

How to Prepare and Respond

Direct engagement with immigrants in your community:

- Volunteer and/or attend information trainings sponsored by immigrant rights organizations in your community and at your local Catholic Charities agency. Ask how you can help. If you cannot find these in your area, email the Mercy Justice Team a justice@sistersofmercy.org.
- Organize or attend a session in your parish (or place of residence) to discern what you can do to assure immigrant members of your support and to make a plan for how your community will respond. Fear among immigrants is heightened, and any gestures of welcome and assurance of support go a long way. If your parish has not yet been engaged in immigrant support, encourage the pastor and parish staff to be in touch with the US Bishops Conference [Justice for Immigrants Campaign](#), of which the Sisters of Mercy are a member group. Ask your pastor to speak to these concerns in a homily and give him the statement and letter from USCCB's Migration Committee Chair Bishop Mark Seitz statement.
- Collect and distribute resources for immigrants, including "Know Your Rights" information, where to find legal help, resources for developing a family plan for mixed-status families, etc. These can be included in church bulletins, or schools can provide such resources for parents.
- Organize or co-host a Know Your Rights workshop, taking care to focus outreach to where immigrants gather. Immigrants are living with a high level of fear and promoting such an event via mass media, could [draw threats](#) to those in attendance.
- If you work directly with immigrants, help may be needed to get passports for children (in preparation for cases in which a parent is at risk of being deported and wants the child to go with him/her). It is important for families to [make a plan](#) now. If you work at a school with immigrant students, make a plan for responding if parents of your students are apprehended. Trauma counseling may be needed, as well as ensuring the care of underage children in the home.
- Be vigilant. Join with others in your local town and find out if your mayor or police department plan to cooperate with ICE enforcement to arrest or hold immigrants in local jails while being processed for deportation. Officials in some states are actively looking for ways to help in the deportation process.
- Set up an emergency response network. If you do not find an immigrant rights' organization local that is conducting trainings to set up emergency response networks, see this [resource](#).

Advocacy and Public Defense of Immigrants:

- Congressional advocacy: If you are not already receiving Mercy Justice "Action Alerts," you can sign up [here](#). While the Executive Branch has much power to enact practices around border control and enforcement in the interior, Congress will play a key role

since all of this will cost money. We will need to hold the line with Democrats and engage with moderate Republicans in the upcoming funding votes.

- Speaking out publicly: Voices of Mercy and compassion need to be elevated in the public square, both to inspire others with Gospel values and the inhumanity of mass deportations, and to put elected officials on notice that the faith community will challenge deportation efforts. This may include writing letters-to-the-editor or submitting opinion pieces to your local news outlet, participating in prayer vigils outside legislators' offices and inviting the local media to come, using social media, etc. Key talking points include how these plans instill fear in communities, violate basic rights, tear families apart and adversely affect children. There also will be huge economic costs.
- Changing the narrative: we need to educate others on why people flee their countries and seek entry to the U.S., and the failure of Congress to pass comprehensive immigration policies that would enable people to legalize their status. We need to call out anti-immigrant, racist rhetoric, including "blaming the victims" –immigrants, and instead shine a light on how U.S. foreign policies in their countries contribute to the very reasons why people have had to flee for their lives.