





Don't feel alone! There are a lot of places you can go for help, to answer questions, to learn more and improve your situation.


In New Jersey:


 *Catholic Community Services:* 494 Broad Street, Newark. Tel: 973.242.1999

 *International Institute of New Jersey:* 880 Bergen Avenue, Jersey City. Tel: 201.653.3888

 *Jesuit Refuge Service,* 976 Broad Street, Newark, NJ 07102, Tel: 973-733-3516 ext 207

 *Jewish Vocational Services:* 111 Prospect St., East Orange. Tel: 973.674.3672


 *Lutheran Family Services,* Trenton, NJ, Tel: 609-393-4900


 *Newark YMWCA, RightStart:* 600 Broad Street, Newark. Tel: 973.624.8900

In New York:


 *Bellevue-NYU Program for Survivors of Torture:* 27th St. & 1st Ave., Tel: 212.889.3519


 *CAMBA:* 884 Flatbush Avenue, Brooklyn. Tel: 718.282.2500

 *Catholic Charities,* 1011 First Avenue, 12th fl, New York, Tel: 212-371-1011 ext 2485

 *Hanac, Inc.:* 23-16 30th Avenue, Astoria, Queens. Tel: 718.626.3232

 *International Rescue Committee:* 122 E. 42nd St., New York. Tel: 212.551.3150


 *Literacy Assistance Center:* 15 Dutch St., New York. Hotline: 212.803.3333

 *Marymount College, IIC:* 619 Lexington Ave., New York. Tel: 212.308.0188

 *NYANA,* 17 Battery Place, New York, Tel: 212-425-5051 ext 1050

 *Riverside Church Adult Learning Ctr:* 91 Claremont St, New York Tel: 212.662.3200


 *Solace:* 74-07 39th Ave., Rm. 412, Jackson Heights, Queens. Tel: 718.899.1233


 *The International Center:* 50 W. 23rd Street, New York. Tel: 212.255.9555





Elsewhere in the US:

Call the National Asylee Hotline 1-800-354-0365

 Education/ ESL

 Social Adjustment Counseling

 Job Placement

 Computer Training

NEXT STEPS



“Just Released” The What-You-Need-To-Know Workbook

Now that you have political asylum, here are a few suggestions as you go about starting a new life in New York City and northern New Jersey.



Remember, this is a workbook, so keep a pen handy.



Jesuit Refugee Service

Catholic Community Services

976 Broad Street Newark NJ 07102

973-733-3516 Ext. 207

We hope this is useful to you. Your good ideas will improve the next edition, so let us know what you think. This edition was updated in *November 2001* as the latest Next Steps publication from Jesuit Refugee Service to help formerly detained asylees and asylum seekers in the United States.

DETAINED
ASSISTANCE
PROJECT - NJ

Remember your rights!

As an asylee, you have the right to: Work, attend school, sponsor relatives for resettlement, buy property and own a business. You have the same human rights as all Americans.

However, you cannot vote, run for public office, or join the army.

First things first. Were you just released from immigration detention? If so, answer this right away!



1. Get what's yours.

Did you ask for and receive all your identification and other original documents the INS kept in your file while you were in detention?

YES ☐ NO ☐

If not, did the INS have your

birth certificate

drivers license

diplomas

national identification papers

or any other item which belongs to you?

While still in court, asylees are expected to ask for their documents. The INS does have the right to keep them for 30 days so don't be surprised if they refused to give them to you.

However, you can still get them back. Ask your deportation officer as soon as possible, in case he still has your file. If your documents have gone to the Records Department, you may have to fill out a form, Request for the Return of Original Documents, Form G-884.

Deportation Office for the Elizabeth

Detention Center: 973.622.7157

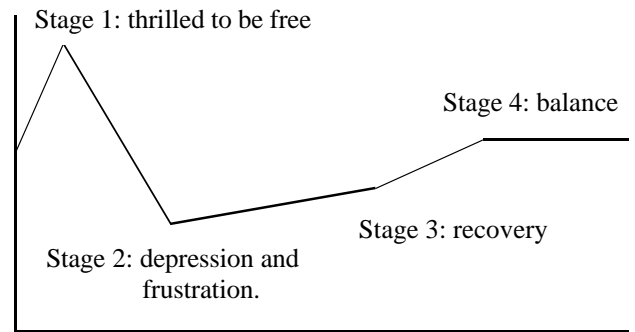
Wackenhut Detention Center: 718.244.7956

INS Phone # for forms: 1.800.870.3676

Name of your deportation officer:

Dates you called and whether you spoke to someone or left a message:

Adapting to a new culture is never easy... even for a survivor like yourself.



This may describe your mood, or level of happiness, over time. It's a normal part of cultural adjustment.

Tips for newcomers to the US.

1. If you don't understand, ask, ask, ask.

Whether you don't understand how to get a driver's license or you don't understand why Americans like a certain TV show, find someone to ask.

2. Always ask for a business card.

Any office you visit for any matter should have a business card. If not, ask the person you spoke with to write down their name and phone number. You may think all your questions have been answered, but the next morning you may wake up wondering what if... and you'll want to be able to call them.

3. How to walk in an unfamiliar city.

Walk as if you were born there. Remember that tourists are targets for pick-pockets.

4. Shopping. It may be hard to know when you can negotiate and when prices are fixed, however you should always shop around to find the best price.

5. It is illegal to smoke in many public places. It's better to ask first.

6. Punctuality (being on time) is very important in American society. For every appointment, be on time every time. Also, most people prefer a phone call to plan a time to meet rather than an unannounced visit. You'll make a great impression!

Adjustment of status continues...

- **Do it as soon as possible.** Apply for adjustment as soon as one year has passed. A change in the country conditions at home can affect your case.

- **Apply for citizenship** 5 years after being granted asylum. The INS will accept your application 4 years after you applied for permanent residence. That means that if you wait 3 years to apply for residence, you will have waited 7 years to become a citizen, instead of five.


Date you were granted asylum:

Date you applied for permanent residence:

Date you obtained permanent residence:

Date you will apply for citizenship:

Once you have a job, what are you going to do with that money you're earning? Save it! Spend it! Do both.

 **8. Banking.** When your new employer gives you your pay check, you have two choices. You can either go to a check cashing place and pay a small fee (2 or 3%) to change the check into cash. OR you can open a savings and/or checking account(s) at a bank. A savings account has an interest rate which allows your money to make money while it's there. We advise that you start both now.

Each bank will have its rules about what you need to start an account. Some require only a SSN and an I-94 card to open a basic account. Ask several banks about their accounts to find the best one for you.

Credit Cards are more difficult to obtain. Until you are a resident, you might have to settle for a debit card only. Believe it or not, having a credit history is an important asset later.

Now, how about getting a job? You'll need to get a few things squared away first. ("squared away" = taken care of)



2. The right to work.

As an asylee, your status guarantees you the right to work. An Employment Authorization Document (EAD) is an ID card which states this right. You do not necessarily need an EAD to get a job if you get an unrestricted Social Security Card (see page 4) but an EAD can help you get an ID from the Department of Motor Vehicles.

What's needed:

1. Form I-765, only one page. *Call INS for forms at 1.800.870.3676. It's a free call.*

2. A photocopy of both sides of your I-94.

3. Two photos of yourself. Be sure it's a side view and not a 'passport' photo (straight view).

3. We suggest including a G-28 form from you lawyer so that he or she will receive a copy of everything the INS sends you.

4. For first-time applicants who are asylees, there is no fee.

5. Asylees should send applications by *certified mail* to INS Service Center, PO Box 87765, Lincoln, NE 68501. All others check instructions.

Do this as soon as possible. It can take up to 3 months (and sometimes more).

Date you submitted the EAD application:

~~Date you received the "Notice of Action"~~
stating that you will receive the card within 80 days:

~~Date you received the EAD:~~

Any other correspondence:

What you must have before you can even apply for a job: a Social Security Number.



3. A Social Security Number (SSN)

is necessary for all people living in the US. Employers use it to pay your salary. The US government uses it to collect taxes (due April 15 every year). You must have a SSN to get a job. Also, Social Security Numbers are national. It doesn't matter if you apply in New Jersey and move to California. You don't need a new one!

Apply for a SSN as soon as possible.

It should take no more than two weeks to obtain.

1. Apply in person at a Social Security Administration (SSA) office. The form is one page and there is no fee.
2. Bring your I-94 card, the court/asylum decision and all pieces of identification (ID) you have. There is a new policy so it might help to take a copy of the SSA memo FILE NO: EM-01061 which was dated April 4, 2001. This memo states that asylees only need an I-94 to get a SSN.
3. Question #2 on the form asks for your address. Write an address where you are sure you will receive mail. If you are moving around, choose a permanent address. JRS and other service agencies will receive, hold and mail Social Security cards to asylees who inform us of their whereabouts.
4. Remember when filling out the form that as an asylee, you are a "*legal alien allowed to work*". (Question #3)
5. Get a receipt from the SSA staff person. If you don't get a receipt, it means that they will not process your application. In this case, ask to see the office manager or go to a different SSA office.

The Social Security Hotline Telephone Number is 1-800-772-1213.

2. You must tell your case worker if you move. Whether you move upstairs in the same building or to another state, you must tell him/her. It is best to write a short letter saying that you are moving, the new address if you are continuing to receive assistance, and sign your name.

3. If you did not have a Social Security Number when you applied for assistance, send a photocopy of the card to your case worker as soon as you get it.

Date you were interviewed:

Date you started to receive assistance:

Your case worker's name and number:

What about these "green cards"?



7. A "green card" is the popular name for the permanent residence card, (because it used to be green, of course). **Asylees can apply for permanent residence one year after their asylum was granted.** This process can take some time. Adjusting your status will take at least one year, perhaps longer.

Bits of advice...

- **You do not need a lawyer** to apply for adjustment of status, but seeing an immigration counselor is a good idea.
- **The fee for asylees is \$220.**
- **It is better not to travel** while you are waiting for permanent residence. Absolutely do not go back to your home country! (Once you are adjusted, you can travel outside the US but you will need a "re-entry permit" from the INS.)
- **Don't get arrested.** If you are convicted, you *could* be deported and banned from returning.

Public Assistance continues...

B) **Medicaid** is medical insurance which allows you to see a doctor and get the medicine you need. You will receive a paper slip each month which you show the doctor or pharmacist. Medicaid is now managed through large, private insurance companies. The Social Services office will send you a form to choose a company, or else the Social Services office will choose for you. If you don't know which to choose but you do know which doctor you will see, call and ask the doctor's office which they suggest.

- You can use your Medicaid at hospitals.
- If you don't have Medicaid and need to go to the hospital, ask for Charity Care.

C) **Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA)**. If you don't receive cash assistance from a refugee resettlement agency ("Match Grant"), you are eligible for RCA for the first 8 months after being granted asylum. Be careful: this begins when you apply. If you wait 1 month before applying, you will receive only 7 months. As a single adult without any resources or income, you will probably receive \$160 per month.

How does it work? The same card you use for Food Stamps can be used to withdraw money from Automatic Teller Machines (ATMs).

Important rules:

1. You must tell your case worker when you get a job. Send him/her a photocopy of your first two "paystubs" (the receipts attached to your paychecks). Once you have an income (get a job), your assistance will change. Depending on how much money you make, your cash assistance and food stamps may be terminated. **However, the Medicaid will continue for EIGHT months from when you were granted asylum.**

Date you applied for your SSN:

Did they give you a receipt?

Date you received your SSN:

Even if you don't have a car, you're going to want a driver's license or an identification card from the DMV.



4. The Department of Motor Vehicles

(DMV) issues driver's licenses as well as State ID cards. Either one is an important form of identification. Many employers will ask for this.

1. Apply at a local DMV, or at least in the state where you live. You must have at least your I-94 and SSN. In N.Y., you may need more pieces of identification.

2. A driver's license requires passing a written exam and a driving test. You can pick up a Driving Manual at a DMV office to study. You do not need to schedule the written exam. However you will need to schedule the driving test, which usually takes place 6 to 8 weeks later. The cost is \$18 in New Jersey.

3. A non-drivers license or State ID can be obtained in one day and costs \$6. You do not need to take a test for this.

The New Jersey Department of Motor Vehicles toll-free telephone number is 1-888-486-3339

Date you passed the written exam:

Date you passed the driving test:

Congratulations!

**You wanna get back on a plane?!?!
("wanna" = want to, incorrect English)**



5. With a Refugee Travel Document, you can. This document looks like a passport and allows you to leave and return to the US.

**One important rule:
DO NOT GO BACK TO YOUR COUNTRY FROM WHICH YOU FLED!**

What's needed:

1. The Application for Travel Document is two pages (front and back). You can call INS for forms at 1-800-870-3676. Ask for Form I-131.

2. The application requires a \$95 processing fee. Get a money order for that amount from the Post Office. Write the money order to: Immigration and Naturalization Service.

3. A photocopy of your I-94 card.

4. Two immigration photographs.
Immigration photos must be done professionally and cost about \$10.

5. Mail your application to:
USINS, Northern Service Center
100 Centennial Mall North, Room B-26
Lincoln, NE 68508.

6. There is no set period of time for processing. You may be waiting for a while, or it might surprise you soon.

Important: It is best to travel during this first year, before you have submitted an application for permanent residence (green card).

Date you mailed application:

~~Date you received your Refugee Travel Document:~~

Now, how are you going to survive?



6. Social Services: If you arrived in the US without financial resources, you will need some form of help to get started.

First you should go to a refugee resettlement agency (see page 12). The resettlement agency will see if you can be in their "**Match Grant**" program. You must do this in the first 30 days after you get asylum. The resettlement agency will work to help you find a job in less than three months. During this time, you will receive cash assistance from the agency.

The resettlement agency will also refer you to the State 'social services' office in your county so that you can receive Food Stamps and Medicaid (more information below). The office may also be called "Workfirst" or a "Job Center" or the "Human Resources Administration".

If you can't be in the Match Grant program, you can still get Refugee Cash Assistance from the State welfare office.

Very Important: If you are an asylee, accepting Public Assistance does not qualify you as a public charge and has no negative effect on your opportunity to obtain permanent residence or citizenship.

Through the State 'social services' office, the following are available to refugees and asylees

A) Food Stamps. All asylees and resettled refugees are eligible for the Federal Food Stamp program for the first **eight months** after being granted. There are certain requirements to determine if you are eligible (for example, your financial situation).

How long does it take? The application process varies from office to office. In NY, the application process may take up to several weeks. In NJ, it generally takes under 10 days.

How does it work? You will be given a plastic card, like a credit card, which you can use in supermarkets, some stores and restaurants. When you receive the card, you will have to go through a training session to learn how to use it. In NJ, look for the Families First sign.