



*Materials adapted from information provided to us by Community Initiatives for Visiting Immigrants in Confinement (CIVIC) and the Detention Watch Network (DWN)*

***Friends of Orange County Detainees***

***Volunteer Training Manual***

***October 2013***



## ***Getting Acquainted with the Program***

### **What does this immigration detention program consist of?**

This detention visitation program consists of weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly visits to an immigrant in detention. The process will begin with volunteers being matched with a detained immigrant and the volunteers will agree to commit to a certain number of visits per month. The goal of the visits is to provide the individual in detention with some companionship and morale during their difficult time in detention.

### **What are the requirements of the visitation program?**

This visitation program requires the volunteer to be committed and consistent in their visits with detained immigrants. Oftentimes, you may be the only individual in the person's life, so consistency is especially important for their morale. Persons without current immigration status should NOT visit detention facilities, since they could be apprehended and detained or deported themselves.

### **What will be the volunteer's time commitment to the program?**

Addressing this question will depend on what you decide for the structure of the program and the frequency of the visits. Generally, you can assume that each visit will be about an hour (this amount of time may also depend on the particular facility). By estimating the time it takes to get to the facility, you will have a realistic idea of the time commitment of each visit.

### **What is expected of the volunteer in this program?**

Volunteers are expected to be sensitive to the detained immigrants' needs. Additionally, it is important to point out that volunteers should not proselytize in the detention facilities. Respecting the detained immigrant's faith or lack thereof is crucial, as many of them have fled their countries due to religious persecution. Having said that, we also encourage the detained immigrant to talk about the ways his/her faith helps him/her cope with suffering and stress in a way that puts the needs of the individual in detention first. Therefore, any conversation on religion should be initiated by the detained immigrant and not the volunteer. Volunteers are also expected to communicate any issues or concerns to the program leaders. Common concerns might include not being able to make scheduled visits, dealing with or navigating the process of setting boundaries with the detained immigrant, etc.

### **What support should the volunteer expect to get from the program leaders?**

The volunteer should expect to get consistent support from the program leaders. Program leaders will be in continuous communication with volunteers and will address any concerns that arise promptly. Program leaders will serve as the liaisons between the detention facilities and volunteers, so volunteers should expect to receive support regarding any issues that arise due to the visits at the detention facilities.

Should the detainee wish to contact a visitor, the letter should be addressed as following:

(Visitor first Name)  
Friends of Orange County Detainees  
P.O. Box 1536

Lake Forest CA 92609

Alternatively, a visitor may be contacted by email at [friendsofcdetainees@gmail.com](mailto:friendsofcdetainees@gmail.com)

## ***The Role of the Volunteer Visitor***

Volunteers provide an important means of support for detained immigrants who often do not have friends or family nearby. Their role is one of friendship, goodwill, and concern for the detained individual's welfare. The visitor-detained immigrant relationship is uniquely rewarding for both parties.

### ***As a volunteer, your visits will provide:***

- A boost to morale.
- Friendship and a smiling face.
- A time when the individual in detention can put their worries aside and just chat with someone.
- An important source of hope for a detained immigrant.
- The opportunity to help individuals in detention with their English language skills.
- A chance for asylum seekers who were detained at a port of entry to learn more about the United States than within the walls of the detention center or jail or what they see on TV.
- An opportunity for you, the volunteer, to learn more about the person you visit, their story, and the legal and administrative processes that asylum seekers and other immigrants face in the United States.

### ***As a volunteer, you are:***

- NOT a lawyer to help someone figure out how to get out of detention or file a claim.
- NOT a mental health professional to assess and treat symptoms of mental illness.
- NOT a social worker.
- NOT a missionary or pastor trying to convert detained immigrants.
- NOT a source of financial support for the detained immigrant or their friends and family.

Nevertheless, helping detained immigrants contact organizations that can provide legal, medical, or psychological assistance is very appropriate and helpful for a detained immigrant. Contact your group leader for assistance.

It is recommended that you plan to visit an individual in detention at least twice a month for at least three to four months. It takes time and a reasonable frequency of visits to develop a relationship. When concluding a visit, always indicate when you will be back and then keep that commitment. Your visits are a source of constancy in a turbulent time, so be consistent. Let them know if you will be away for awhile, ask them if they would like another visitor while you are gone, and try to send them a note or a letter while you are gone. Take some time to develop a relationship with detained immigrants before giving them your home address or phone number, agreeing to contact the detained immigrant's lawyer or family members, etc. (unless truly urgent). "Just visiting" is enough! And that is all the visitation program requires.

Later, you may make the personal choice to do more (send books or pocket money, make phone calls on the detained immigrant's behalf, give your home address or phone number – remember, the detained immigrant will most likely be calling you collect). Some visitor programs encourage their visitors to have individuals in detention write them care of their church or another organization, and to give a reliable church/organization phone number to detained immigrants for use in emergencies.

## ***Steps for a Good First (and following) Visits***

1. Introduce yourself, what group you are with, how you got the detained immigrant's name, and that you are there as a friend – not to sell anything, teach anything, or make anything happen for them legally.
2. Find out what name the person prefers to use and repeat it back to them.
3. Let the person guide the conversation. Say, "What would you like to talk about?" Some conversation starters might include: "Tell me about yourself." "How was your week?" "Have you been following (developments in current events, sports, etc.)?" "Tell me about your culture."

The detained immigrant is likely to ask you to say a word about yourself (your family, job, interests, etc.). As in any relationship, sometimes it takes a visit or two to "break the ice." Give it time!

4. Keep in mind that the individual in detention may want to just talk about the present and not the past. Don't pry into the details of their background or case. The detained immigrant may tell you their story when they are ready. Alternatively, they may never feel comfortable telling anyone besides their lawyer and the immigration judge.

5. Convey what you understand. ("You say you are not receiving any letters.") Be aware of non-verbal communication. Listen (and reflect back) not just the content but also the feelings of the conversation. ("You feel scared.") Use non-verbal communication yourself. Your smile, your hand gestures, touching hands (even through glass) can be powerfully encouraging.

6. Whether or not you share the same faith as the person you visit, you may find yourself conversing about the role of faith in coping with suffering and stress. If faith is important to the detained immigrant, ask how it sustains him/her. Please remember that you are there as a listener and friend to uplift detained immigrants through their own beliefs, not as a proselytizer seeking to convert.

7. Know your boundaries. Determine which needs you can meet and which ones you cannot. At the request of an individual in detention, volunteers may be permitted to give money, mail something to the family member of a detained immigrant, etc. if, and only if, the volunteer feels comfortable doing so. This is something you will have to decide within your group to help your volunteers set healthy boundaries while also providing assistance to their new friends.

8. End the visit by letting the detained immigrant know when you will be back. Say something encouraging and/or affirming to them and that you look forward to talking more with them soon.

9. Do not make any promises, unless you are certain you can keep them.

10. Make sure to record your visit and let your group coordinators know how your visit went in general terms, being sure to not violate important confidentiality standards.

11. Abide by the detention center's rules and be courteous to detention center staff at all times. The process of visiting carries with it certain stresses. For example, you may be searched, or have to wait a long time to see the person you came to visit, or become irritated by the attitude or behavior of a detention center staff member, or be surprised to learn that the detained immigrant you visit is no longer there. "Losing your cool"

will serve no purpose other than, perhaps, to block you and others from visiting. Detention center staff have policies and procedures they must adhere to, and their work is not always easy. Addressing them with respect and professional cordiality is not only appropriate, but helpful to your goal of being able to continue to visit individuals in detention.

12. After each visit, let your group leader know simply that “I (name) visited (name) for (length of visit) on (date).” Let your group leader know if there are any problems that need to be attended to. It is also important to note if a detained immigrant has been (or is about to be) released, moved or deported. If you need to stop visiting someone for any reason, inform the individual in detention and your group leader, who can ask another volunteer to visit that detained immigrant.

## ***Confidentiality***

Respecting the confidentiality of the detained immigrant’s background and legal case must be a high priority. Detained immigrants are in sensitive legal proceedings. Many (especially asylum seekers) may fear for their own lives and the lives of family members with them or in another country if word gets out that they are in a U.S. detention center. Many individuals in detention even refuse to speak about their immigration cases with other detained immigrants. A high level of confidentiality is a sign of respect for the individual in detention. Strict confidentiality protects both the detained immigrant and the visitor. With this in mind, visitors should follow the following guidelines:

1. Do not discuss or communicate information regarding an individual in detention’s case with other volunteers, detention facility employees, other detained immigrants or deportation officers at the facility or when you leave the detention center.
2. If you want to tell other people about the experience of visiting, ask the detained immigrant’s permission before sharing any part of his/her story. Use a pseudonym and a regional identification only (e.g. say “Africa” instead of “Guinea,” for example).
3. Visitors need to find ways to work out their emotions following a stressful visit (e.g. you’ve heard disturbing details of your detained immigrant’s personal story) without violating their confidentiality. (WRONG: “A detained immigrant was raped repeatedly ...” RIGHT: “A detained immigrant told me disturbing details about what he/she went through and I’m feeling very upset.”)
4. Do NOT contact the detained immigrant’s embassy or consulate! For example, asylum seekers by definition are fleeing a country where their government persecuted them or where the government could not or would not protect them. The LAST thing the individual in detention needs is for someone to inform his/her government that he/she is in U.S. detention.
5. Similarly, do not contact local expatriates from the detained immigrant’s home country without checking with them first; there often are political and ethnic considerations and conflicts.

## ***Issues That Should be Referred to Program Leaders***

- Legal matters: upcoming court dates, need for a lawyer, parole affidavits, filing appeals, etc.
- Mental and physical health concerns: depression, suicidal symptoms, prolonged illness, sudden weight loss, etc.
- Urgent detained immigrant needs: contact with family, immediate or impending release.
- Allegations of mistreatment or abuse of a detained immigrant inside the facility.
- Unprofessional conduct of detention center staff towards the volunteer.
- Requests for material assistance (e.g. money for a detained immigrant's account).
- Other questions or concerns the volunteer is uncertain how to deal with.

## ***Common Questions from Individuals In Detention***

### ***"I don't have a lawyer. I have a court date soon! What can I do?"***

Unlike criminal courts, there is no 'public defender' for non-citizens in immigration courts. It is possible and likely for someone to seek relief from removal and go through the process without a lawyer. Studies confirm that an asylum seeker will have a better chance of success if he/she has a lawyer. There may be a local non-profit legal organization that offers pro bono (free) legal representation to eligible detained immigrants, and sometimes local attorneys will provide pro bono assistance. In some detention centers, these agencies work together to meet and 'screen' all newly-arrived detained immigrants. Look for a list of such agencies in the detention center, online, or contact a local lawyer who may know or the local bar association for names of immigration attorneys (or see a list of many below). Individuals in detention should be able to make free telephone calls to potential lawyers, but may need a volunteer's help finding a list of possibilities and doing some initial research that requires the internet. It will be up to your group to determine your policy in regards to this issue. Regardless, all volunteers should have a cursory knowledge of resources in order to best inform and help detained immigrants should they have this question.

These organizations may also be helpful to you:

Justice for Our Neighbors: Free legal assistance - [general@jfon-umcor.org](mailto:general@jfon-umcor.org), (240)450-1186

<http://gbgm-umc.org/UMcor/refugees/justicenetwork.stm>

American Immigration Lawyers Association: Network of immigration lawyers - [www.aila.org](http://www.aila.org)

American Bar Association Commission on Immigration:

[http://www.abanet.org/publicserv/immigration/legal\\_services\\_directory\\_map.shtml](http://www.abanet.org/publicserv/immigration/legal_services_directory_map.shtml)

The National Immigration Project of the National Lawyers Guild – [www.nationalimmigrationproject.org](http://www.nationalimmigrationproject.org)

American Civil Liberties Union – [www.aclu.org](http://www.aclu.org)



***"I haven't seen my lawyer in weeks and I can't speak to him/her on the telephone! Why won't s/he come see me?"***

Attorneys are often strapped for time. From the detained immigrants' perspective, their cases do not move as quickly as they would like them to. Many individuals in detention do not understand that oftentimes their lawyer can best help them from their office and not necessarily by visiting them. Encourage the detained immigrant to continue to call their lawyer's office and leave messages, especially if the call is in regard to previously undisclosed information regarding the detained immigrant's asylum claim. It is also suggested that the volunteer can help by calling and reminding the lawyer of the detained immigrant's need to see him/her. Sometimes just knowing that someone else is interested in a detained immigrant's case can prompt a faster response from a lawyer.

"I don't feel well. I saw the doctor-they didn't help-and don't know what's wrong."

often complain about the medical services in detention. Often the complaints hinge on lack of communication. Encourage the detained immigrant to submit written requests to seek medical attention and to keep copies of these requests. The clinics inside the detention centers have access to telephonic interpreters but seem to rarely use them (perhaps to save time and money). Tell the individual in detention to insist on having an interpreter over the telephone when they visit with the doctor. The volunteer can write a note for them to take to the doctor which says, "I don't understand. I would like an interpreter over the telephone." You can also document the detained immigrant's stories for advocates to use in bringing the case up with the detained immigrant's lawyer, the detention center administration, or even government representatives to press for better medical attention in the facility.

### ***Important Contact Information:***

- Friends of O.C. Detainees  
P.O. Box 1536  
Lake Forest CA 92609  
949 682-5053  
[friendsofocdetainees@gmail.com](mailto:friendsofocdetainees@gmail.com)
- The Center OC (for detainees in the GBT pod at Santa Ana Jail)  
1605 North Spurgeon Street  
Santa Ana, CA 92701
- When sending letters to detainees, use the following format:

Detainee's Name and Booking Number  
Name of the Facility  
Address of the Facility

# ***Appendices***

***James A. Musick Facility Directions***

***Santa Ana Jail Directions***

***Visitation Log***

**James A. Musick Facility**  
13502 Musick Honor Farm Rd  
Irvine, CA 92618



**Driving Directions:**

1. Exit **Lake Forest Dr.** from the **405 or 5 Freeway**
2. Turn toward the mountains on **Lake Forest Dr.**
3. Turn left onto **Rockfield Blvd.**
4. Turn right onto **Bake Pkwy.**
5. Turn Left onto **Irvine Blvd**
6. Take the 2<sup>nd</sup> right onto **Musick Honor Farm Rd.**
7. At the security gate turn left into the **visitors' parking lot**

**Santa Ana City Jail**  
62 Civic Center Plaza  
Santa Ana, CA 92701



**Driving Directions:**

1. Take the **5 Freeway** North
2. Exit at **4th St.** toward **1st St.**
3. Take the ramp toward **1st St.**
4. Stay straight to go onto **Mabury St.**
5. Turn Right onto **1st St.**
6. Turn Right onto **Flower St.**
7. Turn Left onto **Civic Center Drive**
8. Turn Left onto **Boyd Way**
9. Park in the parking structure on your left
10. Walk across Boyd Way to the Jail

## Visitation Log

Date of Visit: \_\_\_\_\_ Facility: \_\_\_\_\_

Start Time: \_\_\_\_\_ End Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Detainee's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ A-Number: \_\_\_\_\_

**Questions or Issues Discussed that you wish to refer to attorneys:  
(Check all that apply.)**

\_\_\_\_\_ Legal matters

\_\_\_\_\_ Mental and/or physical health concerns

\_\_\_\_\_ Urgent detainee needs: contact with family, immediate or impending release

\_\_\_\_\_ Allegations of mistreatment or abuse of a detained immigrant inside the facility

\_\_\_\_\_ Unprofessional conduct of detention center staff towards the volunteer.

\_\_\_\_\_ Requests for material assistance, e.g. money

**Specify:**

---

---

---

**Questions you have for the Program Coordinator:**

---

---

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_