



Suggested Guidelines for Public Talks with the Immigrant Community

(Half Hour Presentation)

This agenda is intended for use as a suggested guideline for speakers during a community talk and is not necessarily intended to be distributed to the attendees.

Introductions

- If you are not an attorney, nor a BIA Accredited Representative, explain that you are not an immigration attorney nor authorized to provide immigration legal advice. Have a list of low-cost immigration legal service providers available for distribution.
- Make clear that there is no legalization law *and* repeat this in the middle of the talk and then again at the end of the talk to help decrease confusion among the community about whether there is a legalization law. (Sometimes a short explanation of how the U.S. legislative process works is helpful – at least to give people an idea of how many steps there are before a bill becomes law. Always tell people to check with an authorized service provider about anything they hear on the news and NOT assume that it means a new law has been signed into effect. “Always check with us before you pay anyone anything...”)

There are many proposals for immigration reform but no legalization law yet.

- Beware of *notarios* and immigration consultants who offer to file applications or petitions on your behalf. (Tell a story about an immigrant in your community who was defrauded by a notario – without revealing identities. Giving a local example can really strike home for people.)
- Provide list of low-cost immigration legal service providers in your area.
- Provide handout to attendees on where they can get help for being defrauded by *notarios* or other unscrupulous immigration consultants or attorneys (e.g., State bars, Attorney’s General Consumer Protection Units, Foreign Consulates, etc).
- Provide information on where the undocumented can find accurate information about pending immigration reform proposals.

What you can start doing now to prepare for a legalization program.

(Use the on “How to Prepare for Legalization” to guide you, or provide a checklist or fill-in-the-blank handout to each person so they can follow along with you as you talk and then have them take the checklist home with them to complete – and to remind them of what to collect)

Define “legalization.” The process by which foreign nationals, who are living and working in the United States without authorization, can apply to obtain legal immigration status by demonstrating their commitment and connection to our society while undergoing rigorous identity and security background checks. The U.S. Catholic Bishops call for an earned legalization program which is achievable and verifiable and which provides a pathway to permanent residency to the estimated 11 million undocumented people in the United States.

Continuous Physical Presence in the United States -- Write out in chronological order, starting from the date you first arrived in the United States up through the present, all the places where you have lived and worked in the United States. This can help organize you for gathering documentation to prove your physical presence in the United States.

- Collect and save documentation to prove *when & how* you arrived in the U.S. (particularly if you arrived legally). If you arrived in the U.S. illegally you still must prove *when* you arrived but beware of approaching the U.S. government to get such information because U.S. government agencies might report you for deportation!
- Collect and save documentation to show that you have been *continuously physically present* in the United States since your arrival. (Go through examples in handout)

Discuss good moral character and how to demonstrate it. Advise them to get involved with their community (such as registering with their church, mosque, or synagogue); get ITIN and pay income taxes.

- Advise to obtain expert immigration legal assistance if they have ever been involved with law enforcement agencies before filing any applications.
- Discuss participating in ESL courses to demonstrate efforts to integrate. Provide handout of parish or other local ESL courses in which the undocumented can participate.
- Discuss participating in other *civic integration* programs offered by the parish or other local groups and provide handouts about such programs.

IDENTITY. Advise them to get valid photo identification so that they can prove that they are who they claim to be. Discuss going to their consulate. Warn them against going to the United States Citizenship & Immigration Services (USCIS) to get documentation.

- Warn them about agencies that offer to get *papers* for them because using fraudulent identification documents can make them end up in removal (i.e., deportation) proceedings.

BIA- RECOGNIZED AGENCIES and WARNINGS AGAINST NOTARIOS -- Discuss again warnings against *notarios* and explain what BIA-recognized agencies are, using handout of low-cost immigration legal service providers.

Conclusion

- Reminder that there is no legalization law.
- Advice to start saving money b/c legalization will have fines and many fees.
- Reminder to start collecting documentation now b/c it's time-consuming.
- Reminder that saving documentation to prove identity, good moral character, and continuous physical presence in the U.S. is just good practice even if it takes years for a legalization bill to become law.
- Reminder that you are not there to provide immigration legal advice and if they need legal advice they should contact one of the agencies on the list of low-cost immigrant legal service organizations that you provide.