system on your behalf, and there may be greater risks of disruption to your children's lives, whether that is in accessing financial accounts or their health records.

FAMILY LAW VARIES BY STATE.

- The following information is specific to Pennsylvania and is provided for general guidance only. ***It is not legal advice.***
- Families are encouraged to consult with an immigration or family law attorney before signing or notarizing any legal documents mentioned in this guide.



MAKE A PLAN FOR YOUR CHILDREN



One of the most important steps you can take in preparing for an emergency is deciding who will care for your children if you are unable to do so due to detention or deportation. Planning ahead can help ensure your children remain safe, supported, and with people you trust.

What is a Caregiver Authorization Form in Pennsylvania?

- A [Caregiver Authorization form](#) is a legal document used in Pennsylvania to grant a non-parent caregiver temporary authority to make day-to-day decisions for a child in their care. This form does not transfer custody or change parental rights but allows institutions to treat the caregiver as the responsible adult without requiring a court order.
- In Pennsylvania, there is no general law that allows parents to formally appoint a legal guardian simply by completing a form, except in limited situations. However, a Caregiver Authorization Form can still be helpful and is a good place to start.
- Many schools, healthcare providers, and other agencies may accept this document, but it is not guaranteed. Because of this, you may need additional documents to ensure your children can receive care if you are unavailable.

For more information about custody and planning options for immigrant families, visit:

- Philadelphia Legal Assistance – Custody for Immigrant Families: <https://philalegal.org/custody-immigrant-families>

To access a sample Caregiver Authorization Form, visit:

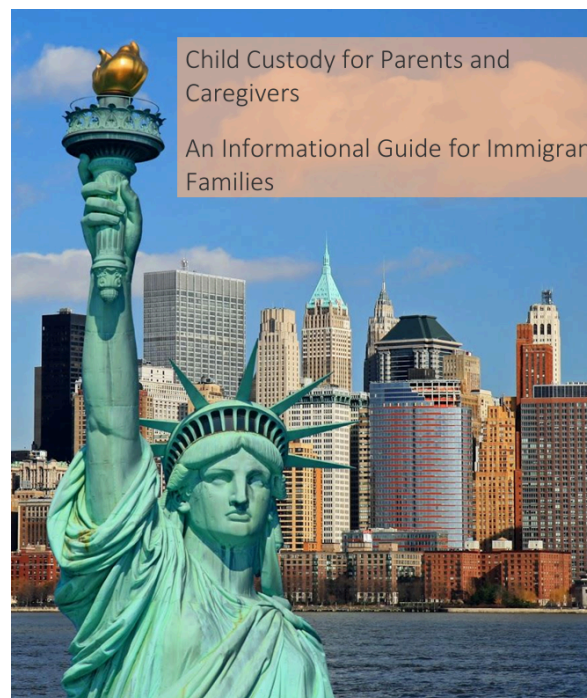
- [Caregiver Authorization Form \(PDF\)](#).

Choose a Caregiver You Trust

Select a responsible adult who knows your children and is willing to care for them if needed. It is best to choose someone who:

- Lives close to your home or your children's school.
- Can be available on short notice.
- Ideally has legal immigration status.

If your chosen caregiver may also be at risk of deportation, identify at least one backup caregiver.



PREPARE SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS FOR YOUR CHILDREN



In addition to completing a caregiver authorization form, it is important to gather and organize other key documents. These documents will help your designated caregiver make decisions and avoid delays in your child's care.

SCHOOL FORMS

Contact your child's school as soon as possible to ensure your caregiver is authorized to act on your behalf if you are detained or deported.

- Add your chosen caregiver to the school's emergency contact and pickup list.
- Provide the school with any required written authorization forms. For families in Philadelphia, you may use: [Philadelphia School District- Delegation of Parental Responsibility Parent/Legal Guardian](#).
- Consider adding backup caregivers to the school's pick-up list in case your first choice is unavailable.

Note: Each school district has its own policies and forms regarding caregiver authorization.

MEDICAL CARE CONSENT FORM

If a parent is not available, healthcare providers may require parental consent or a court order before providing treatment to a child.

- Some providers may accept a Caregiver Authorization Form, but this is not guaranteed.
- To avoid delays in care, it is strongly recommended that you also complete a [Medical Consent Authorization for Medical Treatment of a Child](#) for your child.
- Keep copies of this form with your caregiver and provide one to your child's doctor, if possible.
- Although there is no guarantee that the medical consent form will be accepted in all situations, it can be beneficial for a caregiver to have a clear, notarized consent form in emergency situations.

CONSULAR REGISTRATION

- If your children are eligible, consider registering them with your home country's consulate. Consular registration can help:
 - Confirm your child's citizenship.
 - Facilitate travel to your home country if needed.
 - Support school enrollment abroad.
- Make sure your children have valid passports, whether they were born in the United States or another country.



PREPARE SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS FOR YOUR CHILDREN



APPLYING FOR A U.S. PASSPORT (If Eligible)

If your child is a U.S. citizen, apply for a passport as soon as possible. Depending on your situation, different requirements and forms may apply:

- [Applying for children under 16 when BOTH parents are present.](#)
- [Applying for children under 16 when only ONE parent is available.](#)
- [Neither parent is able to appear with the child.](#)

Each situation may require specific forms and documentation. To learn more about the requirements for a U.S. passport visit: [Apply for a Child's U.S. Passport](#)

Passports from Your Home Country

If your child is not a U.S. citizen:

- Contact your country's consulate to learn how to apply for or renew a passport.
- Ask about any additional documents needed for travel or identification.

TRAVELING ABROAD WITH A MINOR

Before planning any international travel for your children, it is important to understand the requirements of both the United States and the destination country. Travel rules can vary, and being prepared can prevent delays or complications at the airport or border.

- **All children must have a valid passport:** Every child, including infants, must have their own passport, from their country of citizenship, to travel internationally.
- **Traveling with one parent:** If a child is traveling with only one parent, it is strongly recommended to carry a notarized written consent from the other parent authorizing the trip.
- **Traveling without either parent:** If a child is traveling with a relative, caregiver, or another adult, both parents should provide written, notarized permission authorizing the travel.
- **Sole custody situations:** If one parent has sole legal custody, additional documentation (such as a court order) may be required. In some cases, written permission from the other parent may not be necessary, but you should carry proof of custody.

Consent to Travel Letter

[A Consent to Travel Letter](#) is a critical document that helps demonstrate that the child has permission to travel. This document should:

- Be signed by the parent(s) or legal guardian(s).
- Be notarized.
- Include travel details (destination, dates, and accompanying adult).
- Include contact information for the parent(s).

Having this document can help avoid delays, questioning, or denial of boarding.

PREPARE SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS FOR YOUR CHILDREN



APOSTILLE OF SCHOOL TRANSCRIPTS

If your family may need to relocate to another country, it is important to prepare your child's school records in advance. Many countries require official school transcripts to be "apostilled" before they will accept them.

An apostille is an official certification issued by the Pennsylvania Department of State that verifies a document is authentic and can be legally recognized in another country (birth certificates, school records, marriage certificates, etc.).

How to Apostille School Transcripts in Pennsylvania

Follow these steps to prepare your child's school records for use in another country:

- Obtain Official School Transcripts
 - Request original transcripts from your child's school.
 - Make sure the transcripts are signed by the principal or authorized school official.
 - If your child attends a school in Philadelphia: Take the transcripts to the School District of Philadelphia to obtain an official district seal.
 - Ask the school or the Pennsylvania Department of State if notarization is needed for your specific documents.

Submit Documents for Apostille

- **Apply In Person**
 - Location: Bureau of Notaries, Commissions and Legislation (Harrisburg).
 - Hours: Monday–Friday, 8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. (except state holidays).
 - Bring original documents and \$15 per document (cash, credit, debit cards are accepted).
- **Apply by Mail**
 - Make sure to include:
 - Original documents (no photocopies).
 - Complete the [Apostille/Certification Request Form](#).
 - Your name, phone number, email, and return mailing address.
 - Payment: \$15 per document (not per page) payable with personal check, money order, or cashier's check – Make payable to: Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.
 - A self-addressed, stamped envelope for return delivery.



- Mail the documents to the address below:
Pennsylvania Department of State
Bureau of Notaries, Commissions & Legislation
Apostilles & Certifications
North Office Building, Room 201
401 North Street
Harrisburg, PA 17120-0029



For more information, visit the [Pennsylvania Department of State](#) website.

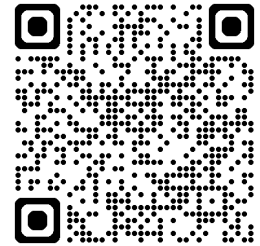


MAKE A PLAN FOR YOUR FINANCES AND PROPERTY



If you are detained or deported, it is important that you write down information about the household's financial situation and leave precise instructions so that your loved ones or someone you trust knows what to do with your bank accounts, home, business, vehicles, and other assets in case you are detained or deported.

Planning ahead can help prevent missed payments, loss of property, or financial hardship for your family. For more information visit [Appleseed Network Deportation Preparation Manual for Immigrant Families – Make a Plan to Protect Your Kids and Finances in the Face of Deportation](#)



Powers of Attorney in Pennsylvania

Power of Attorney (POA), is a legal document that allows you to give another person (called your “agent”) authority to act on your behalf. For example: In Pennsylvania a POA may allow a friend or family member to close your bank account, sell your car or home, pay bills, or make decisions about your children's health care or school enrollment (if specifically authorized) in your absence. To be valid, a POA in Pennsylvania must be written, dated, signed, and witnessed by two people and a notary public. Please consult with an estate planning attorney about assigning a power of attorney to oversee your assets. This will make it easier for your loved ones and the person you designate as your agent to comply with your instructions.

Warning: If you do not specify a time for your Power of Attorney to become effective, it will become effective as soon as it is executed.

Bank Account Access

If you have financial accounts, you want your designated agent to access, you should contact those financial institutions to determine whether they have their own POA forms. Although financial institutions should honor other POA forms, it is always best to use the forms they recommend.



KEEP COPIES OF YOUR IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS



PERSONAL DOCUMENTS

If you are detained, it may take time for your family or lawyer to locate you and contact immigration authorities. During this time, having the right documents ready can make a big difference in getting legal help quickly, especially if you may qualify for bond, a parole request or a habeas petition.

- Gather all important documents, make copies for all family members, and keep those documents in a safe place.
- Use this [List of Important Documents](#) to help you organize your information and keep all this information in a secure location ensuring everyone in the family knows how to find them in case of an emergency.

IMMIGRATION DOCUMENTS

In addition to having your documents and information organized, it is also helpful to prepare the following information in case you are detained:

- Complete and sign several blank G-28 forms in advance. Form G-28 allows an attorney to officially represent you and access information about your case without delays. To download Form G-28 visit <https://www.uscis.gov/g-28>.
- Gather documents showing long-term residence or community ties in the U.S. (utility bills, leases, membership in community groups, letters of support, school records, other).
- Have copies of any prior immigration filings, petitions, appeals, or removal proceedings records. This will help your attorney understand your immigration history and options available in your case.
- Sample [letters of support](#) from community members for bond hearing requests.
- Sample [letter from sponsor](#) for bond hearing or parole request.
- Sample [Affidavit/Statement](#) for bond hearing or parole request.



HOW TO FIND LEGAL REPRESENTATION FOR SOMEONE DETAINED BY ICE?



If your loved one is detained in Pennsylvania and cannot afford an immigration lawyer, you might be able to find legal immigration by contacting the resources below.

Pennsylvania Immigrant Family Unity Project (PAIFUP)

You might be able to get free legal representation through the Pennsylvania Immigrant Family Unity Project (PAIFUP). For an intake to determine your eligibility for services through PAIFUP call or email:

- Hotline number: 267-765-6912
- Email: PAIFUP@philadefender.org

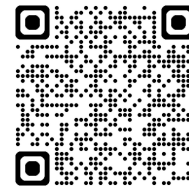
Please have the following information ready:

- Name (and potential different spellings of name).
- Country of Origin and Date of Birth.
- A# (if known).
- Brief circumstances of arrest.
- When/how did the person enter the United States (year, location/manner of entry).
- Have they ever had any encounters with ICE?
- Have they ever been deported before/do they have a deportation order?
- Who is an outside contact person we can get in touch with for more information (name, relationship, best language, phone number & email address)?
- Does the person have any applications pending? If so, do you have a copy of those applications (or if with USCIS, the receipt #).

Immigrant Legal Service Organizations in Pennsylvania

For a list of non-profit organizations that offer immigration legal services visit:

[Legal Resources in Pennsylvania](#)



Rapid Response Networks in Pennsylvania

Rapid response networks are groups of trained community members, advocates, and allies who assist immigrants during and after immigration enforcement actions, such as raids, detentions, or ICE visits.

These networks aim to protect dignity, ensure access to rights, and connect people with resources across Pennsylvania.

For a list of rapid response networks in Pennsylvania, visit: [Rapid Response Networks in Pennsylvania](#).

Legal Resources outside Pennsylvania

- Immigrant Advocates directory: <https://www.immigrationadvocates.org/legaldirectory/>
- American Immigration Lawyers Association directory: <https://ailalawyer.com/>



HOW TO PREVENT NOTARIO FRAUD IN IMMIGRATION CASES/CONGRESSIONAL ADVOCACY



Notarios are NOT lawyers, and they are not qualified to provide legal advice or immigration services. In some cases, Notarios are people in the community that speak your language, but immigration law is complex and it is very important to get information and legal help from trusted and qualified sources.

Unfortunately, many immigrant families are targeted by scams or people who pretend to offer legal help but are not authorized to practice immigration law.

To watch videos visit:

<https://www.miracoalition.org/immigration-scams-and-notario-fraud-information/> (video available in English, Spanish, Haitian Creole, Portuguese and Chinese).

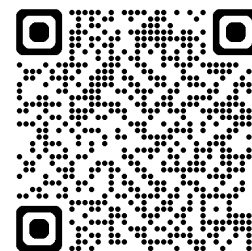
To download a flyer visit:

<https://www.globalrefuge.org/the-wrong-help-can-hurt/> (For English, Spanish, Haitian Creole, Ukrainian, Russian, Dari and Pashto. Scroll down to the end of the page).

Congressional Advocacy

- Members of Congress can visit detention facilities and ask to speak with certain individuals who are detained.
- In some cases, they can also raise someone's case in Congressional hearings or write letters that could help advocate for someone in detention, but consent from the person detained is needed.
- Have a signed Privacy Waiver (ICE Form 60-001) from the person who is detained.
- Most congressional offices have a case liaison team that can use that form to speak with someone detained by ICE.

Use the QR code or visit this link to download the [ICE Form 60-001 \(Privacy Waiver\)](#).

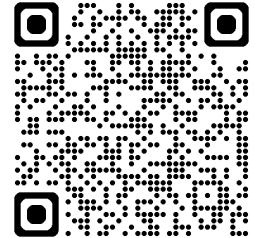


OTHER RESOURCES



HIAS PA Know Your Rights:

<https://hiaspa.org/the-issues/know-your-rights/> (multiple languages)



- Family Law Pennsylvania Immigration Coalition (Rapid Response Resources) visit:
<https://www.paimmigrant.org/rapid-response-information>
- Pennsylvania Immigration Resource Center:
<https://www.pirclaw.org/>
- NIJC Know Your Rights Manual for People in Detention:
<https://immigrantjustice.org/know-Your-Rights/Detained-Pro-Se-Manual>
- NIPNLG: [What Am I Signing When I Sign My Deportation](#)
- NIPNLG: [Habeas Explainer & Pro Se Filing Instructions](#)
- NIJC “Know Your Rights” resources:
<https://immigrantjustice.org/KnowYourRights>
- Immigration Court self-help materials:
<https://www.justice.gov/eoir/self-help-materials>
- ACLU: [What to Do When Interacting with ICE](#):
<https://www.wehaverights.us/>
- Global Refugee: Ensuring Immigration Cases Are Handled by Professionals: <https://www.globalrefuge.org/the-wrong-help-can-hurt/>
- Education Justice Project: [A New Path: A Guide to the Challenges & Opportunities After Deportation](#)

