



## Introductory Guide: Immigration Detention Visitation

Each year, over 400,000 people are detained in a network of over 200 detention facilities across the country. These are mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters and sons and daughters that need your support through visitation. The following is a brief visitation guide to help prepare you for your visit and point you in the direction for more resources.

### I. Planning your Visit to a Detention Center

**Connect with a DWN Member** to plan your visit through an established visitation program or local organization that has a relationship with a detention center. Visitation programs can arrange your visit and guide you through the entire process, providing in-depth manuals on visitation. They will also address specific questions or concerns pertaining to your local facility.

- Contact Community Initiatives for Visiting Immigrants in Confinement (CIVIC), who will recommend and facilitate an introduction to a local visitation program near you.
  - Email CIVIC at [info@endisolation.org](mailto:info@endisolation.org) to be connected or learn more through their website: <http://www.endisolation.org/>

### II. Recognize your Role as a Visitor

Your only agenda is friendship. Don't assume anything about their stories or their needs, but go with a willingness to listen and learn and respond. You are not visiting as an attorney, social worker, or mental health professional. Your role is to be a compassionate presence in the lives of individuals who have been deprived of freedom and cut off from the outside world. Their need for emotional support is real and deep.

*(Excerpt from the LIRS Bring the Sky manual)*

It might feel awkward at the beginning to engage in conversation but start off with basic questions. Introduce yourself, what group you are with, how you got their name, and that you are there as a friend – not to sell anything, teach anything, or promise anything for them legally. Conversation may begin with you speaking about yourself and talking about the weather or current events, allow plenty of time for the people you are visiting to talk. Let what they say direct the conversation, and as they do, their particular needs will become apparent in time. Let them speak as much as possible.

### III. What to bring and What not to Bring

It's important to note that all facilities have different rules that visitors must follow.

Do Bring	Don't Bring
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● A form of identification</li><li>● The "Alien Number" also known as "A Number" of the person you will be visiting</li><li>● Full name of the person you're visiting</li><li>● Change-quarters<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Many facilities offer coin operated lockers to store your items</li></ul></li></ul>	Beyond the waiting room, you will not be allowed to bring anything inside the detention facility. Leave all non-essential items in your car (sunglasses, phone, camera) and expect to store the rest of your essential items in a locker (keys, ID).

### IV. What to Expect Upon Arrival of the Facility

- You will need to check-in with the front desk and fill out a visitation form with your personal information, name and "alien number" of the person you are visiting and the make and model of your car if you arrived by personal vehicle.
- When asked about the relation to the person you're visiting, you should say you are a "friend."
- Be prepared to wait. Visiting hours depend on a variety of factors, therefore expect the possibility of a lengthy waiting period.

### V. Help Share Their Story

- Voices From Detention (<http://www.detentionwatchnetwork.org/voicesfromdetention>)  
For people interested in sharing their personal story publicly please inform them of Detention Watch Network's Voices from Detention project. Voices from Detention brings forward the voices of directly impacted individuals currently in detention via audio phone recordings.

Contact DWN organizer Aurea Martinez at [amartinez@detentionwatchnetwork.org](mailto:amartinez@detentionwatchnetwork.org) or 202-803-6690 for more details.

### VI. Learn More - Member Resources on Visitation

- LIRS - Bring the Sky  
<http://lirs.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/BRING-THE-SKY-4-BEING-A-VISITOR.pdf>
- CIVIC Visitation Page  
<http://www.endisolation.org/resources/for-visitors/>
- DWN Visitation Guide  
<https://www.prisonlegalnews.org/news/publications/detention-watch-network-visiting-us-detainees-manual/>

### VII. Learn More - Immigration Detention System

- Our website provides numerous resources and general information on the immigration detention system as well as the work we are currently focusing on: <http://www.detentionwatchnetwork.org/>