



Urgency of Now North American Immigrant Justice Campaign:

How to Get Involved

It has been our blessing as American Jews to live in a country that at its best offers hope, security and welcome to immigrants from all over the world. As that promise has been tarnished by increased deportations, the revocation of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA),¹ Temporary Protective Status (TPS)² for many immigrant communities, and more, many of our URJ congregations have taken action to protect and defend our neighboring and fellow immigrant communities.

This resource guide is intended to help Reform congregations engage in the North American Immigrant Justice Campaign – to learn from others’ experiences and explore how to begin! You can find additional helpful information at www.rac.org/naijc.

The goal of the campaign is to promote permanent protection, dignity and respect for the 11 million undocumented immigrants living in the United States. In order to move towards comprehensive immigration reform on the federal level, we believe that we need to create circumstances that are more favorable to comprehensive reforms. We can do this by (1) **building a strong base of Reform Jews** willing and able to act for the permanent protection, respect and dignity of undocumented immigrants and (2) **changing the narrative about immigration in the United States** from one that views immigrants as dangerous “takers” weakening our country to one that views them as our neighbors and fellow community members who contribute to the American economy, society and culture. There are four strategic arms that contribute to this larger strategy:

Advocacy: Pursuing winnable policy changes that better protect undocumented immigrants on the local, state and federal levels is also an opportunity to both challenge the dominant narrative and rally a base of people around the policy change.

¹ The Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, created through an executive order in 2012, has allowed nearly 800,000 undocumented immigrant youth who were brought to the United States as children to obtain work permits, attend school and contribute openly to our economy without fear of deportation.

² The Secretary of Homeland Security may designate a foreign country for TPS due to conditions that temporarily prevent the country’s nationals from returning safely, or in certain circumstances, where the country is unable to handle the return of its nationals adequately, often because of civil unrest, violence or natural disaster.

Deportation Defense: Participating meaningfully in public campaigns to protect individuals from deportation, challenging the dominant narrative and helping rally large numbers of people in support of permanent protection, dignity and respect for all immigrants.

Material/Legal/Financial Support: Helping undocumented immigrants meet their immediate needs by providing financial support, clothing, food, legal expertise, know your rights trainings and other goods or services can have broad appeal in a congregation and can be a tool for building a large base who will join us in working for immigrant justice.

Sanctuary: Providing temporary shelter for undocumented immigrants immediately facing deportation resonates deeply with our Jewish values and the history many Jews share. It is an especially effective way of challenging the dominant narrative.

For each strategy, we share links to resources and vignettes of congregational experiences at the end of this guide to help you and your congregation join this crucial effort.

But first, here is an overview of how you might want to determine your congregation's plan of action:

Before You Start (Readiness)

Getting ready to act rests on building the right team, ensuring that the congregation is motivated by and invested in the issue, finding the right community partners and setting a clear, achievable goal. The following steps can help guide you through this process, as can the RAC's [Brit Olam \(Covenant with our World\)](#), which enables your congregation to join over 130 congregations from across the Reform Movement to publicly reaffirm its commitment to meaningful social justice work.

1. Identify a **team or person to lead the effort**, think about how you will recruit other interested congregants, and raise funds as needed to support the work. This team should see its role not as doing justice on behalf of the congregation, but rather on moving the congregation into justice together. Members of the team should not be just the activists in your congregation, but should instead represent the diversity of your congregation.
2. **Review** how/if your congregation has been engaged in Social Justice work, either doing direct service or advocacy work. It is important to build upon what you already have in place. If starting from scratch, expect to go slow at first.
3. Be clear on the **purpose** of your efforts. Which of the four strategies do you want to invest your time and effort in? (It could be more than one.) Be clear about how whatever you choose to do leads to the ultimate goal: the permanent protection, dignity and respect for the 11 million undocumented immigrants in the U.S.
4. Determine if you have a **community partner** who can help you educate your board and congregation, or get you connected to service or advocacy projects.
5. Take time to plan out a **congregational campaign** to get buy-in and involvement from the members of your congregation. This will include educational efforts but also conversations, one-to-one and in small groups, where congregants can talk about how they experience the issue of immigrant justice/injustice. Education efforts should include Jewish texts that can help you frame the work you want your congregants to engage in, URJ Resolutions and resources about the issue.

6. Make sure your Rabbi(s) and Board of Trustees are on board and understand your plan.
7. If doing advocacy, establish policies/procedures to guide when you can and will take positions on issues.
8. Anticipate possible controversy in your congregation and how will you address that. Continue to go back to Jewish texts and values to help people **find common ground**. Even when we disagree on policies, we usually agree on the values behind the policies. Be willing to delay action to allow time for these conversations. They are essential to making sure your action does not divide your congregation.

Launch (once Rabbi, Board, and other key internal stakeholders are on board):

1. Create a **partnership** with other immigrant congregations and organizations. It is important that we take leadership from those that are directly affected. Consider:
 - Reaching out to **other faith leaders** in your community.
 - Contacting **community groups** that work on immigrant justice issues.
 - Checking with **college campuses** regarding support for students with DACA.
 - Asking people in or around your community who might know who you can talk to or google the issue to see who has written/commented/acted on the issue locally.
 - If your community has a chapter of a **national community organizing group, such as PICO or the Industrial Areas Foundation**, you might want to contact someone in that organization, as they offer expertise and paid organizers to work with the faith community.

Here are some specific organizations to explore:

- PICO National Network (<https://www.piconetwork.org/find>)
 - Industrial Areas foundation (<http://www.industrialareasfoundation.org/affiliate-members>)
 - Fair Immigration Reform Movement – FIRM (<https://fairimmigration.org/>)
 - Center for Popular Democracy (<https://populardemocracy.org/about-us/our-partners>)
 - People’s Action (<https://peoplesaction.org/affiliates/>)
 - Interfaith Immigration Coalition (<http://www.interfaithimmigration.org/>)
 - United We Dream (<https://unitedwedream.org/>)
 - Local Sanctuary Movements (find one at <http://www.sanctuarynotdeportation.org/find-a-local-coalition.html>)
2. Do a **listening campaign** in your congregation, where members can come together in small groups to share their stories about immigration. This is a good way to build support for immigrant justice work in your congregation.
 3. Host a **community meeting** or educational event to present why the issue matters, the scope of the issue and how it relates to Jewish values; clergy and lay leaders should collaborate.
 4. Identify those who want to engage in the strategies you’ve identified. Have **commitment cards** for people to sign up right then and there at the meeting.
 5. Post **articles in your bulletins** to keep people updated on progress and how to get involved.
 6. **Follow up** with those interested in the effort who can carry out the strategy. Find volunteers with needed skills to help address implementation issues.

Maintain:

If doing an advocacy approach: Do your research on your issue or join with a local partner (see above), build relationships with your elected officials, get clear on your ask, keep your base informed so that when you need them to protest, present, write letters, or make calls, they will. Keep your board and Rabbi(s) informed and involved. Use social media to activate people to show up.

If doing a service approach: Recruit volunteers, raise funds if needed, write updates to your bulletin, and coordinate volunteers.

Celebrate and Reflect: Take time to celebrate what you have achieved, reflect on the work, inform the congregation and the Board of Trustees of your results, and revise as needed.

Key Lessons: This work takes time and commitment of a few people with passion who can be sparks to ignite interest and involvement. It's important to have Temple leadership on board. Gain consensus and build bridges before you act. Become allies with others in your community doing this work. The URJ has done a lot work on these issues, so use our materials, knowledge and resources. There is no need to recreate the wheel.

Members of the Immigrant Justice Leadership Team are available to talk to you about any questions or challenges you have throughout the process, sharing our own experiences and hearing yours. [You can also keep in touch with and share information with other congregational leaders engaged in this work in the Tent.](#)

ADVOCACY

Through this strategy we urge congregants to advocate for legislation and policies on local, state and national levels to pass fair and compassionate immigration laws and ordinances, and to oppose laws and ordinances that penalize immigrants. You can advocate for or against legislation and ordinances by engaging your congregants to make calls, write emails and letters, text, amplify with social media, and meet in-person with your legislators and their staff. Use these advocacy efforts not only to pass or stop laws but to change the narrative about immigrants.

Use these [Tips for a Successful Legislative Meeting](#) available at www.rac.org/advocacy (adapt as needed).

State and Local Advocacy

Advocate for "Sanctuary" or Community Policing Reform in Your City, County, Region or State

The term "sanctuary city," (or "welcoming city") according to the [American Immigration Council](#), represents a broad set of policies on the city, county, or state level that seek to eliminate fear among immigrants of potential deportation if they report a crime or interact with local law enforcement. Over

thirty cities and three hundred counties have limited local law enforcement and prison intervention in federal ICE (U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement) operations. In most cases, these reforms are implemented to increase safety. Visit the National Immigration Law Center's [website](#) to access general and state-specific legislation, resources and talking points.

Seek Public Funding for Defense of Detained Immigrants

Immigration is one of the most complex areas of American law, but representation is not available for most of those detained. A [report](#) by the Vera Institute found immigrants with representation were more than 10 times more likely to have successful outcomes in their cases than those without. As a result, the Vera Institute has launched the [Safe Cities Network](#) in eleven communities across the country to provide publicly funded representation for people facing deportation. Many communities have initiated public representation projects on their own: New York gained funding through the state senate, the Chicago project started with the mayor, and in San Francisco it began in the office of the public defender. Read about some of the efforts [here](#) and brainstorm about how you might collaborate on a project to save those in detention from facing one of the most complex areas of American law alone.

Advocate for State Financial Aid to Undocumented Students

Undocumented immigrants who have attended high schools in five states (California, New Mexico, Minnesota, Texas and Washington) can apply for financial aid to attend their state schools. The New York State Assembly has passed similar legislation for several years but the Senate has not brought it to the floor. All the states mentioned above as well as 16 others permit undocumented immigrants to pay in-state tuition. This, however, is still costly and is beyond the means of the majority. [Check](#) to see the status in your state and advocate for legislation to provide financial aid as well as in-state tuition to undocumented students.

Push for Legislation in Your State to Allow Undocumented Immigrants to Obtain a Driver's License

According to the [National Conference of State Legislators](#), twelve states and the District of Columbia allow undocumented immigrants to obtain a driver's license. While these licenses may not be used as identification, they have many benefits. They enable an immigrant to get insurance, perhaps take a better job, be safer moving around in their community and interacting with police. Proponents of these bills argue that they make the roads safer, because they give immigrants an opportunity to pass a driving test and an eye exam, and they reduce the incidence of hit-and-runs, since drivers are less likely to flee the scene of an accident. They also reduce the risk that an immigrant will be arrested and then deported for driving without a license. Look [here](#) to see if your state has such a law. If not, check with local immigration advocacy organizations to see if you can join together in this effort.

Opposing Anti-Immigrant Legislation

Anti-immigrant bills can take many forms. Sometimes, like Texas SB4 or Arizona SB1070, they require the police to use racial profiling to enforce federal immigration law. Some states have considered bills that would prohibit sanctuary cities. [A comprehensive look at state immigration laws is available here.](#)

Federal Advocacy

Our work to pass a clean Dream Act to ensure greater protection for 800,000 undocumented immigrant youth (called DREAMers) until legislation is passed.³ This bill would ensure permanent protection for those who are at increased risk for deportation as the Trump administration dismantles the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program. Also look for actions to fight TPS revocations and other national needs as they arise. Go to www.rac.org/immigration for the latest information and [sign up for the RAC's email list here](#).

Wow, had a great day at Senator Portman's office in Cleveland. We met with the Director of his N.E. Ohio office... Rabbi Josh Brown and Lynn Tramonte of Americas Voice joined me. We presented a letter from one of our local Dreamers that had to be at work and could not attend. The Senator is committed to a legislative decision. We suggested a press conference with a Dreamer would be a great move and we could stand along with him. I finished the day at The Akron Interfaith Immigrant Advocacy meeting. Great Day! – Alan Fortnoff, Temple Israel, Akron, OH

DEPORTATION DEFENSE

Deportation defense entails working with local partners to protect a particular individual who is imminently facing deportation. The immediate goal is to prevent the person from being deported and the larger goal is to humanize undocumented immigrants to shift the narrative about immigration. Congregations can become involved in Deportation Defense in several ways.

Rapid Response Teams

Congregations can form or join Rapid Response Teams which can create a public presence and a public relations effort to stall or publicize an Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) raid, accompany individuals to ICE check-ins, or urge immigration officials against deporting someone they have targeted or detained. With a text message network in place, people can be notified to witness, videotape, pray, or join a vigil.

A detailed plan of action is outlined as part of [Congregation B'nai Israel of Sacramento's Resource Binder, available here](#).

³ The Dream Act grants DREAMers permanent residence status on a conditional basis and provides them with a pathway to citizenship for DREAMers who attend college, work in the U.S., or serve in the U.S. military.

Influencing Public Opinion

Holding public events, writing letters to the editor, issuing high profile public statements, and using social media are all ways to increase public pressure against deportation. By sharing the story of an immigrant facing deportation – why they came to this country, how they have contributed to the community – we not only help the individual immigrant facing deportation, but we also help change the narrative about who immigrants are and the social and human costs of deportation.

Legal Strategies

Deportation defense campaigns often include forms of legal representation and support for the individual facing deportation. It can be helpful to have lawyers who are connected to legal service organizations and are ready for rapid response when someone needs immediate assistance. See more about legal assistance below.

We are part of a coordinated team, joining with our Amos partner congregations so it's not just a small group showing up once. It's 500 or 1000 people showing up every day for a week in front of the jail and a group of clergy meeting with the Senators and other key leaders making their calls but all of us working with the same message and timelines. I think it's really important to build that network in order to be effective. –Rabbi Miriam Terlinchamp, Temple Sholom, Cincinnati, OH

MATERIAL/LEGAL/FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Support for Sanctuary Networks and other Immigrant Justice Organizations

There are many ways to act as a support or solidarity congregation, meeting the daily needs of undocumented residents in your community.

Solidarity communities help **fundraise** for the facilities that host and serve people in need of sanctuary. Additionally, solidarity congregations provide ‘people power’ in the form of **volunteer support, rides, translators, emergency call lines, meals**, and providing **organizational support**.

Conducting Preparedness Trainings

Some congregations are conducting “Know Your Rights” presentations and Family Preparedness Planning workshops for members of the immigrant community. We have compiled several documents that might be helpful for congregations looking to do this kind of work. Please note that laws vary from state to state, so you will need to modify some of the documents to conform to your state’s laws.

Few immigrants realize that, as non-citizens, they too have rights under the U.S. Constitution. Providing information about those rights and how to exercise them provides a sense of empowerment to the immigrant community.

At presentations, you can provide handouts in multiple languages from ACLU and [use this PowerPoint presentation from Dallas, TX](#) as a reference:

[English](#) | [Spanish](#) | [Arabic](#) | [Urdu](#) | [Hindi](#) | [Punjabi](#) | [Farsi](#) | [Somali](#)

In particular, families who may be subject to detention or deportation often need help planning for their minor children, whether to join them if they leave the country or to stay in the United States with a designated caregiver. [This packet](#) compiled for volunteers in Dallas, TX includes relevant forms as well as an [informative power point presentation](#).

There is a great deal of anxiety surrounding the possibility of parents being detained or deported. We found that having a plan in place for the care of minor children has provided some relief to anxious parents and kids alike. Assisting families in putting documentation in order in case of an emergency is a much needed and valuable service.” – Cheryl Pollman, Temple Emanu-El, Dallas, TX

Legal Support

Your local community likely has a legal services or legal aid program, a local chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), or a non-profit human rights organization working with immigrants. Most of these organizations need volunteer lawyers to help with the deportation defense services they provide. Attorneys with immigration law experience are especially needed to take on pro bono cases.

Regardless of their experience with immigration law, attorneys can assist with many portions of the intake, interview and application process and often use their expertise in other legal areas that may be related to immigration.

What you can do:

- Make contact with local immigrant justice, legal aid, legal services, Bar Association, and advocacy organizations to volunteer.
- Describe the immigration issue to your congregation, use local examples (your community may have immediate issues with DACA and with TPS), and ask for volunteer attorneys (describe the type of assistance that is needed). Make it easy to participate by being the liaison between the volunteer and the agency. It will be helpful if the clergy lead the way, but a volunteer coordinator must be involved. Use all means available to reach volunteers through personal contact, the synagogue newsletter and e-mail blasts.

- Attorneys without immigration experience can still contribute by doing intake work, working on cases, and using your knowledge of other aspects the law.

As a member of the Florida Bar who never practiced immigration law, I was immediately put to work (by ACLU) interviewing potential clients, taking applications and doing intake, and assisting knowledgeable immigration attorneys with screening of applications and my knowledge of civil law. Even non-attorneys can assist in the intake process. – Mark Buchbinder, Temple Beth Am, Miami, FL

SANCTUARY

Some congregations have committed to opening their doors to provide sanctuary for individuals or families at risk of deportation. The following are some issues to address if you are considering becoming a sanctuary congregation:

- Committing to housing one or more families typically lasts for an indefinite period.
- Physical facilities, food, clothing, financial assistance, and legal assistance are provided. Your congregation may be assisted by supportive/solidarity congregations and organizations.
- Congregations can take in who they want: some have limited sanctuary to those they know or have a connection with, or only certain groups of undocumented individuals or families. A formal vetting process needs to be put in place.
- Create family intake and agreement for service forms.
- In general, those with a final deportation order are most in need.
- Those entering into sanctuary should have a reasonable prospect for obtaining a stay of removal, order of supervision or other form of administrative relief.
- Offering sanctuary does not mean obstruction of government officials if they seek to enter the sanctuary. It may mean requesting a warrant or legal authority and creating publicity in order to sway public opinion.
- Public vs. private: Public sanctuary has a purpose of changing hearts and minds, not only to provide protection. It is not done in secret! Always make decisions about whether and how to publicize sanctuary with the individuals who are staying in your congregation and with counsel.
- Work closely with your congregation's counsel when planning and welcoming individuals.

These points are taken from a full PowerPoint presentation made for Temple Israel, Minneapolis, MN, [which is available here](#).

Sanctuary work is best done as part of a larger network. If your facility is not prepared to house an individual full-time for months (i.e. have a basic apartment furnished in your space) becoming a

solidarity congregation and supporting another sanctuary institution is an alternative way to be of service.

Congregation B'nai Israel of Sacramento has shared several resources including: [a Waiver Agreement between the Congregation and the family being housed](#); [the Table of Contents from their Confidential Resource Binder, including a Temporary Guardianship Affidavit](#); [a Power Point of Congregational roles and responsibilities](#); and [a Resource Binder with additional forms and information](#).

There are many needs in between the urgent moments of sanctuary such as: deportation defense, contact with media, advocacy within the immigrant community, and connecting needs with service providers. Part of solidarity work is to get to know the other agencies and congregations that share our passion and developing working relationships with one another. This way, when urgent moments of action arise, all are prepared to act as a team.

In January 2017, CBI held a town hall to discuss the possibility of becoming a sanctuary congregation. The meeting was attended by over 200 people and involved text study and a discussion of practical and legal considerations...The congregation developed guidelines for accepting people for sanctuary, the processes to be followed if and when an individual was housed and crisis response protocols if and when enforcement agencies came to the congregation... To date, CBI has not had to house anyone on its premises but maintains its close relationships with partners in the community and stands ready to act when and if needed. – Rabbi Mona Alfi, Congregation B'nai Israel, Sacramento CA

GRATITUDE

Every day we see the urgency of this work, and we are grateful to all congregations that are engaged in or are considering engaging in protecting the rights of immigrant communities.

This document has been a joint effort of our Immigrant Justice Campaign Leadership Team. Members have shared their experiences, their processes, and their writing to highlight the goals of this campaign. We are also available to you to answer questions and offer guidance in your efforts. Many thanks to this great team:

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