Beware of Immigration Scams

Before you decide to get help with non-immigration matters and before you pay any money, you should do research so you can make the right decision about what kind of legal help you need. Protect yourself from becoming a victim of immigration fraud.

Important things to remember:

- No private organization or person offering help with immigration issues has a special connection with USCIS. Ask questions of people who make promises that sound too good to be true or who claim to have a special relationship with USCIS. Do not trust people who guarantee results or faster processing. If you are not eligible for an immigration benefit, using an immigration lawyer or consultant will not change that fact.

- Some consultants, travel agencies, real estate offices, and people called "notaries public" offer immigration services. Be sure to ask questions about their qualifications and ask to see copies of their BIA accreditation letter or bar certificate. Some people who say they are qualified to offer legal services are not. These people can make mistakes that could put your immigration status at risk and cause serious problems for you.

- If you use an immigration consultant or lawyer, get a written contract. The contract should list all services that will be provided to you and how much they will cost. Ask for references before you sign the contract.

- Try to avoid paying cash for services. Make sure you get a receipt for your payment. Be sure to keep your original documents.

- Never sign a blank form or application. Make sure you understand what you are signing.

For more information about how to protect yourself from becoming a victim of immigration fraud, visit www.uscis.gov/avoidscams.

Get help if an immigration consultant has cheated you. Call your state or local district attorney, consumer affairs department, or local police department. You can also contact the Federal Trade Commission to report the unauthorized practice of immigration law by visiting www.ftccomplaintassistant.gov.
Consequences of Criminal Behavior for Non-Permanent Residents

The United States is a law-abiding society. Non-immigrants in the United States must obey all laws. If you are a non-immigrant and engage in or are convicted of a crime in the United States, you could have serious problems. You could be removed from the country, refused re-entry into the United States if you leave the country, lose your non-immigrant status, and, in certain circumstances, lose your eligibility for U.S. citizenship.

Examples of crimes that may affect you:
Crimes defined as an aggravated felony, which includes crimes of violence that are felonies with a one-year prison term;
- Murder;
- Rape;
- Sexual assault against a child;
- Illegal trafficking in drugs, firearms, or people; and
- A crime of moral turpitude, which, in general, is a crime with an intent to steal or defraud, a crime where physical harm is done or threatened, a crime where serious physical harm is caused by reckless behavior, or a crime of sexual misconduct.

There are also serious consequences for you as a non-immigrant if you:
- Lie to get immigration benefits for yourself or someone else;
- Say you are a U.S. citizen if you are not;
- Vote in a federal election or in a state or local election open only to U.S. citizens;
- Are married to more than one person at the same time;
- Fail to support your family or to pay child or spousal support as ordered;
- Are arrested for domestic violence (domestic violence is when someone assaults or harasses a family member, which includes violating a protection order);
- Lie or present fake documents to get public benefits or defraud any government agency;
- Fail to file tax returns when required;
- Help someone else who is not a U.S. citizen or national to enter the United States illegally even if that person is a close relative and you are not paid.

If you have committed or have been convicted of a crime, you should consult with a reputable immigration lawyer.
Find a Place to Live

You can choose where you live in the United States. Many people stay with friends or family members when they first arrive. Others move into their own housing.

In the United States, most people spend about 25 percent of their income on housing. Here are some housing options you may consider.

Renting a Home

Apartments and houses can be rented. You can find these in several ways:

- Look for “Apartment Available” or “For Rent” signs on buildings.
- Ask friends, relatives, and co-workers if they know of places to rent.
- Look for “For Rent” signs in public spaces, such as bulletin boards in your library, grocery stores, and community centers.
- Research places available for rent on the Internet. If you do not have a computer at home, you can use one at your local public library.
- Look in the “Classifieds” section of the newspaper. Find the pages listing “Apartments for Rent” and “Homes for Rent.” These will have information about renting homes and apartments.
- Call a local real estate agent.

What to Expect When You Rent a Home

This section outlines the different steps you may encounter before moving into your new home. For more information, visit www.hud.gov or, for Spanish, see www.espanol.hud.gov.

Applying to Rent: People who rent housing are called tenants. As a tenant, you either rent housing directly from the landlord (the owner of the property) or through the property manager (a person responsible for the property). A landlord or property manager may ask you to fill out a rental application, which verifies whether you have money to pay rent. You may need someone to sign the rental agreement with you. This person is called a co-signer. If you cannot pay the rent, the co-signer is responsible for paying it.

Signing a Lease: You sign a rental agreement, or lease, if the landlord agrees to rent to you. A lease is a legal document. When you sign a lease, you agree to pay your rent on time and rent for a specific length of time. Most leases are for one year. You can also find housing for shorter periods of time, such as one month. You may have to pay more money for a short lease. When you sign a lease, you agree to keep the home clean and in good condition. You may be charged extra if you damage the place you are renting. The lease may also list the number of people who may live in the home.
**Paying a Security Deposit:** Renters usually pay a security deposit before moving into the home. This deposit is usually equal to one month's rent. If the home is clean and in good condition when you move out, then you will get your deposit back. If not, the landlord may keep some or all of your deposit to pay for cleaning or repairs. Inspect the house or apartment before you move in. Tell the landlord about any problems you find. **Before** you move out, ask your landlord what you need to fix or clean so you may receive all of your security deposit back.

**TIP**
If you move, you should tell the U.S. Postal Service so it can forward your mail to your new address. To change your address online, visit [www.usps.com/umove](http://www.usps.com/umove) or visit your local post office. Also, do not forget to file Form AR-11, Change of Address.

**Paying Other Rental Costs:** For some houses or apartments, the rent payment includes the cost of utilities, such as gas, electricity, heat, water, and trash removal. For other rentals, you must pay separately for these expenses. When you are looking for housing, ask the landlord if any utilities are included. If utilities are included, make sure this information is in your lease before you sign it. If utilities are not included, find out how much they will cost before signing the agreement. The cost of some utilities will be more in the summer (for air conditioning) or in the winter (for heat). Renters insurance, sometimes referred to as tenants insurance, is available. This insurance protects personal belongings, offers liability protection, and may cover additional living expenses if the home you are renting is destroyed or damaged.

**Ending a Lease:** Ending a rental agreement is called “terminating your lease.” If you need to terminate your lease earlier than expected, you may have to pay monthly rent until the end of the lease even if you are not living there. You also may lose your security deposit if you leave before the end of the lease. Before you move out, give your landlord a written notice telling him or her that you are ready to move out. Most landlords require at least 30 days’ advance notice before you want to leave. Before you sign the lease, make sure you understand its terms and ask how much notice you are required to give the landlord before moving out.

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**Addressing Home Repairs with Your Landlord**

Landlords must keep the home or apartment you rent in safe and good condition. If you are in need of a home repair:

- First, talk to your landlord. Tell him or her about the problem and that you need it fixed. If your landlord does not respond, then write a letter to your landlord to tell him or her about the problem. Keep a copy of the letter for yourself.

- If your landlord still does not respond to your request, then call your local Housing Office. Most city or local governments have people who inspect homes for problems. Ask the Housing Office to send an inspector to visit your home. Show the inspector the problem.

- Lastly, if your landlord does not fix the problem(s), then you may be able to file a legal charge against your landlord.
Driving in the US

Should I Buy a Car?

Owning a car can be a convenient way to travel. In the United States, you must also pay for car insurance and register your vehicle and license plates. Heavy traffic can make driving difficult in some cities. Think of all the costs and benefits before you decide to buy a car. For more information on buying a car, visit the “Travel and Recreation” section of www.usa.gov.

10 Tips for Driving Safely in the United States

1. Drive on the right-hand side of the road.
2. Always have your driver’s license, registration, and insurance card with you.
3. Always wear your seat belt.
4. Use proper seat belts and car safety seats for children.
5. Use your car’s signals to show if you are turning left or right.
6. Obey all traffic laws and signals.
7. Pull over to the side of the road if an emergency vehicle—such as police car, fire truck, or ambulance—needs to pass you.
8. Do not pass a school bus when its red lights are flashing.
9. Do not drive if you have been drinking or taking drugs.
10. Slow down and be very careful when driving in fog, ice, rain, or snow.

TIP

A driver’s license is used for identification in the United States. It is a good idea to get one even if you do not own or regularly drive a car.

If you do not know how to drive, you can take driving lessons. Many public school districts have classes in driver education.
Payroll Documents

If Temple will pay you a stipend or a salary, you will be asked to fill out some forms. These include:

- **Form I-9, Employment Eligibility Verification**: By law, employers must verify that all newly hired workers are eligible to work in the US. On your first day of work, you will need to fill out Section 1 of Form I-9. Within three business days, you must give your employer documentation that shows your identity and authorization to work. You can choose which document(s) to show as proof of your right to work in the US, as long as the document is listed on Form I-9. Your employer provide you with the list of acceptable documents.

- **Form W-4, Employee’s Withholding Allowance Certificate**: Your employer should take federal taxes from your paycheck to send to the government. This is called withholding tax. Form W-4 tells your employer to withhold taxes and helps you determine the correct amount to withhold so that your tax bill is not due all at once at the end of the year.

- **Other Forms**: You may need to fill out a tax withholding form for the state you live in and other forms so that you can get benefits.

You may be paid each week, every two weeks, or once a month. Your paycheck will show the amount taken out for federal and state taxes, Social Security taxes, and any employment benefits you pay. Some employers will send your pay directly to your bank account; this method is called direct deposit.

**Know Your Rights: Federal Laws Protect Employees**

The United States has several federal laws that forbid employers from discriminating against people looking for a job and that protect against retaliation and other forms of discrimination in the workplace.

- The Civil Rights Act forbids discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, country of origin, sex, or pregnancy.
- The Age Discrimination in Employment Act forbids discrimination on the basis of age.
- The Americans with Disabilities Act and the Rehabilitation Act forbids discrimination on the basis of having a disability.
- The Equal Pay Act forbids discrimination on the basis of sex.
- The Genetic Nondiscrimination Act forbids discrimination on the basis of genetic information.

For more information about these protections, visit the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission website at [www.eeoc.gov](http://www.eeoc.gov) or call 1-800-669-4000 and 1-800-669-6820 (for hearing impaired).

Other laws help keep workplaces safe, provide leave in cases of family or medical emergencies, and provide temporary funds for unemployed workers. Visit the U.S. Department of Labor website at [www.dol.gov](http://www.dol.gov) for more information about workers’ rights.

Additionally, federal laws protect employees from discrimination on the basis of national origin or citizenship status. For more information about these protections, call the Department of Justice’s Office of Special Counsel for Immigration-Related Unfair Employment Practices at 1-800-255-7688 or 1-800-237-2515 (for hearing impaired). If you do not speak English, interpreters are available to help you. For more information, visit [www.justice.gov/crt/osc](http://www.justice.gov/crt/osc).
Using Your Bank Account

You can get money from your account by using a personal check, ATM, or debit card. Be sure that only you and your joint account holder (if you have one) have access to your account.

**Personal Checks:** You can get a supply of personal checks when you open your checking account. These checks are forms that you fill out to pay for something. Checks tell your financial institution to pay the person or business you have written on the check. Keep these checks in a safe place and ask your financial institution how to order new checks when you have used your supply.

**ATM Cards:** You can ask your financial institution for an ATM card. An ATM card is a small plastic card linked to your account. Use this card to get cash or deposit money in your account at an ATM. Usually you do not pay a fee for using your own financial institution's ATM. You will most likely be charged a fee if you use an ATM owned and operated by another financial institution. The financial institution staff will show you how to use an ATM card and give you a special number, called a PIN (personal identification number), to use at the ATM. Be careful when using ATMs. Never give anyone your PIN or ATM card because he or she could use it to take money out of your account.

**Debit Cards:** Your financial institution may give you a debit card to use for your checking account. Sometimes your ATM card can also be used as a debit card. Never give anyone your PIN or debit card because he or she could use it to take money out of your account. You can use your debit card to pay for something at a store and the money will automatically be taken out of your checking account to pay the store.

**Keeping Your Money Safe**

It is not safe to carry around large amounts of cash or to leave cash in your home, it could be stolen or lost. If you put money in a bank or credit union that is a member of the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) or is insured by the National Credit Union Administration (NCUA), then your money is protected up to $250,000. When choosing a financial institution, make sure it is either a member of the FDIC or that it is insured by the NCUA. For more information, visit [www.fdic.gov](http://www.fdic.gov) or [www.ncua.gov](http://www.ncua.gov).

**TIP**

Manage your account carefully so that you do not incur any overdraft fees. An overdraft occurs when you do not have enough money in your account to cover a payment or withdrawal. Check with your financial institution to find out about your options and the fees.
**Cashier’s and Certified Checks:** These are checks that a financial institution creates upon your request. You give the financial institution money and then they create a check for that amount of money to the person or business you want to pay. Financial institutions may charge a fee for these checks. Ask your financial institution about other options that may be available to you.

**Credit Cards:** Credit cards allow you to make purchases and pay for them later. Banks, credit unions, stores, and gas stations are some businesses that can give you a credit card. You get a bill in the mail each month for purchases you have made with your credit card. If you pay the entire amount on the bill when you receive it, then you do not have to pay interest. If you do not pay the entire amount or if you send your payment late, then you will be charged interest and possibly an additional fee. Some credit cards have very high interest rates, so review the different credit card options to determine which one is best for you. Credit cards may be called charge cards, but they are different. With a charge card you are required to pay the balance in full each month, but credit cards allow you to carry a balance if you do not pay in full. Be careful about giving your credit card number to others, especially over the phone or on the Internet. Be sure you know and trust the person or business that asks for your number.

**TIP**

Check your credit card bill each month to make sure all the charges are correct. If you see a charge that you did not make, call the credit card company immediately. You usually do not have to pay for charges you did not make if you report it to the credit card company immediately.

Write down the numbers for all accounts and debit, ATM, and credit cards. Also write down the phone numbers of these companies. Keep this information in a safe and secure place. If your wallet is lost or stolen, call the companies and cancel all of your cards. This will keep someone else from using your cards illegally.

To learn more about personal finance, visit [www.mymoney.gov](http://www.mymoney.gov).

**Your Credit Rating**

In the United States, the way you manage your credit is very important. There are organizations that determine your credit score or credit rating. Your credit score or rating depends on how you pay bills, how many loans you take out, how many credit cards you have, and other factors. Your credit rating is very important when you want to buy a home or car, or take out a loan. Here are things you can do to maintain a good credit rating:

- Pay all your bills on time.
- Keep your credit card balances low and pay at least the minimum amount due each month.

Under federal law, you can get one free credit report once a year. If you would like to get a copy of your credit rating report, call 1-877-322-8228 or visit [www.annualcreditreport.com](http://www.annualcreditreport.com).
Protect Yourself and Your Money

Avoid Identity Theft

Identity theft means someone has stolen your personal information, such as your Social Security or bank account numbers. They can use it to take money from your accounts or open a credit card in your name. Identity theft is a serious crime. Protect yourself by:

- Making sure you know and trust the people or businesses you give your personal information to, especially on the phone or the Internet.
- Leaving your Social Security card at home in a safe place. Do not carry it with you.
- Carrying with you only the identification documents or credit cards you need at the time. Leave the rest at home in a safe place.
- Tearing up or shredding any paper or forms with your personal information on them before throwing them in the trash.
- Selecting unique passwords for each account. Do not use the same password, as that could put your personal information at risk.


“Phishing” and Other Scams

According to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), “phishing” is when an unknown source sends an email or pop-up message to you claiming to be from a business or organization with which you are associated, such as a bank, an online payment service, or even a government agency. The message may include links to websites asking you to update your account or personal information. The links in the email connect to a website that looks like a legitimate organization’s site, but the website is not real. Scammers created the website to steal your identity so that they can charge money or commit crimes in your name.

Be aware of phone scams that target individuals, including immigrants. A scammer may call you and ask for money or threaten you. They will likely have some information about you and their phone number may look like an official one. Government agencies will never call you to ask for money or threaten you. If you receive a call like this, hang up and call the official number for the business or government agency to check if it is a scam.
To avoid getting scammed, here are important things to remember:

- If you get an email or pop-up message that asks for personal or financial information, do not reply.
- Do not give out your account number or password over the phone unless you’re making the call to a company you know is reputable. If you have questions about a company, check with your local consumer protection office or Better Business Bureau.
- Review credit card and bank account statements as soon as you receive them to check for unauthorized charges.
- If you have a computer, use anti-virus and anti-spyware software, as well as a firewall. Update them regularly.
- Be careful when opening attachments or downloading files from emails. If you do not know who sent the message to you, do not open the attachment(s) or download the file(s).
- If you suspect an email or website is fraudulent, report this information to the real bank, company, or government agency.

If you believe you have been scammed, you can file a complaint through the FTCs website at [www.ftccomplaintassistant.gov](http://www.ftccomplaintassistant.gov). To learn more about how to avoid online scams and deal with deceptive spam, visit [www.onguardonline.gov](http://www.onguardonline.gov).

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Education in the United States

Most public schools in the United States are coeducational. Coeducational means that girls and boys attend classes together, however, there are some schools that only enroll a single gender. Most schools are part of a school district that has several schools, including different schools for children of different ages. The ages of students at each school may vary from community to community.

Enroll Your Child in School

You can send your child to a public or private school. Public schools do not offer religious instruction. The state decides what your child learns in public school, but local school districts, principals, teachers, and parents decide how to teach your child. Charter schools are a special type of public school that operate independently from the local school district.

Private schools are another way you can educate your child. Private schools are owned and run by groups that are independent of the government, including religious and non-religious groups. Students generally must pay a fee (called tuition) to attend private school. In some cases, private schools may offer financial help for students who cannot pay the tuition. Some private schools are coeducational, while some are only for boys or only for girls. Some states have licensing or registration requirements for private schools, and many private schools choose to be accredited by an accrediting association. To learn more about private schools, contact your state's department of education.

Educating your child at home is another option. This is called homeschooling. The requirements for homeschooling differ from state to state. Parents interested in homeschooling should contact their state department of education to get more information.

Most American children are in public school for around 13 years, from kindergarten through grade 12. In most schools, your child will be placed in a class (called a grade) based on two things: age and level of previous education. In some cases, a school may give your child a test to determine his or her grade level and class assignment.
How the typical U.S. School is organized

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Grades</th>
<th>Ages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elementary or Primary School</td>
<td>Kindergarten and Grades 1 to 5 or 1 to 6</td>
<td>Children Ages 5 to 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior or Middle School</td>
<td>Grades 6 to 8, 7 to 8, or 7 to 9</td>
<td>Youths Ages 11 to 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary or High School</td>
<td>Grades 9 to 12 or 10 to 12</td>
<td>Young Adults Ages 14 to 18 (and up to age 21 in some cases)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postsecondary or Higher Education</td>
<td>Public and Private Community Colleges, Two-Year or Four-Year Colleges or Universities, Trade Schools</td>
<td>All Eligible Adults May Attend</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How long is the school year?
The school year usually begins in August or September and ends in May or June. In some places, children attend school all year. Children are in school Monday through Friday. Many schools offer programs before or after regular school hours for children whose parents work. You may be charged a fee for these before- or after-school programs, but some special tutoring services may be available for free in your school district.

Where do I enroll my child?
Call or visit your local school district’s main office or website to find out which school or schools your child may attend.

What documents do I need to enroll my child?
You need your child’s medical records and proof that your child has certain immunizations (also called shots) to protect him or her from disease. You also may need proof of identification, such as a birth certificate, and proof that you live in the same community as the school. If you have lost these documents, ask school staff how to get new documents. To avoid delays, do this before you try to enroll your child.

What if my child does not speak English?
If your child does not speak English, the school district will evaluate your child’s language skills. The school will then provide your child with the services he or she needs to learn English and to participate in the academic program for his or her grade level. In addition to language services during the regular school day, some schools offer after-school programs and tutoring to help students improve English outside of school. Your child’s school will tell you what kind of extra help they offer to students learning English.
How is my child’s work assessed?
Teachers assign scores (also called grades) based on the work children do during the school year. Grades are usually based on homework, classwork, tests, attendance, and class behavior. Your child will receive a report card several times a year. Some schools will send your child's report card directly to you. A report card tells you how your child is doing in each subject. Schools have different ways of grading students. Some schools use letter grades, with A or A+ for excellent work and D or F for poor or failing work. Others use number grades or words like “excellent,” “good,” or “needs improvement” to summarize your child's performance. In many grades, students also take standardized tests, which schools administer to assess students. Ask school staff how students in your child's school are graded and assessed.

How can I talk to my child’s teacher?
Most schools have regular parent conferences for you to meet with your child’s teacher. You can also schedule meetings to talk with teachers or school administrators about how your child is doing in school.

What if my child misses school?
Being in school is very important. Parents must send a written letter to the teacher or call the school to explain why their child was not in school. If your child will be out of school, tell the teacher in advance. Students must usually make up any work they missed. Ask your child’s school what type of information you need to provide if your child misses school.

How to Stop Bullying
Bullying is unwanted, aggressive verbal or physical behavior among school-aged children. Bullying can occur during or after school hours. While most reported bullying happens in the school building, bullying also happens in places like the playground, bus, or on the Internet. To learn more about how to prevent bullying or respond to it, visit www.stopbullying.gov.

What You Can Do
Most public and private schools have a Parent Teacher Association (PTA) or Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) that you may join. These groups help parents learn about what is going on in their child’s school and how to get involved in school events. At most schools, anyone can join, even grandparents. The PTA/PTOs also support schools by sponsoring special activities and by providing volunteers to help in the classroom. Call or visit your child’s school office to find out when the PTA/PTO meets and how you can join. You can also talk to your child’s teacher and ask if there are ways that you can volunteer or get involved.
Higher Education: Colleges and Universities

After high school, young adults and other adults can continue their education in a two-year community or technical college, a four-year college, or a university. These are called postsecondary institutions or institutions of higher education. Typically, the first four years of postsecondary education is called undergraduate education, and schooling beyond the bachelor’s degree is called graduate studies. There are both public and private institutions of higher education.

Generally, public colleges and universities may cost less than private ones, especially for residents of the state where the college or university is located. Adults can also choose to attend schools to learn how to do specific jobs, such as repairing computers or being a health care assistant.

Students in higher education choose a specific subject to study in depth (this subject is called their major). Choosing a major helps prepare them for employment or further education in that field.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree Type</th>
<th>Type of School</th>
<th>Years of Schooling</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Certificate</td>
<td>Community College/Trade School</td>
<td>Six Months to Two Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate’s</td>
<td>Community College</td>
<td>Two Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td>Four-Year College or University</td>
<td>Four Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s</td>
<td>University</td>
<td>Two Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>University</td>
<td>Two to Eight Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>Specialized School</td>
<td>Two to Five Years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Be Prepared

Prepare for emergencies before they happen. For information on how to prepare for an emergency, visit www.ready.gov. This comprehensive website provides information on how to get ready for an emergency so that you can keep your home and family safe.

Here are some things you can do to prepare:

- Be sure your doors have good locks and keep them locked at all times. Do not give your house keys to strangers. If a stranger knocks on your door, ask who they are and what they want before opening the door.

- Smoke alarms make a loud noise when there is smoke in your house or apartment. Make sure you have smoke alarms on the ceiling near bedrooms and on each level of your house. Check the alarm each month to make sure it works. Replace the batteries in your smoke alarms at least once a year.

- Find out where the nearest hospital and police and fire stations are located. Keep all important phone numbers near your phone where you can easily find them in the event of an emergency.

- Find out where the main valves for gas, electricity, and water are in your home. Be sure you know how to turn them off by hand. If you do not know how to find them, ask your landlord, local utility company, or neighbors.

- Prepare a disaster kit that includes a flashlight, portable radio, extra batteries, blankets, first-aid supplies, and enough canned or packaged food and bottled water to last for at least three days. Be sure to include trash bags, toilet paper, and pet food, if needed. Keep all of these things in one place where it is easy to find them.

- Practice with your family how to get out of your house in case of a fire or other emergency. Make sure your children know what the smoke alarm sounds like and what to do if they hear it. Plan a place to meet your family if you have to leave your home. Choose one spot outside of your home to meet and another spot outside of your neighborhood, in case you cannot return home. Ask a friend or family member living in another area to be the main person your family will call if you are separated in an emergency. Make sure everyone knows to call this person and has his or her phone number.

- Ask about emergency plans at your child’s school. Make sure your child knows what to do in the event of an emergency and where you can meet him or her. Your child should know your phone number and address.
First Aid

Learn how to help in certain emergency situations, such as when someone is bleeding or choking. This is called first aid. You can take a first-aid training class through your local Red Cross. Call your local Red Cross office or the National Safety Council to ask about classes in your area. For more information, visit www.redcross.org or www.nsc.org/learn/Safety-Training/Pages/first-aid-training.aspx.

Keep a first-aid kit at home, at work, and in your car. A first-aid kit has items you can use for small injuries or for pain, such as bandages, antiseptic wipes, medicine, instant ice packs, and gloves. You can buy a first aid kit at your local drugstore.

Poison Control

Many things in your home can be poisonous if they are ingested. These can include cleaning products, medicine, paint, alcohol, cosmetics, and even some plants. Keep these things away from young children. If someone swallows a poisonous substance, call the Poison Control Center immediately at 1-800-222-1222. You can get help 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Have the poisonous substance with you when you call so you can tell the operator what it is. If you do not speak English, tell the operator so an interpreter can help you. Calls to the Poison Control Center are confidential and free.
Respond to an Emergency

Emergency Help by Phone

In the United States, 911 is a number you can call on any telephone to get emergency help. 911 should only be used in the event of an emergency. Teach your family about when it is and is not appropriate to call 911. Examples are listed below.

**Call 911 to:**
- Report a fire;
- Report a crime in progress;
- Request emergency medical help;
- Report a gas leak; and
- Report suspicious activities, such as screams, calls for help, or gunshots.

**Do Not Call 911 to:**
- Ask for directions;
- Ask for information about public services;
- Find out if someone is in jail;
- Report situations that are not emergencies;
- Ask for information about animal control; or
- Talk to a police officer.

Call 911 for serious, life-threatening emergencies only. Calling 911 for the wrong reason may keep someone else from getting the help he or she needs. If you have a question for the police, call the non-emergency number for the police department listed in your phone book.

**What Happens When I Call 911?**
- Calls to 911 are usually answered within 12 seconds. You may be put on hold. When the operator answers, there will be silence on the phone for several seconds. Do not hang up. Wait for the operator to speak.
- If you do not speak English, tell the operator what language you speak. An interpreter should come on the line.
- The 911 operator will ask your questions to find out what and where the emergency is. Keep calm and answer these questions. Try to stay on the phone with the operator until you answer all questions.
Law Enforcement in the United States

In the United States, there are federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies that protect the public. In your community, law enforcement officers are the police or sheriff. Find out the phone number of the police station nearest you and keep it next to your telephone. Remember that police officers are there to protect you and your family from harm. Do not be afraid to report a crime, especially if you are the victim. Some criminals take advantage of immigrants because they think you will not report the crime to the police. If you are stopped by a police officer:

- Do not be afraid.
- Be polite and cooperative.
- Tell the officer if you do not speak English.
- If you are in a car, do not get out of the car until the officer tells you to do so.
- Keep your hands where the officer can see them. Do not reach into your pockets or into other areas of the car.

Natural Disaster Assistance

Natural disasters come in many forms, such as tornadoes, hurricanes, floods, or earthquakes. In the event you are affected by a natural disaster, access disaster help and resources at [www.disasterassistance.gov](http://www.disasterassistance.gov) or by calling 1-800-621-FEMA (3362) or 1-800-462-7585 (for hearing impaired).

If You See Something, Say Something™

Federal and state officials ask all people living in the United States to help fight terrorism. Be aware of your surroundings, especially when you travel on public buses, trains, and airplanes. If you see a suspicious item that has been left behind, such as a briefcase, backpack, or paper bag, report it immediately to the nearest police officer or other authority. Do not open or remove the item yourself. For more information, visit [www.dhs.gov](http://www.dhs.gov).
Federal Holidays
Most federal offices are closed on official holidays. If a holiday falls on Saturday, it is observed on the preceding Friday. If a holiday falls on a Sunday, it is observed on the following Monday. Many non-government employers also give their employees a holiday on these days. The federal government observes the following official holidays:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Holiday</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New Year's Day</td>
<td>January 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Birthday of Martin Luther King, Jr.</td>
<td>3rd Monday in January</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presidents' Day</td>
<td>3rd Monday in February</td>
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<tr>
<td>Memorial Day</td>
<td>Last Monday in May</td>
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<tr>
<td>Independence Day</td>
<td>July 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Labor Day</td>
<td>1st Monday in September</td>
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<tr>
<td>Columbus Day</td>
<td>2nd Monday in October</td>
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<tr>
<td>Veterans Day</td>
<td>November 11</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thanksgiving Day</td>
<td>4th Thursday in November</td>
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<tr>
<td>Christmas Day</td>
<td>December 25</td>
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Experience the United States
You can learn more about the United States by visiting our national parks, which include some of our nation's most majestic and historic sites. You can experience your America in national parks such as:

- Yellowstone National Park, with the world’s largest collection of geysers, including Old Faithful.
- Independence National Historical Park, home to Independence Hall and the Liberty Bell.
- Mammoth Cave National Park, which contains the longest cave system in the world.
- Denali National Park and Preserve, home to North America’s tallest mountain, Mount McKinley.

The National Park System includes more than 400 national monuments, battlefields, historic sites, seashores, and more. National parks are located in every state, the District of Columbia, and five U.S. territories. Visit the National Park Service website at [www.nps.gov](http://www.nps.gov).