



Guide to Requesting a Visit or Tour of ICE Detention Facilities

ICE's access policy, set out in its 2011 Access Directive, means that any organization may now more easily access an ICE facility. Visitors can speak with detainees and monitor conditions to see whether or not the facility is in compliance with national standards. If you or your organization is interested in visiting an ICE facility, here are a few resources to get you started. For more information, see ICE's instructions on the access directive: <http://wrc.ms/1S7E1Rt>

Please note that these procedures and this policy are primarily intended for organizations wishing to access a facility for monitoring. Legal service providers who have existing partnerships for Know Your Rights presentations or Legal Orientation Programs, or media and reporters, should not be impacted by this policy.

Why Visit Facilities?

Touring detention centers and interviewing detained immigrants are essential to advocating for reform. This directly informs efforts to ensure compliance with detention standards.

Visits to the facilities allow us to monitor operations and listen to the personal experiences of detained immigrants, helping us identify serious gaps in custody determinations, the upholding of detention standards and the lack of oversight that exists both on a national and local level. Our visits also help us identify the best practices that could be replicated elsewhere and that should be developed into new detention standards and policies.

The Women's Refugee Commission's follow-up with local facilities and ICE headquarters has often led to immediate, concrete changes in conditions for detained immigrants. We document our visits with extensive notes and submit our observations in writing. It is particularly important to identify circumstances in which a facility did not meet the very basic ICE detention standards.

In addition, minor improvements are often made especially in preparation for a tour or visit. Even if these improvements are temporary, they result in real and concrete benefits to those detained. Over time, they may lead to a culture change and become more standardized.

How to Request a Visit or Tour

Resources to complete these tasks are listed on the next page, and available for download at: <http://wrc.ms/1H7iLox>

Submit the following at least 14 days prior to your planned visit to the Local ICE Field Office Outreach Liaison.

1. A written request, sent by email or post, on letterhead that describes:
 - The type of visit you wish to make (a tour, interviews with detainees, or both)
 - A brief description of the purpose of your visit
 - Three options of dates and times that would work for your tour/visit
 - Background information for each visitor as required by the facility (e.g. Name, Date of Birth, Driver's License Number, etc.)
2. The following completed forms:
 - Tour/Visit Notification Flyer (includes sign-up sheet)
 - Signed ICE Visitor Code of Conduct form for each stakeholder participant
 - Copy of the consent form

NOTE: Materials that you plan to distribute to detainees should be submitted ahead of the tour and pre-approved.

Ethics & Confidentiality

Detention center visits can be difficult and traumatizing experiences, both for the visitor and for the individual being interviewed. Before requesting to interview detained immigrants, keep in mind your reasons for talking to him or her and what you will do with the information you hear.

Employ sensitivity.

Always explain the purpose of your visit clearly and with compassion. Many immigrants need legal representation and will hope and think that this is what you are providing. If your visit is for another reason, make sure the detained individual understands what the information he or she provides you will be used for.

The Women's Refugee Commission often presents copies of our reports to illustrate our work and our inclusion of detainee stories in our advocacy. When permitted, we leave these reports with detainees. If you have examples of the ways in which their stories will be used, you should leave these materials as well.

Allow the detainee the space and opportunity to stop an interview at any time.

Notice if someone is uncomfortable talking to you even if they say otherwise.

Informed Consent is critical.

After explaining the purpose of your visit and how the information will be used (if at all), ensure that a detainee gives consent to speak with you and gives you permission for any way in which you plan to use the information. See below for a sample consent form.

Make it clear that you will maintain confidentiality.

Explain that you will never repeat a detainee's name, always use a pseudonym and never reveal any information (for example, a unique country of origin that would help others narrow down the detainee you met with) that could be used to identify a detainee.

Resources

Downloads are available at: <http://wrc.ms/1H7iLox>

WRC Sample Letter to Request a Tour or Visitation

<http://wrc.ms/1N5kAc0>

This generic form can be tailored to your visit. Stakeholders should be specific in what they would like to see, in order to ensure a complete and comprehensive tour.

WRC Sample Consent Form

<http://wrc.ms/1MgvpCT>

This generic form can be tailored to your visit.

ICE Stakeholder Procedures for Requesting a Detention Facility Tour and/or Visitation

<http://wrc.ms/1Wgj6MB>

Review these policies as prior to submitting your request.

ICE Stakeholder Visitor Code of Conduct

<http://wrc.ms/1N5l2qH>

Each member participating in the stakeholder visit must read and complete this form.

ICE Stakeholder Tour/Visit Notification Flyer

<http://wrc.ms/1jOoFGe>

This gives detainees a chance to sign up to speak with you ahead of your visit. Provide your and/or your organization's information, and purpose for the visit.

Local ICE Field Office Outreach

Liaison Contact Information

<http://wrc.ms/1KmXTtv>

ICE's Instructions on the Access Directive

www.wrc.ms/1S7E1Rt

Detention Standards

<http://wrc.ms/1N5cKPM>

When touring a detention facility, take time to understand the standards against which that facility is inspected to better inform the questions you ask.

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