



## 'Always Welcome' Toolkit

*A toolkit of humanitarian response models, legal service orientation, advocacy strategies, and narrative/messaging resources to support the efforts led by organizations and localities to welcome new arrivals.*

### **Toolkit Sections:**

- [Welcoming Response Strategies](#)
  - Pre-Arrival Preparation
  - Immediate and Short Term Welcome Response Work
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*Pictured Top L: Volunteers from The Resurrection Project in Chicago welcome migrants to shelter; Top R: Chicago City Bus provides transportation to migrants who arrived at Union Station; Bottom L: Migrants arriving in NYC are greeting by local leaders; Bottom R: Commissioner Castro of NYC speaks to press*



## Overview

In 2022, Texas Governor Abbott, Florida Governor DeSantis and Arizona Governor Ducey began trafficking migrants and asylum seekers from the Southern border via buses and planes to other cities, including Washington, DC, New York City, Chicago, and other locations without notice. These cruel, inhumane and costly actions by these governors have sparked outrage and prompted communities and localities to put welcoming values into action, with local leaders and organizations establishing welcoming centers, providing shelter and showing the country what our values of ‘welcoming the stranger’ look like in practice.

Members of the National Partnership for New Americans (NPNA), Cities and Counties for Citizenship (CC4C), and We Are All America (WAAA) have been at the forefront of responding to the arrival of migrants and setting up new infrastructure to welcome and create short term and long term solutions for newcomers. The migrants, who bring richness and strength to our communities, are fleeing political violence and persecution from countries such as Cuba, Venezuela, Colombia and Nicaragua, and deserve to be treated with dignity and respect as they seek their legal right to asylum under U.S. and international law.

This toolkit provides insight into how organizations and localities are responding to new arrivals, outlines the core infrastructure and practices to establish, shares local solutions and strategies, and provides guidance to combat the hateful narrative. This toolkit is a “live” document that will continue to be updated.

## WELCOME RESPONSE STRATEGIES

### PRE-ARRIVAL PREPARATION

As there is intentional lack of coordination by the Governors when sending migrants to other locations, it is important to begin to set up communication and response plans to prepare for arrivals. Below are several recommendations to prepare for newcomers:

- 1. Establish Partnerships & Systems of Communication Between Local Government and Community-Based Organizations In Advance** - Community-based organizations, together with local and state governments, are key to supporting newcomers upon arrival. Prior to newcomers arriving, ensure that communication and partnerships are established with community organizations, legal service providers, medical clinics, and other humanitarian organizations. Start now by bringing together key stakeholders who would be involved in response work to create a “Welcoming Plan”. Also, an important department to start to coordinate with is the local and state offices of emergency management.
- 2. Identify Shelter Location(s)** - Having a place for migrants to go and receive immediate shelter, food and core humanitarian services is important to plan before migrants arrive. In some cities, shelters have been established by partnering with the Salvation Army, opening up vacant school buildings, utilizing city/county buildings, and/or creating partnerships with local hotels and motels.
- 3. Identify a Centralized “Welcome Center”** - Creating a centralized location for intake and navigation services that provide migrants and asylum seekers with legal orientation and screening, housing



options, final destination support, and other core humanitarian needs is important and helpful to organize the service providers in one location.

## IMMEDIATE AND SHORT TERM WELCOME RESPONSE WORK

In an effort to best prepare, below is a list of important services and practices to establish to best meet the needs of the newcomers. Due to the intentional lack of notice and coordination by the Governors sending buses or planes with migrants, it is important to have these systems prepared for activation in advance.

1. **CENTRALIZE THE ARRIVAL “WELCOME” LOCATION & ORGANIZE ON-SITE BUS ARRIVAL WELCOME TEAMS WITH BILINGUAL VOLUNTEERS** - While it is difficult to know exactly when buses will arrive, it is important to organize welcome teams of volunteers that can be on site when buses arrive. It will be important to have volunteers who speak Spanish and/or who can meet the language needs of the new arrivals. We have heard that the migrants are told to quickly get off of their bus and that the bus they arrive on quickly departs, making it important for the welcome teams to be ready to greet them, provide water and food/snack, a “welcome packet” with important navigation resources (map, shelter locations, steps to receive support, legal service providers in the area, know your rights, local services, etc).
  - a. **Chicago Example:** In the Fall of 2022, when buses dropped migrants off at Union Station downtown, onsite volunteers from community based organizations served as the “Welcome Team” that greeted migrants and told them the next steps to receive shelter and services. The City of Chicago prepared to take migrants to shelters (one family shelter and one shelter for single individuals). The Welcome Team helped to move migrants to the city buses and gave them an orientation of what will take place in the shelter and identified any individuals that would not like to go to the shelter due to having a local contact in the area or a need to go to the airport for a flight to a new destination. See the City of Chicago’s Volunteer Sign Up form [here](#).
  - b. **New York City Example:** At the end of August, NYC established a Welcome Center at Port Authority to serve as a central site so that when migrants are dropped off at the transportation hub, they immediately have access to all the resources they may need. Read more about the welcome center work [here](#).



*Pictured Left: Migrants arrive in NYC; Right: Migrants in Chicago are transferred to shelter on city bus available to transport families and individuals to shelters.*



2. **PROVIDE CORE NEEDS & CENTRALIZE DONATION COLLECTIONS** - Migrants, including women, children, and older adults, have been traveling for months and arrive in cities in need of food, clothing, medical assistance, shelter and navigation of services. Centralizing donation collection helps local community members support migrants and organizes the process of receiving and distributing needed items. See the City of Chicago’s donation landing page [here](#), which lists items that are most needed. Some of the essential needs organizations and localities are seeing include:
  - a. Food
  - b. Clothing
  - c. New Hygiene kit items (toothbrush, toothpaste, deodorant, soap, shampoo)
  - d. Medical assistance including mental health screenings with trauma-informed care
  - e. COVID-19 testing for symptomatic individuals
  - f. Prepaid cell phones
  - g. Financial assistance
  - h. Public transportation cards
  
3. **ESTABLISH TRANSPORTATION SUPPORT TO SHELTERS AND/OR AIRPORTS** - As some migrants have a known final destination outside of the arrival city, it is important to assess where migrants are planning to go. Having transportation available via volunteers providing rides to the airport or train stations and/or paying for the migrants’ transportation fare, it is important to understand where the migrants are hoping to arrive and how to support them in getting to that final destination.
  - a. **Chattanooga Example:** When a bus of migrants arrived in Chattanooga, the majority of them had plans to continue their travels to a final destination. Local volunteers drove migrants to the airport to ensure they safely arrived to make their flight.
  
4. **PROVIDE SHELTER FOR MIGRANTS** - Receiving shelter and housing is one of the most urgent needs migrants have upon arrival. Below are ways in which localities have been able to provide shelter and housing services:
  - a. Collaborate with Emergency Management teams and/pr Salvation Army to provide short term shelter
  - b. Utilize vacant or low capacity city or county buildings (schools, gyms, etc) for short term shelter
  - c. Partner with local hotels and/or motels to provide housing
  - d. Work with state and cities to subsidize costs for longer term hotel/motel stays for families and individuals (1-3+months)
  
5. **ESTABLISH A CENTRALIZED WELCOME CENTER OR NAVIGATION HUB**
  - a. Having one centralized location where migrants and asylum seekers can go is an effective strategy to have a one-stop location to organize service providers and city/state departments that can help individuals and families with services and programs available to them.
    - i. **New York City Example:** On September 15th, 2022, NYC [announced](#) the first-ever **Asylum Seeker Resource Navigation Center** that will support individuals and families



who have arrived in New York City on or after January 1, 2022. The center will serve as a central place where newly arrived asylum seekers will receive free and confidential help accessing a variety of important services and resources that will help them integrate and thrive in New York City. The center, located at the American Red Cross of Greater New York headquarters will provide the following services:

1. Health care services directly and through referral,
2. Health insurance enrollment,
3. Mental health counseling,
4. School enrollment, and
5. Immigration legal services, among other services.

#### *Additional Welcoming Resources:*

- [FindHello](#) - a free service finder app that connects newcomers to resources in communities nationwide.
  - Offers searchable Google map
  - Developed in partnership with [UNHCR](#)
  - Lists over 5k resources
  - Available on the [web](#) or for [download](#)
  - Languages: Arabic, English, Spanish, Ukrainian, Russian

## **LEGAL ORIENTATION & EDUCATION**

The legal orientation and education needs for migrants and asylum seekers arriving are extensive to ensure individuals and families understand what documents they've been given, where they may need to report to, and how to find trusted legal advice from local legal service providers that can assist them in navigating the immigration system.

- **Chicago Example:** [Here](#) is an example of a “Welcome Packet” from the National Immigrant Justice Center (NIJC) that is given to migrants arriving in Chicago. NIJC also has [this central welcome landing page](#) in Spanish that provides important legal orientation information.

Below is a summary of some of the core information new arrivals need to be informed about and helpful resources that are available for organizations to use, many coming from the [Asylum Seeker Advocacy Project \(ASAP\)](#):

### **Parole**

Some migrants and asylum seekers who arrived have been “paroled” into the United States at the Southern border, which means they are allowed to stay temporarily in the United States. Grants of parole are made for limited periods of time, often to accomplish a discrete purpose, and individuals are typically expected to depart the United States when the authorized period expires unless another form of status or relief is conferred. While individuals who receive a grant of parole are allowed to enter the United States, they are not provided with an immigration status nor are they formally “admitted” into the country for purposes of immigration law. An admission occurs when an immigration officer allows a noncitizen to enter the United States pursuant to a visa or another entry document, without the limitation of parole.



#### *Parole Resources:*

- Read more about Parole in the American Immigration Council's resource, [The Use of Parole Under Immigration Law](#).

### **Notice to Appear (NTA)**

A Notice to Appear (NTA), also known as Form I-862, is given to people by the U.S. Government who they believe are in the United States without permission. If a migrant receives an NTA, this means that the government is starting an immigration court case against that individual. NTAs may list the date and location of one's next immigration court hearing. Or, it may not list a specific date or location. Migrants may also receive a [hearing notice](#) in the mail with the location and date of their next immigration court hearing. If they do not know the date of your first hearing, they should [check the immigration court system](#). In some cases, even though they received an NTA, their information may not be in the immigration court system yet. Sometimes the government takes a long time to update the system. They can continue to check it every week.

#### *NTA Resources:*

- Asylum Seeker Advocacy Project (ASAP) - [NTA Overview and Sample of NTA \(ESPAÑOL AQUÍ\)](#)
- Immigration Legal Resource Center (ILRC) - [NTA Practice Advisory](#)

### **Notice to Report (NTR)**

A "Notice to Report" (NTR), also known as Form I-385, is a document the U.S. government started giving to people who crossed the Mexico-United States border in the spring of 2021. Typically, the form tells the individual to report to an [Immigration and Customs Enforcement \(ICE\)](#) office within 60 days. Please note that the Notice to Report is **NOT** a [Notice to Appear](#) in immigration court.

#### *NTR Resources:*

- Asylum Seeker Advocacy Project (ASAP) - [NTR Overview and Sample of NTR \(ESPAÑOL AQUÍ\)](#)
- Asylum Seeker Advocacy Project (ASAP) - [Notice to Report: 60 days to check in with ICE? What are my options? \(ESPAÑOL AQUÍ\)](#)

### **ICE Check-Ins**

When migrants receive their Notice to Report, they may have been told that you must report to ICE within 60 days. They can schedule their appointment with ICE, by [visiting the ICE website](#). If they have problems with the website, they can call the ICE Detention Reporting and Information Line at 1-888-351-4024 and try to schedule an appointment over the phone. They can also try calling or emailing the [local ICE office](#). If they are having difficulty contacting ICE to schedule an appointment, they can keep trying, and should write down everything they have done to try to schedule an appointment. They can also keep records, like taking a screenshot of the website scheduler with their phone. Later, they may have to show that you tried your best to schedule an appointment.

When someone does report for their ICE check-in, many people receive a Notice to Appear at their appointment, or by mail afterwards. Migrants may have to give a photo and fingerprints at the appointment. It is



possible that ICE could place an ankle monitor on migrants during their appointment. They could also be scheduled for another check-in appointment in the future.

#### *ICE Check-In Resources:*

- Asylum Seeker Advocacy Project (ASAP) - [ICE and ISAP Check Ins \(ESPAÑOL AQUÍ\)](#)
- Asylum Seeker Advocacy Project (ASAP) - [Notice to Report: 60 days to check in with ICE? What are my options? \(ESPAÑOL AQUÍ\)](#)
- Asylum Seeker Advocacy Project (ASAP) - [VIDEO - What you need to know about check-ins with ICE and ISAP? \(ESPAÑOL AQUÍ\)](#)
- National Immigrant Justice Center (NIJC) - [Bienvenidos a Chicago! landing page](#)

### **Change Address & Check Case Status**

It is common that migrants will need to change their address with the government when arriving to a new destination. Also, it is important migrants are aware of their current cases pending with immigration, whether it be with immigration court and/or USCIS. Below are helpful ASAP resources on changing addresses and checking status:

#### *Changing Address:*

- [How to change your address with the government when you move](#) - how to change addresses with ICE/ISAP, Immigration Court, and USCIS ([ESPAÑOL AQUÍ](#))
- [How to file a motion to change venue](#) in immigration court, including a sample pro se motion ([ESPAÑOL AQUÍ](#))

#### *Checking Case Status:*

- [How to check your case status](#) - ([ESPAÑOL AQUÍ](#))

### **Asylum**

Many migrants are arriving with the intent to apply for asylum. Below are helpful resources from the Asylum Seeker Advocacy Project (ASAP) to help migrants navigate the decision to apply and process:

- [Asylum: Your Case Is In Your Hands](#) - video primer on asylum law - created by Innovation Law Lab, orientates pro se applicants to asylum requirements. Available in many different languages.
- [General orientation on the decision to apply for asylum \(ESPAÑOL AQUÍ\)](#)
- How to file an asylum application (English [video](#), [video en español](#), English [FAQs](#), [FAQs en español](#))
- [Information about work permits \(ESPAÑOL AQUÍ\)](#)
- [Videos for asylum seekers in defensive proceedings](#), including what to expect at immigration court hearings
- [Frequently asked questions](#) on other topics for asylum seekers ([ESPAÑOL AQUÍ](#))
- [Catalog of sample documents \(ESPAÑOL AQUÍ\)](#)

Asylum seekers can also sign up for ASAP membership to join the ASAP community and receive updates about asylum news. You can find more information here: <https://www.asylumadvocacy.org/members>.



*Additional Resources:*

- [CWS Asylum Process Roadmap](#)

## Know Your Rights

All people in the United States, regardless of their immigration status, have certain rights under the US Constitution and other laws. It is important for newly-arrived immigrants to know and exercise their rights and create a family preparedness plan. There are many educational materials and resources in different formats that can be shared with immigrant communities:

- Ready to Stay Coalition - [Know Your Rights page](#) (includes KYR videos in English and Spanish)
- Immigrant Legal Resource Center (ILRC) - [Know Your Rights “Red Cards”](#) in 13 different languages
- Immigrant Legal Resource Center (ILRC) - [Immigration Preparedness Toolkit](#)
- SEIU - [Your Rights as a Worker in a Labor Action](#)
- Immigrant Justice Network - [Enforcement of Deportation Priorities](#) (in-depth information for advocates)

## Fraud Prevention

Finding trusted and reliable legal representation can be a challenge for immigrant communities, particularly in areas with limited resources. Unscrupulous individuals and businesses can often take advantage of immigrants by offering immigration legal services they are not qualified to provide. Immigrants can access several resources to help them identify red flags when seeking immigration legal services and avoid falling victims of fraud. These include:

- Ready to Stay Coalition - [How to Find Legal Help and Avoid Fraud](#) (available in 10 different languages)
- Immigrant Legal Resource Center (ILRC) - [Avoiding Fraud When Seeking Immigration Services](#) (English and Spanish, includes videos)
- Immi.org - [Watch out for Immigration Scams](#)
- Stop Notario Fraud - [Victim Resources on Notario Fraud](#)

## Find Legal Services & Screening Tools

In addition to in-person legal service providers, there are different screening tools to help immigrants understand their options and potential path to an immigration status. Online tools are for educational purposes only and should not substitute a legal consultation with a qualified immigration legal services provider. The screening tools can be used by advocates and organizations to provide a general sense of the immigration options that might be available to an individual.

- Immi.org - [Prescreening tool to find your path to legal immigration status](#)
- Ready to Stay Coalition - [Find Legal Help Directory](#)
- [NPNA Legal Services Directory](#)
- Asylum Seeker Advocacy Project (ASAP) - [Find Help Page](#)





- Asylum Seeker Advocacy Project (ASAP) - [Pro se help desks](#) (CA, CO, FL, GA, IL, MA, NY, TX)
- American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA) - [Find an Immigration Lawyer](#)

### Immigration Legal Service Directories

- [NPNA Legal Services Directory](#)
- ASAP's Find legal help: <https://help.asylumadvocacy.org/find-help/>
- Immigrant Advocates Network (IAN): [National Legal Services Network](#)
- AILA [Find an Immigration Lawyer](#)

### Additional ASAP Resources

- Resources for asylum seekers: <https://help.asylumadvocacy.org/>
- Asylum Q&A: <https://help.asylumadvocacy.org/faqs/>
- Videos from ASAP: <https://www.youtube.com/c/AsylumSeekerAdvocacyProjectASAP/videos>

## ALWAYS WELCOME POLICY PRINCIPLES

NPNA, in collaboration with members, created the “Always Welcome” Policy Principles that outlines concrete policy recommendations for federal action and successful examples of state and local policies. Below is an outline and the extended version can be found [here](#).

- I. **THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT SHOULD PLAY A LEADING AND TRANSFORMATIONAL ROLE IN THE WELCOMING OF MIGRANTS**
  1. Proactively Address the Harms that Have Been Committed Against Migrants Bused or Flown by Governors
  2. Facilitate the Inclusion and Thriving of Migrants in Welcoming Communities
  
- II. **STATES AND LOCALITIES HAVE A SUCCESSFUL TRACK RECORD OF WELCOMING IMMIGRANTS THAT SHOULD BE REPLICATED AND SCALED UP**
  1. Asylum and Housing are Human Rights
  2. Strengthening the Health of Migrants Strengthens our Collective Wellbeing
  3. Investing in Children and Education Secures our Future
  4. Advancing Migrants' Professional Development Advances Equity and Shared Prosperity
  5. State, City, and Municipal Governments Have a Significant Role in Expanding Due Process Protections and Moving Away from Failed Immigration Policies
  6. States, Cities, and Counties Should Have a Holistic Welcoming Response, in Coordination with the Federal Government and CBOs

## NARRATIVE SHIFT & MESSAGING

**UPDATED FOR TITLE 42 (May 2023) - See “Always Welcome - Title 42 SUNSET - Messaging & Narrative Framework [HERE](#)**



A goal of these political stunts from the governors of Arizona, Florida, and Texas is to create a sense of chaos and foster feelings of scarcity. They want the American public to believe that our immigration system is “out of control” and that it is straining the capacity of our cities. They are driving a narrative of scarcity that erodes support for asylum and other systems of protection and entrenches policies like Title 42.

As we respond, it is important that we contest this narrative and worldview of scarcity and chaos. We can tell a different story about our communities readiness, willingness, and capacity to welcome. We can use this moment to build the case for more generous pathways for people seeking safety in the United States and stronger and more robust systems of welcome and support for people who arrive in our communities.

NPNA Partner *Welcome With Dignity* has created and is frequently updating their [message guidance](#) which includes sample talking points and tips on responding to questions as well as a [social media toolkit](#). What follows are a set of guiding principles for how to approach and integrate narrative and messaging into your response work.

## FRAMING PRINCIPLES

**Avoid crisis messaging:** Media coverage will often try to center on conflict, especially in an election year. And well-intentioned advocates may try to highlight the cruelty of the border state governors by focusing on how they weren’t given time to prepare. But stories that center a strain on resources or systems being overwhelmed play into anti-immigrant narratives. Instead focus on how communities are stepping up to welcome and the infrastructure that exists or is being built.

**Lead with values:** If we want to shift public opinion on these cruel stunts, on people seeking asylum, and the kind of immigration system our country needs - we must ground our messages in shared values. Don’t focus your message on problems, policies, or facts and figures. Start with shared values: like care, compassion, family, safety, and dignity.

**Cast a vision of the world we want:** In contrast to the crisis and chaos messaging, we can use this moment to offer a vision for how our local and federal governments can work together, and with local communities, to strengthen systems of support and welcome for newcomers. In our messaging, we can paint a picture of the world we want, rooted in values, where people can find safety for their families, find community, and have resources and support to rebuild their lives here. In our response to the buses, we can advance a narrative of abundance, not scarcity, and build support for transformative policy changes in our local communities and federal government.

**Talk about people:** These political stunts are dehumanizing and subsequent coverage often talks about people seeking asylum as victims or as political pawns. In your message, try to use language and messaging that refers to people first (like “people seeking asylum” instead of “migrants”). Similarly,



there is a lot of power in telling the stories of people who are welcoming people and supporting people arriving in their communities. This is not about red states v. blue states, or sanctuary cities v. border states. This is about people, families, communities, and neighbors.

**Think about messengers:** To shift the narrative, think about the kinds of messengers in your community who can help recenter the conversation on people and values, and who can demonstrate and further build support for the kind of policy changes we need. In addition to advocates and elected officials, think about faith leaders or volunteers who can talk about the community’s capacity and readiness to welcome.

**Defend asylum:** These extreme and cruel political stunts are putting the asylum system and treatment of people seeking asylum front and center in our national conversation. This is an important moment to educate the public about the right to seek asylum and to build durable public support.

**...but don’t throw other immigrants under the bus:** As we defend the right to seek asylum, it's important not to undermine support for other immigrants. Just as we should avoid the crisis framework, we can also avoid frameworks that reinforce good/bad immigrants, or the right way/wrong way to migrate. No matter where someone comes from, or how they got here, our communities work best when people are welcomed and given the resources and support to fully participate in our communities.

DOs	DONTs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Start your messages with shared values</li> <li>✓ Talk about how we can build more robust systems of welcome in our country and communities</li> <li>✓ Talk about people first (people seeking asylum, fathers/mothers, etc.)</li> <li>✓ Lift up a variety of messengers to demonstrate broad support and capacity to welcome</li> <li>✓ Defend the right to seek asylum</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✗ Use crisis language</li> <li>✗ Focus on the problems</li> <li>✗ Use dehumanizing language to talk about people seeking safety (flood of asylum seekers, buses of migrants, etc.)</li> <li>✗ Throw undocumented immigrants under the bus</li> </ul>

**Media Examples**



- Op-Ed Example: [The D.C. area is grateful for the migrants that Texas is sending](#)
- Chicago - Mayoral Welcoming Tweets:
  - ["We will continue to be a welcoming city that defends the dignity and human rights of migrants - no matter their status"](#)
  - ["We will not allow the actions of Governor Abbott to dehumanize individuals fleeing unsafe living conditions, and Chicago will continue to be a welcoming city for our new neighbors"](#)
  - [Como Estamos Chicago?](#)