

DIGNITY AT THE CENTER

A TOOLKIT FOR KEEPING THE DIGNITY OF IMMIGRANTS AT THE FOREFRONT OF CONVERSATIONS ABOUT IMMIGRATION



At St. Francis Community Services, we envision a world where everyone is valued, including our immigrant neighbors. Here's a road map for ensuring that happens in the conversations in our daily lives.

1

ESTABLISH COMMON VALUES

Start by establishing common values and build off of those. It is important to emphasize points of agreement.

2

ENGAGE IN ACTIVE LISTENING

The goal is to have conversations, not arguments. Make an effort to hear and understand the other person so that you can learn their perspective. Avoid interrupting and name-calling. Instead, ask questions.

3

EMPHASIZE HUMAN DIGNITY

Conversations surrounding immigration often disregard the humanity of migrants. It is important to emphasize that immigrants are innately deserving of compassion, dignity, and respect.

4

USE A STORY

Every immigration policy decision directly impacts the lives of people. Stories help put a human face to these policy issues.



UNDERSTANDING IMMIGRATION

THERE ARE VERY LIMITED PATHS TO ENTER THE COUNTRY LEGALLY.

Due to processing backlogs and insufficient quotas, the wait for a visa can be over 20 years depending on one's country of origin. For people who do not have a college degree or any close relatives with legal status, there is not even a line to wait in.

THERE IS NO LINE FOR ASYLUM SEEKERS TO WAIT IN.

There is no processing system accessible to asylum seekers in their home countries. By definition, asylum seekers are seeking protection outside of their country of origin.

IMMIGRANTS CREATE JOBS FOR U.S. CITIZENS.

Immigrants are innovators, job creators, and consumers with an enormous spending power that drives our economy and creates employment opportunities for all Americans. Statistics show that immigrants are significantly more likely to start businesses and file patents than native-born citizens. Study after study demonstrates that immigrants typically complement American workers rather than compete directly with them for jobs.

UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANTS PAY TAXES.

Contrary to popular belief, the vast majority of undocumented workers pay taxes. They pay local, state, and federal taxes using their Individual Tax Identification Number. In 2014, undocumented immigrants paid \$48.9 million in state and local taxes in Missouri alone. Despite paying into the system, undocumented immigrants are ineligible for most public benefits.

MASS DEPORTATION WOULD HURT THE AMERICAN ECONOMY AND AMERICAN FAMILIES.

Not only would mass deportation cost U.S. taxpayers between \$400 and \$600 billion, it would reduce the national GDP by \$4.7 trillion over 10 years and decrease the median household income by 47%, throwing many U.S. families into poverty. It would also send vulnerable people back to the world's most dangerous cities and separate millions of families.

GIVING DREAMERS LEGAL STATUS WOULD MAKE THINGS BETTER FOR STRUGGLING AMERICANS.

Approximately 97% of DACA recipients are either employed or in school, strengthening the U.S. economy. They are doctors and nurses who care for the elderly and sick, teachers who educate the next generation of American leaders, and engineers who build American roads and bridges. If Dreamers were provided with a pathway to citizenship, \$1 trillion would be added to our GDP over a decade.

THE UNITED STATES TAKES A SMALL SHARE OF THE WORLD'S REFUGEES.

Over 80% of the world's refugees are taken in by developing countries. The United States' refugee program once served as a global model of how a powerful country should support the world's most vulnerable people. However, the U.S. recently set its cap for the upcoming fiscal year at 18,000, which is only 16% of what it was 2 years ago.

THE LOW CAP ON REFUGEES WILL NOT EASE THE BACKLOG OF ASYLUM SEEKERS.

Refugees and asylum seekers go through two separate processes. In fact, refugees have already qualified as in need of protection and resettlement.

WE NEED MORE IMMIGRATION, NOT LESS.

The rate of net migration to the United States today is far below what it has been in previous periods. In 2017, the annual U.S. net migration rate was 3.9 per 1,000 U.S. residents, which is less than the historical average.

DID YOU KNOW?

Did you know that the U.S. detains over 486,000 people a year at the cost of \$3.1 billion to taxpayers?

Did you know that about two-thirds of unauthorized immigrant adults have lived in the U.S. for more than a decade?

Did you know that Catholic Social Teaching on Immigration says that persons have the right to migrate to support themselves and their families?

Did you know that the undocumented immigrant population is at its lowest level in over a decade?

Did you know that the vast majority of illegal drugs enter the country through legal ports of entry?

Did you know that undocumented immigrants are less likely to commit crimes than native-born Americans?

Did you know that about two-thirds of recent unauthorized immigrants entered the U.S. on valid visas?

Did you know asylum is a special type of immigration process reserved for those who have suffered persecution or fear of persecution due to their race, nationality, religion, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group?

Did you know that the overwhelming majority of asylum seekers (89% in 2017) showed up to all of their court dates?
