



How to Check In to an Immigration Office

A Guidebook by the Washtenaw Interfaith Coalition for Immigrant Rights

WICIR Community Member Ride Instructions

Thank you for supporting the Washtenaw County Community by providing rides to those who may need them. It is important that you understand the importance of your role. Many in our community must regularly engage with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) or other government agencies in Detroit. This can be exceptionally difficult for individuals who do not have access to driver's licenses, or who fear racial profiling when driving to these check ins.

So THANK YOU.

What does it mean to “check in”? Why do folks have to go to immigration offices?

“Check in” is a phrase we use to describe a wide range of reasons that folks go to immigration offices or private offices to which immigration tasks have been outsourced. “Immigration offices”, or just “immigration” is a phrase or word we use to describe a range of offices in the Department of Homeland Security. In most cases, we mean either Immigrations and Customs Enforcement (ICE) or US Customs and Immigration Services (USCIS).

There are many reasons that folks go to these offices, and not everyone who goes to these offices is undocumented or under the threat of deportation. Generally speaking there are three main reasons that we see with frequency:

1. When you apply for a visa, DACA, or some other non-citizen immigration status, you must go to USCIS to be fingerprinted. This is usually a positive experience for all involved, as it generally means the person has a little bit more protection from deportation;
2. When folks who are undocumented are arrested, sometimes ICE will allow them to remain in their communities, reporting to ICE at times that range from monthly to annually. Usually, this only involves signing a sheet of paper and agreeing on a certain set of restrictions, such as not leaving the state. These are usually frustrating experiences, but it's important to note that we have thus far never had anyone detained during this check in. At times, however, individuals are told that they will be deported and need to report back with airplane tickets.
3. Sometimes ICE will attach a tether to someone's ankle to track them. These ankle monitors are GPS locators so ICE can track their locations. Checking in a tether occurs at a private locations, not government locations.

Where are these offices located?

Those in the Washtenaw Community community usually are assigned to go to one of a handful of locations in Detroit. We detail each below. There are others, and they change, so be communicative.

US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) Detroit Field Office:

This is where people go to get their biometrics (fingerprint appointments done). People who come here are often in the process of going through an immigration relief application such as marrying a U.S citizen or renewing their work permits.

Address: 11581 East Jefferson Avenue, Detroit MI,

Webpage:

<https://www.uscis.gov/about-us/find-uscis-office/field-offices/michigan-detroit-field-office>

Some facts about the experience:

- Generally, this does not take over an hour.
- There is plenty of parking in front of the building, and a parking structure in the back for which you will pay hourly.
- You may or may not have an appointment time.
- You cannot take in a cell phone so make sure you leave it in your car. You will have to go through security like at the airport (take off your shoes, belt, jacket, and put in your belongings through a metal detector).
- There is someone at the front desk to help you. You can show them whatever paperwork the individual brought and they will direct you to where you need to be, to the right or to the left. The community member might need to check in at a desk in a separate room to the left, and some paperwork might need to be filled out in English.
- There is a waiting room you can sit in, and the individual will eventually be called into a back room for printing. That process takes about 15 minutes
- This is by far one of the easiest tasks for a volunteer, especially since many who go to USCIS are fluent or semi-fluent in English. Don't forget to celebrate good news!



Immigration and Customs Enforcement Office

Address: 260 Mt. Elliot; Sometimes 333 Mt. Elliot.

Webpage: <https://www.ice.gov/contact/ero>

Some facts about the experience

- These usually have appointment times associated with them but they aren't always on time. Be sure to get there before the appointment. There is street parking around the back.
- When you enter, you will put your paperwork in the basket or hand it to the front desk person as soon as you are able.
- You will have to go through a metal detector to get inside. You will be asked to leave your phone in the car, so bring pen and paper to take notes if you wish; You may also want to bring a book or something to do while you wait, and a snack because you can't leave or you'll lose your place in line.
- You'll wait in the lobby with other people. Sometimes you are allowed in back and other times not. Identify yourself as a "friend".
- People can be detained while they are this office, though this is unlikely.
- Entrance is to the door on the right of the hallway in the center of the photo.
- This environment is usually a little tense, as many folks know they will be receiving bad news. If you feel anxious in the space, that's okay, it's a tense space.
- Gas station toward the main road is closest place for food,
- Depending on time of day (traffic) it can take over an hour and 15 minutes to get here from Ann Arbor so leave plenty of time.

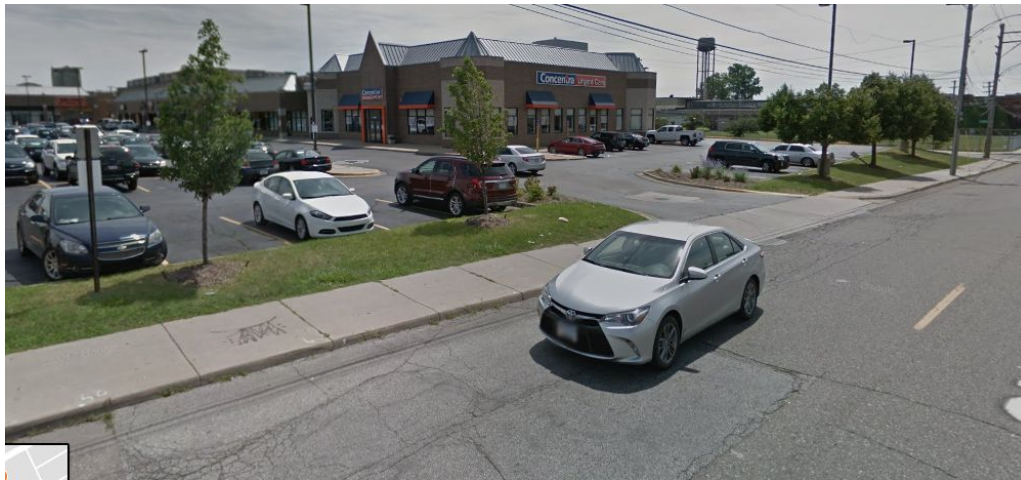


Alternative to Detention Program

Address: 2636 or 3300 East Jefferson Ave., Detroit, MI

Some facts about the experience:

- This is a private business that operates the tether program for ICE. There is usually one person there with broken Spanish.
- Park in the parking lot at the strip mall where the office is inconspicuously located.
- All the community member does here is sign a piece of paper that they are abiding by the rules of ICE and the limitations of the tether.
- There are no restrooms and they will not let you into the ones in the back. The closest are at the gas station in front.
- The drive is over an hour. The community member will likely have an appointment time, but people seem to be called on a first-come, first-served basis. Be sure to leave the individual's ID at the front desk when signing in. When you are seen, the check in takes about ten minutes.



Immigration/Bond Hearing

Address: McNamara Federal Building, 477 Michigan Ave., Detroit, MI

Some facts about the experience:

- There are public parking lots in the vicinity; charges range from \$5-20, which usually must be paid in cash. If possible, park in the less expensive lot right by the bus depot.
- Building opens at 8 am. Go through security as in an airport. Cell phones are allowed in the building (but must be turned off in the courtroom.)
- Go to the 4th floor where the immigration courts are located, and sign in at the waiting room front desk as community supporters of an immigrant detainee. The front desk clerk can give you an idea of the order in which the jails will be called, as well as connect you with the lawyer representing the detainee.
- Meet up with the attorney representing the detainee in the waiting room.
- Wait to be called into the courtroom. The call will be announced by the name of the jail where the immigrant is detained.
- Sit in the public area right behind the attorney during the proceedings. The attorney may identify the presence of community supporters.

- You may leave after the proceedings. The whole process might take half a day depending on the immigrant detainee's court appointment time.
- Please be patient. You could spend a lot of time waiting.

Is there anything else I should be thinking of?

- Ask the organization on behalf of whom you are driving for reimbursement, which may or may not be possible depending on the financial situation.
- If a ride has to be cancelled by the driver for whatever reasons, such as inclement weather and sickness, please notify your coordinator asap, so that another driver can be identified, or so that the individual can change the check-in appointment. The new appointment may be re-scheduled as soon as for the next day.
- Make sure you drive with an active license and insurance; and drive carefully!
- If there is an encounter with the police for various reasons such as accidents and speeding, etc., you as the driver will be asked to present your ID and car documents.
- If an immigrant is detained en route to or at check-in, call WICIR Urgent Response immediately.
- There seems to be more state police presence in the median on I-94 than on I-96.
- Most importantly, we ask that you remember that this service is rooted in our privilege as U.S. citizens/residents who have access to driver's licenses, and, for many, the fact that it is much safer for you to drive given the color of your skin. We thank you for using your privilege in this way.