

Safety NetWorks

(for immigrants)

Red de Apoyo y Protección

Safety NetWorks is a project initiated by Assembly Mennonite Church to respond to the actions of our government that left many of our Latino neighbors living in fear after the 2016 presidential election. As we saw and heard of people hurt by aggressive immigration enforcement actions, we wanted to follow Christ's call to feed, clothe, visit and care for God in our midst. In early 2017, Assembly learned of an urgent need of The National Immigrant Justice Center (NIJC) in Goshen, which helps immigrants maneuver through the complex immigration system. One of NIJC's paralegals was spending a significant amount of time coordinating volunteer drivers with immigrants needing safe transportation, rather than doing the legal work that was in high demand.

Safety Networks was developed to solicit volunteers through an online sign up, and to match them with a variety of immigrant needs that were identified by NIJC. Each "Network", as described on the below, had coordinators that worked with our referral partners to receive details about specific needs/opportunities, and to link them with volunteers. The idea was to create "safety nets" for immigrants in our community. Each Network developed a variety of tools, guidelines, policies, and procedures to provide structure and support to its volunteers.

In recent years we have invited other non-Latino, vulnerable immigrant groups – specifically those from Ukraine and Haiti – to receive help from our networks. We have evolved to include a variety of referral partners who identify and vet immigrants in need. In 2024, our most active partners are NIJC, the Center for Healing & Hope, Maple City Health Care Center, Child and Parent Services (CAPS), and the Haitian Christian Church. Volunteers represent not only Assembly, but other congregations and vetted individuals. The Transportation, Financial Resources, and Family to Family networks are currently active.

We have seen a significant increase in need and in interest in Safety Networks after the 2024 presidential election, and welcome additional volunteer and financial resources

To volunteer, please visit our online sign-up at <http://bit.ly/safety-net-start>.

Tax-deductible donations can be made to Assembly Mennonite Church with "Safety Networks" on the memo line. Contributions can be made by check or online at [Online Giving - Assembly Mennonite Church](#).

Our original networks are outlined below. Only the first 4 are currently active.

Network	Description
Umbrella	Oversees the coordination and functioning of the other Networks. Stays in contact with the Network coordinators and referral partners to ensure the Networks are operating as intended and to identify unmet needs.
Transportation <i>Immigrants without drivers' licenses are being advised NOT to drive at this time due to risk for deportation if stopped for a traffic violation.</i>	Assists immigrants with transportation to legal proceedings, medical appointments, and other needs locally and as far as Chicago and Indianapolis. Coordinator vets volunteers, provides guidelines and offers resources the volunteer may need while interacting with an immigrant.
Financial Resources	Solicits tax-deductible contributions and disperses financial resources to support the work of the other Networks according to defined policies and procedures.
Family to Family	Connects immigrant families in need of a variety of forms of support with an individual/family/small group able to provide help. This Network intends to foster a longer term relationship between volunteer and immigrant, with the support offered including assistance such as friendship, transportation, childcare, interpretation, and financial needs (especially if a wage-earner has been deported).
Interpreters	Volunteers create a Network of language resources for immigrants as well as for non-bilingual volunteers for the other Networks. Assistance may involve interpreting at a medical or court appointment, or helping a volunteer driver and immigrant communicate critical information.
Childcare	Connects immigrants needing care for their children with vetted volunteers.
Know Your Rights	Organizes presentations to the Hispanic community about how to protect themselves and respond to law enforcement encounters. Coordinators organize volunteers to support these events (location, sound system, child care, snacks, hand outs, etc), with content provided by NIJC.
Resource Support Team	Social workers and others with knowledge of community resources provide support to immigrants and volunteers in the other Networks by sharing information on where undocumented people can receive services (such as food, assistance with rent, utilities, etc).
Technology	Provides technology expertise and support in developing and managing the online sign-up, and in developing technology tools to facilitate the work of the other Networks.
Rapid Response	Coordinates individuals able to quickly mobilize at the site of an immigration raid to document what happens and act as witnesses to increase accountability of law enforcement agents. Coordinator communicates with volunteers when they sign up and provides guidelines for being a raid witness. The coordinator receives and verifies reports of a raid, then activates the Network. After a raid the coordinator receives reports and images from the volunteers, and reports it to local media.