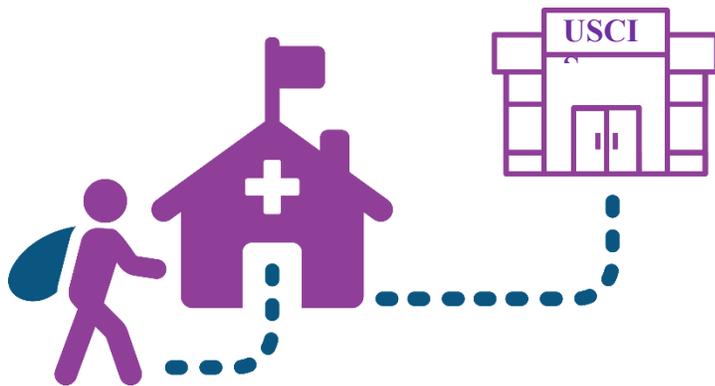


# How to Apply for Asylum with USCIS (Using the Affirmative Process)



This fact sheet helps you apply for asylum. It explains the process and how to fill out the right forms. It also shares what type of documents you need to gather to prove you are eligible for asylum.

There are different asylum application processes for different people. If you use the wrong process, your application will be denied. **You should only use this fact sheet if you are an adult and you are NOT in removal proceedings.** To find out which asylum application process you should use, go to: <https://www.lawhelpmn.org/self-help-library/fact-sheet/how-decide-if-you-can-apply-asylum-united-states>

This fact sheet was developed in collaboration with the Immigrant Law Center of Minnesota, Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid, Southern Minnesota Regional Legal Services, The Advocates for Human Rights, and the Volunteer Lawyers Network. It was supported by funding from the State of Minnesota Department of Human Services.

Special thanks to The Advocates for Human Rights and the Volunteer Lawyers Network for generously allowing us to draw from their asylum guides in creating this resource.



# The Affirmative Process for Asylum

## How do I apply for asylum?

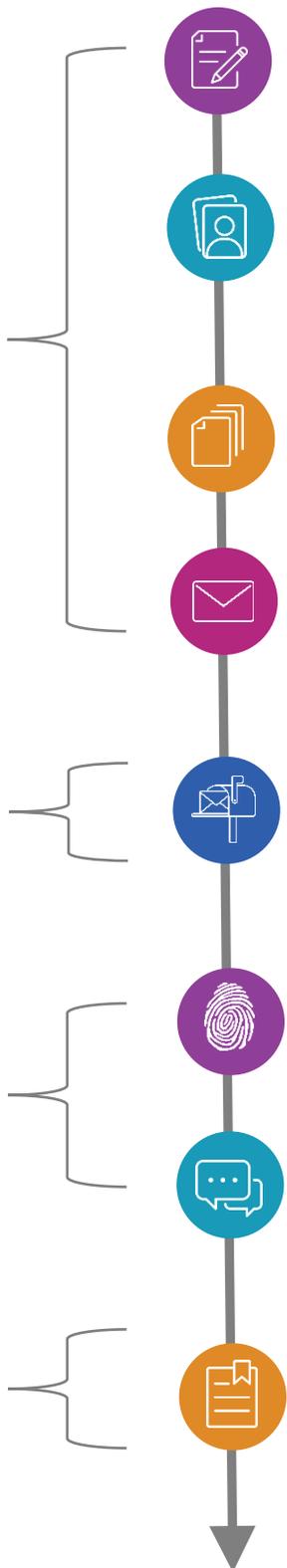
There are 8 steps to apply for asylum with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).

You must complete your application (steps 01- 04) **within 1 year** of your last entry to the United States.

It can take months or years for USCIS to review your application.

These next steps usually take months.

After your interview, USCIS can take a long time to make a decision. Use your receipt number to check your application status.



### STEP 01

Fill out Form I-589.

### STEP 02

Gather and prepare documents to send with your application.

### STEP 03

Make a copy of your application.

### STEP 04

Mail your application to USCIS. Pay the \$100 application fee.

### STEP 05

USCIS sends you a receipt telling you the date your application was received.

### STEP 06

Go to your biometrics appointment.

### STEP 07

Go to your interview with USCIS. Send any remaining evidence by the deadline.

### STEP 08

USCIS notifies you of their decision.



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with your phone

## Tell USCIS if you move during the application process.

LawHelpMN has a fact sheet that tells you how to update your address with USCIS. Scan the QR code or go to:

[lawhelpmn.org/self-help-library/fact-sheet/reporting-change-address-uscis](http://lawhelpmn.org/self-help-library/fact-sheet/reporting-change-address-uscis)



## Ask for help with your application if you are not comfortable using English.

### **The Asylum Application Form**

The I-589 Form must be completed in English. Someone else can help you fill out the form. This might be a family member, friend, or lawyer. If someone helps you fill out the form, they are called a “preparer.” They need to fill out and sign “Part E” on the I-589 Form.

### **Supporting Documents**

You may need to send supporting documents with your application. They must be submitted in English. If the original document is not in English, someone must translate it. You do not need to use a professional interpreter or translator. A bilingual family member, friend, or acquaintance can do it if they are qualified. Anyone who translates a document must complete a translator form. Send the translator form with your application. Get a blank translator form at:

[lawhelpmn.org/sites/default/files/2025-02/Immigration Certificate of Translation.pdf](http://lawhelpmn.org/sites/default/files/2025-02/Immigration%20Certificate%20of%20Translation.pdf)

## STEP 01

Fill out Form I-589.



Scan the QR code or go to [uscis.gov/i-589](https://uscis.gov/i-589) to get a blank copy of the form. There are instructions in the “How to Fill Out Form I-589” part of this fact sheet.



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**You must fill out the most recent edition of the form.** USCIS will not accept your application if you use an old version of the form. The form edition is on the bottom left corner of each page on the form. Example: It could say, “Edition 01/20/25”. **You must fill out the form in English.**

### You can also apply for asylum online.

Fill out the form. Then upload the supporting documents you gathered in step 02. To apply online, scan the QR code or go to:

[uscis.gov/humanitarian/form-i-589-filing-instructions-tool](https://uscis.gov/humanitarian/form-i-589-filing-instructions-tool)



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## STEP 02

Gather and prepare documents  
to send with your application.



You must send 4 things with your asylum application:

- Cover letter.** There is a sample cover letter in the “Sample Cover Letter” part of this fact sheet.
- Completed and signed Form I-589.**
- \$100 application fee.** You can pay by credit card or you can authorize an ACH transfer from your bank account. To pay by credit card, [fill out form G-1450](#) and send it with your application. To pay by ACH transfer, [fill out form G-1650](#) and send it with your application.
- Copy of at least 1 document that proves your identity, if you have one.** Send copies of as many documents as you have. The document must have been issued by the United States or other country’s government. If the document is not in English, you must get it translated. **Do not send original documents, only send copies.** Examples of acceptable documents include:
  - Passport that shows your picture, name, and date of birth. Copy and send **every page** of your passport.
  - Birth certificate if it has your photo on it. **OR** a birth certificate **AND** a photo ID.
  - Visa issued by a foreign consulate.
  - National ID document with photo and/or fingerprint.

**Submit your asylum application even if you don’t have one of these ID documents.** You can send an ID document later.

**You may also send any evidence you have that supports why you are applying for asylum.** Evidence is documents and photos that help prove your story. This might be medical records, police reports, photos, or reports from a human rights organization about violence in your home country. You also have another chance to submit evidence later. LawHelpMN has a fact sheet about how to prepare evidence for USCIS. Scan the QR code or go to: [lawhelpmn.org/self-help-library/fact-sheet/preparing-evidence-uscis](http://lawhelpmn.org/self-help-library/fact-sheet/preparing-evidence-uscis)



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All documents must be submitted in English. If the original document is not in English, someone must translate it. You do not need to use a professional interpreter or translator. A bilingual family member, friend, or acquaintance can do it if they are qualified. They must complete a translator form. Get a blank translator form at: [lawhelpmn.org/sites/default/files/2025-02/Immigration Certificate of Translation.pdf](http://lawhelpmn.org/sites/default/files/2025-02/Immigration%20Certificate%20of%20Translation.pdf)

## STEP 03

**Make a copy of your application.**



Make a copy of your cover letter, completed Form I-589, identity documents, and any evidence you send with your application. Keep the **copy** of the cover letter and Form I-589 for your records. Keep your **original** identity document and evidence for your records.

## STEP 04

Mail your application to USCIS.



Mail the **original** cover letter and Form I-589. If you live in Minnesota, mail the **copy** of your identity document and evidence.

- **If you use the United States Postal Service (USPS), send your application to:**  
USCIS  
Attn: I-589  
P.O. Box 6893  
Chicago, IL 60680
- **If you use FedEx, DHL, or UPS, send your application to:**  
USCIS  
Attn: I-589 (Box 6893)  
131 S. Dearborn St., 3rd Floor  
Chicago, IL 60680
- **Tell the person at the shipping service that you need to track your application** when you mail it. Purchase tracking so that you know when your application is delivered. Make sure to get proof or a receipt when it is delivered.

If you do not live in Minnesota, visit [uscis.gov](https://uscis.gov) to find the address where you should mail your application.

## STEP 05

USCIS reviews your application and tells you if it is complete.



It could take months or years for USCIS to review your application. [Update your address with USCIS](#) if you move during your application process.

- **If your application is not complete:** USCIS rejects your application. They mail your whole application back to you. Complete the missing parts and mail your application back to USCIS as soon as possible.
- **If your application is complete:** USCIS mails you a letter that says they received your application. This letter includes a receipt number that lets you to look up the status of your application online. **Keep your receipt!** Take a picture of the receipt with your phone. Keep the picture in case you lose the paper copy.

## STEP 06

Go to your biometrics appointment.



USCIS mails you a letter that says you have a biometrics appointment. **Bring this letter with you to your appointment. Bring a photo ID to this appointment.**

USCIS takes your fingerprints during the biometrics appointment. You need to fill out the back of the biometrics form.

**It is very important that you go to this appointment.** If you are scheduled for more than one biometrics appointment, go to all of them. Call the number on the letter right away if you need to reschedule your appointment.

At your biometrics appointment, the government official stamps your appointment notice to prove that you went to the appointment. Keep a copy of the stamped notice for your records.

## STEP 07

Go to your interview with USCIS.



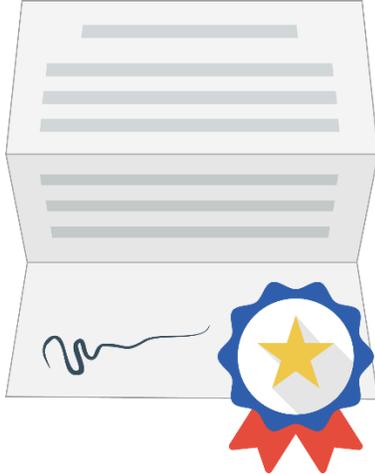
USCIS mails you a letter that tells you when and where to go for your interview. At this interview, you tell your story to an asylum officer and explain why you need asylum. You can bring more evidence to support your story to this meeting or mail it to USCIS before the interview. LawHelpMN has a fact sheet about how to prepare evidence for USCIS. Scan the QR code or go to: [lawhelpmn.org/self-help-library/fact-sheet/preparing-evidence-uscis](https://www.lawhelpmn.org/self-help-library/fact-sheet/preparing-evidence-uscis)



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## STEP 08

USCIS tells you their decision.



USCIS mails you a letter that says whether your request for asylum was approved or denied.

### **If your application is approved:**

- You are eligible to apply for a new work permit that says you are an asylee. If you get this new work permit, use it even if you have an old permit. LawHelpMN has a fact that can help you apply for a work permit. Go to: [lawhelpmn.org/self-help-library/fact-sheet/how-get-permission-work-minnesota](http://lawhelpmn.org/self-help-library/fact-sheet/how-get-permission-work-minnesota)
- You are eligible to apply for a Green Card in 1 year.
- If you have immediate family that need to derive, they can apply.
- You can go to the Social Security Office and get a Social Security Number. You can get an updated card without restrictions.
- Your I-94 form comes in the mail.

### **If your application is denied:**

- If you have no other immigration status: Your case goes to immigration court and you start over. You can present your asylum case to the judge.
- If you have Temporary Protected Status or some other form of immigration relief: You keep your other form of relief.



# Sample Cover Letter

Date:

USCIS  
Attn: I-589 (Box 6893)  
131 S. Dearborn St., 3rd Floor  
Chicago, IL 60603-5517

Re: I-589, Application for Asylum and Withholding of Removal

Applicant:

A#:

Dear Sir or Madam:

Please find the following:

- Completed and signed Form I-589, Asylum Application
- Copy of Identity Documents
- 
- 

Thank you for your consideration of my application.

Sincerely,

(Signature)

(Full Name)

(Your Phone #)

(Your Address)



# How to Fill Out Form I-589



## You must tell the truth in your asylum application.

**Only apply for asylum if you fear harm in your home country.** You must answer the questions on the asylum application form completely and honestly. If you lie on the application, you may never be able to apply for legal status in the United States again.

## General Tips for Filling Out the Form



### 01

You must complete the form in English.

### 02

Type your answers or write them in black ink.

### 03

If something on the form does not apply to you, write, "N/A" (Not Applicable) in the space. Do not leave blank boxes.

### 04

If you need more space to answer a question, write on the page labeled "Supplement B." Write your name and A-Number at the top of each Supplement B page. Sign and date each Supplement B page.

### 05

The instructions in this fact sheet are based on "Edition 01/20/25" of Form I-589. This fact sheet gives tips for filling out **some** of the questions. Make sure to read and answer **all** the questions. More instructions are at [uscis.gov/sites/default/files/document/forms/i-589instr.pdf](https://uscis.gov/sites/default/files/document/forms/i-589instr.pdf)

## Withholding of Removal Under the Convention Against Torture

There is a question at the top of the form on page 1. It asks if you also want to apply for protection under the convention against torture (CAT). **Check this box if you are afraid of being subjected to torture in your home country or any other country to which you may be returned.**

### Part A.I. Information About You

This part of Form I-589 has 25 questions about your identity, how you entered the U.S., and your current immigration status. The table has tips for filling out **some** questions in Part A.I.

Question	Instructions
<b>Question 1</b> Alien Registration Number (A-Number) <i>(if any)</i>	Go to <a href="http://us-immigration.com">us-immigration.com</a> to find your A-Number.
<b>Question 3</b> USCIS Online Account Number <i>(if any)</i>	Your USCIS account number is different from your A-Number. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>If you filed an application or petition using the USCIS online filing system</b>, you have an account number.</li> <li>• <b>If you filed applications or petitions on a paper form through a USCIS Lockbox facility</b>, you have an account number. It is on your Access Notice.</li> <li>• <b>If you do not have a USCIS Online Account Number or have not activated your account</b>, write "N/A" here.</li> </ul>
<b>Question 4</b> Complete Last Name	If you have 2 last names, write both last names in the Complete Last Name box.
<b>Question 11</b> Marital Status	If your marriage is not recognized by the government or legal system of the place where you were married, do not answer, "Married."
<b>Question 19b</b> What is your current I-94 Number, if any?	Customs and Border Protection (CBP) might have given you a Form I-94 when you were admitted to the U.S. This form has your Arrival-Departure Record Number. To get a copy of your Form I-94: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>If you entered the U.S. at a seaport or airport after April 30, 2013</b>, go to: <a href="http://cbp.gov/i94">cbp.gov/i94</a></li> <li>• <b>File Form I-102</b> (Application for Replacement/Initial Nonimmigrant Arrival-Departure Record). Get Form I-102 at: <a href="http://uscis.gov/i-102">uscis.gov/i-102</a></li> </ul>
<b>Question 21</b> Passport Number or Travel Document Number	If you have a passport or travel document, write that number here. If you do not have a passport or travel document, write "N/A."

## Part A.II. Information About Your Spouse and Children

This part of Form I-589 asks questions about your spouse and children, if you have any. You must list your spouse and **all of your children**, including your biological children, stepchildren, and adopted children. Include your adult children even if they are married. Include your children that live in the United States and your children that live in other countries. Include children even if they never plan to come to the United States. Include children who have passed away. Include children you no longer speak to. **Use Supplement A at the end of form I-589 if you need more space to list your children.**

Question	Instructions
<b>Spouse Question 24</b> If in the U.S., is your spouse to be included in this application?	If you are granted asylum, your spouse could also be granted asylum if they live in the United States and are in removal proceedings. Your spouse will only get asylum too if you include them on this application.  Check “yes” if your spouse lives in the United States.
<b>Child Question 21</b> If in the U.S., is this child to be included in this application?	If you are granted asylum, any of your unmarried children under age 21 at the time of the application could also be granted asylum if they live in the United States and are in removal proceedings. These children will only get asylum too if you include them on this application.  Check “yes” for every unmarried child under 21 who lives in the United States.

## Part A.III. Information About Your Background

This part of Form I-589 has 5 questions about where you lived in the past and where you have worked. It also has questions about your parents and siblings. Include as much information as you know. If you do not know the exact date for any of the questions, try to include the month and year. If you don’t know the exact date, write “Approx.” before the date. Example: “Approx. 05/1997”. It is important to tell the truth. **Do NOT make up information.** If you do not know the answer to a question, write “unknown.”

## Part B. Information About Your Application

This part of Form I-589 has 4 questions. This is where you say why you are applying for asylum. The questions ask why you are afraid to return home and what harm you have experienced. **If you need more space, you can write on Supplement B at the end of Form I-589. You can also attach additional pages with your complete story.** Below are tips and examples for filling out Part B.

Question	Instructions	 <p><b>Example: What Nayeli Wrote On Her I-589 Form</b></p>
<p><b>Question 1</b> Why are you applying for asylum?</p>	<p>Check all the reasons that apply to you, your family, friends, and colleagues.</p> <p>Check the “Tortue Convention” box here if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You are afraid of being tortured if your return home, <u>AND</u></li> <li>You the box on page 1 for “Withholding of Removal Under the Convention Against Torture”</li> </ul>	<p>Nayeli checked 2 boxes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Race</li> <li>Membership in a particular social group</li> </ul>
<p><b>Question 1A</b> Have you, your family, close friends, or colleagues ever experienced harm or mistreatment or threats in the past by anyone?</p>	<p>If you check “yes,” write what happened in as much detail as you can. Be certain about the facts you share. <b>Your story needs to be the same every time you tell it.</b> Include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Specific facts. Don’t use general statements.</li> <li>Information about the person or group responsible for causing the harm.</li> <li>What you believe will happen if you return to your country.</li> </ul>	<p>My adopted brothers, Miguel and Nestor, were kidnapped by the Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13). The gang members kept visiting our home to recruit my brothers. My brothers didn’t want to join. They were only 13 and 16 years-old. My mother brought us up Catholic. The gang would drive by and yell at us. They would threaten the family if my brothers didn’t join. In about 2022, 2 gang members grabbed my brothers and took them away. We begged the police to look for them, but the police didn’t help us. I think the police didn’t want to help us because we are an indigenous family. My native language is Nawat and I only speak a little Spanish. The police didn’t like indigenous people. My husband didn’t want to cause problems, but I kept visiting the police. The police detained me in 2023. I was detained for a few hours. The police warned me to leave them alone.</p>

Question	Instructions	 <p><b>Example: What Nayeli Wrote On Her I-589 Form</b></p>
<p><b>Question 1B</b> Do you fear harm or mistreatment if you return to your home country?</p>	<p>Check “yes” if you fear you will be arrested, tortured, or killed if you return home. Describe in as much detail as you can what you think will happen. Include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who you are afraid of and why you think they will harm you. You don’t have to state the name of the person or people you fear if you do not know their names. You do need to name the group the person belongs to if you know the group name.</li> <li>• Try to say how the harm is tied to your race, nationality, ethnicity, religion, political opinion, gender, or membership in a social group.</li> </ul>	<p>I fear that both the police and the gang will threaten and harm me because I will keep standing up to them and looking for my brothers. They are still young and my mother wants her children back.</p> <p>I also have a young son and I worry that the gang will also look to recruit him when he is old enough. I would stand up to the gang to protect my son too. It’s hard to live in El Salvador. No one is there to help you. The police do not protect people from gangs, especially if you are indigenous.</p>
<p><b>Question 2</b> Have you or your family members ever been accused, charged, arrested, detained, interrogated, convicted and sentenced, or imprisoned in any country other than the United States (including for an immigration law violation)?</p>	<p>If you checked “yes,” describe what happened in as much detail as possible.</p>	<p>I was detained for a few hours by the police in El Salvador because I kept asking about my missing brothers.</p> <p>I was briefly detained by Mexican Immigration when I crossed into their country without papers.</p>

Question	Instructions	 <p><b>Example: What Nayeli Wrote On Her I-589 Form</b></p>
<p><b>Question 3A</b> Have you or your family members ever belonged to or been associated with any organizations or groups...?</p>	<p>If you checked “yes,” explain what group. Include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If you think you will be harmed because of your activities within a particular organization or movement. Describe what those activities are.</li> <li>• <b>If you belonged to or supported a para-military or guerrilla organization, or any armed group, consult an immigration attorney before completing this application.</b></li> </ul>	<p>My family is Pipil. We are one of the indigenous groups in El Salvador. My husband and I were born into it. My husband, my parents, my son, and I were all raised Catholic and attend Catholic church every week.</p>
<p><b>Question 3B</b> Do you or your family members continue to participate in any way in these organizations or groups?</p>	<p>If you checked “yes,” explain your role or your family’s role in the group. Include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leadership positions held.</li> <li>• Activities you participate in.</li> </ul>	<p>My family is Pipil. We are one of the indigenous groups in El Salvador. My husband and I were born into it.</p>
<p><b>Question 4</b> Are you afraid of being subjected to torture in your home country or any other country to which you may be returned?</p>	<p>If you checked “yes,” explain in as much detail what you think will happen to you. The torture must be by the government or with the government’s consent. The torture can be mental, physical, or both. <b>The torture does not have to be because of race, nationality, political opinion, membership in a social group or religion.</b> Include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who you think will torture you and why.</li> <li>• If you were tortured in the past and what happened to you.</li> </ul>	<p>I fear that both the police and the gang might torture me because I will keep standing up to them to look for my brothers and protect my son. It’s hard to live in El Salvador. No one is there to help you. The police do not protect people from gangs, especially if you are indigenous.</p>

## Part C. Additional Information About Your Application

This part has 6 questions about your immigration status, travel history, and criminal record.

**Talk to an immigration lawyer BEFORE you mail your application if you answered “yes” to any question in Part C.**

## Part D. Your Signature

Sign the statement to confirm what you wrote on the form is correct. Write the address and phone number where USCIS can reach you.

## Part E. Declaration of the Person Preparing this Form, If Other Than the Applicant, Spouse, Parent, or Child

A “preparer” is anyone who helped you fill out the form. This might be a family member, friend, or lawyer. Did anyone help you fill out the form?

- **If yes**, write their name and contact information. They must also sign the form.
- **If no**, skip these questions.

## Part F. To Be Completed at Asylum Interview, if Applicable

Leave this section blank.

## Part G. To Be Completed at Removal Hearing, if Applicable

Leave this section blank.

## Supplement A.

Use this part if you need more space to enter information about your children. **Print and sign Supplement A even if you leave these pages blank.**

## Supplement B.

Use this part if you need more space to write about why you are afraid to return to your home country. **Print and sign Supplement B even if you leave these pages blank.**