

Pro Bono Attorney Delegations to the US-Mexico Border



Welcome the stranger.
Protect the refugee.

Guide for Congregations

Overview

Congregations are at the core of the thriving national Jewish movement supporting today's refugees and asylum seekers, taking action through advocacy, education, direct service, and tzedakah. This particular opportunity is for groups of attorneys from your congregation.

HIAS organizes groups of pro bono attorneys to travel to our partner organizations along the border to spend a week working with them to provide legal services to asylum seekers. The following information will help you determine if your congregation is a fit for this effort.

What happens during a delegation?

HIAS' pro bono attorney delegations are entirely dedicated to enhancing our partners' capacities to serve clients. Attorneys perform discrete tasks that help expand the reach of the organizations, but do not take on representation of any clients. Examples of tasks include:

- Going to detention centers to conduct intake interviews and/or prepare individuals for a Credible Fear Interview (the first step towards applying for asylum)
- Meeting with individuals at detention centers to assist with preparation of pro se applications for asylum, client declarations, or motions for change of venue
- Preparing parole packets or bond hearing packets for detained individuals
- Drafting legal briefs, declarations, motions, or conducting country conditions research

The delegation is not designed as an expressly educational experience, nor is it focused on witnessing the border crisis; it is entirely about direct service to partner organization clients. To find other pressing and up-to-date ways to take action, please visit [HIAS' Take Action page](#), under "Organize Your Community".

Who should participate?

Each delegation must consist of six to eight attorneys, paralegals or law students. Participants must be fluent enough in Spanish to be able to conduct an intake interview. Non-Spanish speakers may bring an interpreter, but the total number of people must not exceed eight. Interpreters must be mature adults (teens are not eligible) with experience interpreting for professional purposes. Up to two non-Spanish speaking attorneys (without interpreters) may participate per delegation, but should expect to mostly be in the office assisting with brief writing and country conditions research, with little direct client contact. Attorneys do not need to be in active status, but should inform the partner organization ahead of time of such. Everyone on the delegation must either be an attorney or an interpreter.

What is the time commitment for participants?

Participants should arrive on the Sunday evening prior to the week selected to volunteer, and plan to stay until at least noon the following Friday. Participants must be available to work from 9am-6pm each day of the delegation except Friday.

Additionally, all participants are required to participate in a webinar training as well as a pre-trip briefing call and a post-trip call to process the experience and discuss ways to take action from home.

What is the cost for participants?

Participants are responsible for all logistics and expenses related to travel, lodging, meals, and any other costs associated with the delegation.

What is HIAS' role?

HIAS staff will connect your group with one of our partner organizations to determine if your group is able to work with them. Our partner organization will help you navigate the logistics of your trip, including scheduling and recommendations for hotels, car rentals and meals. HIAS will facilitate a pre-trip briefing call and a post-trip processing and planning call (mentioned above), and will provide substantive training on asylum law as well as written resources for review prior to the trip.

Unfortunately, HIAS staff are not able to accompany congregational pro bono legal delegations. However, upon return, we will support your congregation in thinking through post-delegation next steps and connect you to the many other ways to take action from home to ensure that you can sustain this work essential work going forward.

Please contact Rachel Zoghlin, National Pro Bono Technical Legal Advisor, at rachel.zoghlin@hias.org to discuss whether this opportunity is right for your congregation.