

Know Your Rights

Understanding your legal rights and responsibilities is essential when living in the United States, especially as laws may differ from those in your home country. All individuals in the U.S., including international students and scholars, are entitled to certain rights. This page will help you know your rights and provide resources for further review.

Disclaimer statement

This document provides resources and content for general informational and educational purposes only. This page is specifically created for international students and scholars. This information does not constitute legal advice. The information provided is subject to changes in the law. For specific legal questions or guidance, students and scholars are encouraged to seek personalized legal advice from a qualified attorney at their own discretion and expense.

Additionally, be aware that laws vary by state and locality.

Centenary College of Louisiana Policies

As a member of the Centenary community, you must follow our policies. It is expected you will familiarize yourself with these policies, as well as the [Student Handbook](#), [Student Conduct Code](#) to avoid academic, and potentially legal, consequences; [the Personnel Manual](#); and/or the [Faculty Handbook](#), dependent on your position with the college. Even innocent violations of the law could have serious consequences for your immigration status. We recommend you get to know the policies governing [academic integrity](#), [intellectual property](#), [alcohol and drug use](#), and discrimination and harassment.

Maintaining and protecting your non-immigrant status

Staying informed about your responsibilities to maintain your non-immigrant status will help you protecting yourself and your dependents (if any). Know and actively participate in the purpose of your stay in the U.S. Read and understand your immigration documents.

Every person with a non-immigrant status (F-1, J-1, H-1B, TN, O-1, etc.) has certain obligations to maintain status in the U.S. Student as encouraged to partner with the Director of Global Engagement to ensure you are meeting these obligations by reviewing your immigration status responsibilities.

In addition to following immigration regulations, follow these guidelines:

- **Follow laws** - Follow federal, state and local laws in the U.S. It is important for you to understand and follow all laws.
- **Carry status documentation** - As a routine precaution while you are in the United States, we recommend carrying **hard copies** of key immigration documents. Keeping these documents readily available can help address questions quickly and reduce the risk of unnecessary delays or complications.

For all travel, including domestic, carry printed copies of these documents. Always review the [Travel.State.Gov](https://travel.state.gov) webpage before planning your travel. Also leave a copy of your documents with a trusted friend or relative. These documents include:

- **A valid, unexpired biographical passport page**
- **Your most recent I-94 arrival/departure**
- **F-1 students:** Form I-20 with a valid travel signature (6 months validity for students on OPT/STEM OPT; 12 months validity for all others)
- **J-1 exchange visitors:** Form DS-2019 with a valid travel signature (6 months validity for short-term scholars; 12 months validity for all others)
- **H-1B, TN, E-3, and O-1:** Documents confirming your current immigration status (e.g., approval notice and related documentation)
- **Use discretion online-** Public online activity, including social media, is likely to be reviewed in immigration-related contexts. Exercise caution and professionalism in online engagement.
- **Seek legal counsel as needed** - If you encounter law enforcement and have concerns about your status, you have the right to request an immigration or criminal attorney.
- **Know your rights in the U.S.** - All individuals in the U.S. have the following rights ([ACLU resource](#)), regardless of immigration status, country of origin, or citizenship.
 - **Right to remain silent.** You can inform law enforcement that you are using your fifth amendment right to remain silent and that you will not answer any questions without a lawyer present.
 - **Right to free speech.** Under the First Amendment of the U.S. constitution, you have the right to free speech. However, you should be aware that any protest activities or social media use may come under scrutiny by DHS. If you choose to participate in protests or utilize any form of social media, be aware of the legal risks including possible impacts to your current or future immigration status or visa applications.
 - **Right to “due process.”** This means that the government must operate within the law and that legal procedures must be fair and impartial. For example, you have the right to an attorney and a right to a hearing before a judge in most *criminal* cases. If arrested, you also have the right to receive notice of any charges against you and present your case.
 - **Right to refuse entry and/or search unless an appropriate warrant is presented.** You are not required to consent to a search of yourself, your residence or your belongings without a judicial warrant (not an ICE administrative document).
[Warrant for Arrest for Alien \(Form I-200 Sample\)](#)
[Warrant of Removal/Deportation \(Form I-205 Sample\)](#)
 - **Right to speak to an attorney/lawyer.** You may request an attorney at any time if you are questioned by law enforcement. However, you are not entitled to an attorney at a

U.S. port of entry or border. In an immigration case involving U.S. Immigrations and Customs Enforcement (ICE), you have the right to consult with an attorney, but the government does not have to provide one for you.

- **Right to contact your country's Consulate.** If you are arrested or detained, you have the right to have your country's consulate or embassy notified.
- **Interactions with law enforcement** - There are many circumstances in which you may have interactions with law enforcement officials. This may include police officers, Customs and Border Protection (CBP), Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). Remember, many of these interactions are routine and normal. Therefore, prepare and remain calm.

Beware of scammers who pretend to be law enforcement. Never give out your personal information, such as address, social security number or banking information, unless you can verify the source.

- **Port of entry or U.S. border** - Before traveling to the U.S., learn what to expect at a U.S. [Port of Entry](#). Have your travel documents printed and ready to show to a Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Officer. Do not bring restricted items and follow CBP and airline rules and procedures.

At an airport, immigration authorities are permitted to:

- Search you, your bags, your phone and electronic devices.
- Take and keep your electronic devices. Ask for a receipt with information about your device and contact information of the officer for you to follow up. Find more information about electronic device searches on the [CBP website](#).

At a land border, immigration authorities are permitted to:

- Search you and others in the vehicle.
- Search the outside and inside of the vehicle, including anything inside it.

Visit to your home

- **You are not legally required to open the door.** If you do decide to open the door, you are giving permission for them to enter your home.
- **Ask for identification through the door or at a window and check the badge or identification.**
- **Both the police and ICE agents must have a warrant to enter and search your home.** An ICE agent cannot use an administrative warrant (which is not signed by a judge) to enter your home. You do not need to open the door or consent to a search of you or your residence without a judicial warrant.

Driving or a passenger in a vehicle

If you are driving and get pulled over:

- If a police officer is behind you with lights and siren on, pull your vehicle over to the side of the road or pull off to the first safe place.
- **Do not exit the car.** Open your window and put your hands on the steering wheel.
- If asked, you must give your full legal name and show your valid state-issued driver's license. Police will likely also ask for proof of insurance and vehicle registration.

If you are involved in a car accident or collision:

- Call 911 if anyone is seriously injured.
- Exchange contact information and insurance information with others involved in the accident.
- You have the right to call the police and have them file a report.

Arrests

Do not resist arrest! Even if you believe the arrest is wrongful, it is important that you do not physically resist a police officer. Instead, know and remember your rights.

- **Right to remain silent.** If you wish to exercise your right to remain silent, say so out loud. (In some states, you may be required to provide your name if asked to identify yourself.)
- **Right to make a local phone call.** Give your family or lawyer your location so that they can reach you.
- **Right to talk to an attorney/lawyer before signing any documents.**
- **Right to a public defender.** If you are arrested by police, you have the right to a government-appointed lawyer. We recommend that you consult with both a criminal lawyer and immigration lawyer if you are arrested.

Certain arrests or convictions may lead to your visa being revoked. Know that your visa stamp being revoked is not the same as your status being revoked or terminated.

Detainment

Do not resist ICE agents! Even if you believe you are being wrongfully questioned or detained, it is important that you do not physically resist a government agent. Instead, remember your rights.

- **Right to remain silent.** If you wish to exercise your right to remain silent, say so out loud. (In some states, you may be required to provide your name if asked to identify yourself.)
- **Right to talk to an attorney/lawyer before signing any documents.**
- **Right to legal counsel.** You have the right to consult with a lawyer, but the government is not required to provide one for you. You can ask for a list of free or low-cost alternatives.

- **Notice to consulate or embassy.** If you are detained by ICE, you have the right to contact your consulate/embassy or have an immigration agent inform the consulate/embassy of your detention.

If you feel your rights are violated

- Do not physically resist or threaten a law enforcement officer.
- Write down everything you can remember, including officers’ names, patrol car numbers and any other details. Get contact information for witnesses.
- If you’re injured, seek medical attention immediately and take photographs of your injuries.
- Contact an attorney. In some circumstances, you may want two attorneys: one criminal and one immigration. Many attorneys only specialize in one area of law.

Consulting an attorney/lawyer

Below are some recommendations to consider when searching for a qualified immigration attorney:

- We strongly recommend working with an AILA certified attorney. The AILA website offers a [search tool to find specialists in an area](#).
- Read client reviews online and ask for the types of cases that the attorney has worked on. Do not be afraid to get a second (or third) opinion if you feel unsure or uncomfortable with any advice.
- Some attorneys specialize in criminal matters that involve non-citizens. However, if an attorney is assisting you with a criminal matter and does not also have expertise in immigration law, you may benefit from working with two attorneys: one criminal attorney and one immigration attorney.

Additional Resources

Organization	Resources
American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)	Stopped by Police Enforcement at the Airport 100 Mile Border Zone Immigrants’ Rights
American Immigration Lawyer Association (AILA)	Know your Rights if ICE Visits
National Immigration Law Center	Know Your Rights Under the U.S. Constitution Warrants and Subpoenas