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Q&A: Responding to Immigration Enforcement Efforts

On November 4, 2024, Donald Trump was re-elected president of the United States. Republicans also secured a 53-47 majority in the Senate for the 119th Congress, while maintaining their majority in the House of Representatives. Where can I learn more about the ways in which the recent presidential election might affect immigration policy?

The USCCB's Department of Migration and Refugee Services (USCCB/MRS) has created a useful backgrounder on the likely impact of the recent election on migration policy and focuses on an array of issues related to refugee resettlement and on immigration more generally. [This resource is available on the USCCB website.](#)

Given the likelihood of increased immigration enforcement, it is critical that immigrants be aware of their rights. Why does this matter and where can they learn more?

All people in the United States, including undocumented immigrants, have Constitutional rights and protections. Neither immigration nor the police will assume you want to exercise your rights. You are responsible for asserting them by showing your Know Your Rights card or by telling the officer you are exercising your rights.

The Catholic Legal Immigration Network (CLINIC) has created a set of very useful, know your rights resources for immigrant communities that are available in a wide range of languages. We urge you to distribute these resources to populations who might benefit from them. [These resources are available at the CLINIC website](#)

For some particularly useful know your rights resources, see below:

- [Know your Rights card](#): This wallet-sized card can be printed in English, Spanish, or Portuguese
- [Know Your Rights Flyers](#): These flyers explain your rights in various contexts.

What is the likely impact of the election on what have traditionally been understood as “sensitive locations”?

[A newly created resource](#) from USCCB/MRS outlines updated guidance from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) regarding immigration enforcement in "protected areas" (formerly known as "sensitive locations"). The 2021 Memo directs immigration enforcement agencies like Customs and Border Protection and Immigration and Customs Enforcement to avoid actions in or near locations where enforcement could hinder access to essential services, such as schools, healthcare facilities, places of worship, and social service centers. While the policy generally restricts enforcement in these areas, exceptions exist for urgent circumstances such as national security threats or imminent risks of harm. At this point, it is uncertain if the new administration will maintain the guidance in the 2021 Memo, but the USCCB/MRS resource will be updated to reflect any changes.

What is standby guardianship and why is it important for immigrant parents to better understand how this option can help in the case that they are detained or deported?

Standby guardianship is an important tool that enables parents to plan for the future care of their children. It allows a parent to designate an adult to be on standby to assume guardianship of a child only when a triggering event occurs, for example, incarceration, a terminal illness, or death, that could render the parent incapable of caring for a child, typically without losing the parent’s legal or parental rights. Standby guardianship could prove to be an important tool for migrants in cases where parents are detained or deported and plans for the care of their children is essential. [Learn more about standby guardianship from this important resource from CLINIC.](#)

Mixed-status families face a series of challenges and difficult decisions in preparing for the possibility of being separated from one another. Where can I learn more about resources where migrants and their supporters can turn for help if needed?

Mixed-status families face a series of challenges and difficult decisions in preparing for the possibility of being separated from one another. Planning to ensure children (as well as other dependents) and financial assets are taken care of is crucial, and preparation can be complex. Each state has its own set of laws, legal forms, and processes related to appointing a guardian for a dependent or for financial planning.

CLINIC strongly urges families to work with qualified attorneys to assist with these procedures, as state laws and legal forms may not clearly apply to a detention or deportation scenario. For example, a legal form may be intended for a parent preparing for the possibility of becoming ill, but not applicable for the possibility of detention or deportation. Attorneys with expertise in

these areas of law can guide families in making the best decision for their situation. [Learn more about pertinent resources at the CLINIC website.](#)

Where can I learn more about how my local community can engage in a rapid response effort in the face of an immigration raid?

Given the rise in enforcement activity by Immigration and Customs Enforcement, or ICE, it is necessary for community navigators and neighbors to be prepared in the event of a small- or large-scale raid. A community navigator is an advocate, community organizer, attorney, faith leader, volunteer or student who provides comprehensive support to those who need it. Immigration raids may take place at workplaces, homes, checkpoints or may be neighborhood-wide. Being prepared before a raid or increase of ICE activities can help communities respond immediately and effectively by assisting those directly affected. The first few hours after a raid are crucial and being prepared allows for advocates, communities and families to work together and help those who are detained quickly and efficiently. [This CLINIC resource provides a useful tool for how you can be prepared for such a reality.](#)

Where can I learn more about Catholic teaching and migration?

The Catholic Church has long been engaged on the issue of migration and has developed a robust set of teachings in response. One key resource to begin your learning process on this issue is the USCCB's [Principles of Migration](#). For further reading, please review the pastoral letters, [Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope \(Spanish\)](#). Please also be sure to check out the new resource on the [Catholic Elements of Immigration Reform](#).

How can I stay informed about migration-related policy changes?

The USCCB's Justice for Immigrants (JFI) campaign is one source of updates regarding immigration policy, as well as information about opportunities to advocate and engage in this area. Those interested can [sign up for these updates](#) on the JFI website. You can also keep abreast of key policy issues at the [USCCB migration policy page](#).