

## Racine Interfaith Coalition's Detained Migrants Project

Thank you for your interest in helping detained migrants in Wisconsin.

- Until recently, Wisconsin had two detention facilities that housed ICE detainees: one in Kenosha (the Kenosha County Detention Center, or KCDC) and one in Juneau (the Dodge County Detention Center). The Illinois McHenry County Correctional Facility is also nearby. All three are both public facilities not owned by private corporations, but they of course use private companies to contract out services like communications and commissary. A private detention center was recently proposed for Wisconsin but defeated by resistance from the local community.
- ICE recently removed all of its federal detainees from the Kenosha County in response to the Kenosha County sheriff's efforts to protect inmates from infection during the pandemic. Between 30-40 of the Kenosha inmates were moved to McHenry.
- Numbers fluctuate, but Dodge maintains a population of roughly 150 federal detainees, while McHenry houses between 325-380. Both counties receive substantial income from the federal government in exchange for housing migrant detainees, although much of that revenue is expended in the costs relating to their incarceration.
- ICE detainees may come from anywhere in the world, but they fall into two rough categories.
  - Some inmates have been affected by local ICE actions that target members of our own communities, most of whom have lived here for longer than ten years. These individuals, many of whom are from Mexico, typically have family and friends in our local area, including US-born children. The experience of being arrested and placed in detention is traumatic, both for the individual and for their family, but these people are usually able to communicate with people on the outside of the prison system who care about them and advocate for them.
  - Other detainees were arrested shortly after crossing the border into the United States. These individuals may have family somewhere in the United States, but it is unlikely that they know anyone in our local area. Many of these people are fleeing violence and/or extreme poverty in Central America, but others come from Haiti, Venezuela, or countries in Africa. It may be difficult for these individuals even to establish contact with anyone on the outside of the detention facility, so many may have been detained for months without even being able to notify loved ones of their whereabouts.
- Migrants facing detention may have a variety of needs, which may change over time. Typical requests for help include
  - Communicating with family members either in the home country or in the United States
  - Gathering documents to aid in an asylum claim
  - Gathering documents in support of receiving the opportunity for and immigration bond, such as letters of support from a community member, or character references
  - Raising money for bond
  - Processing bond at ICE office in Milwaukee or Chicago
  - Assistance in resettling in our community (We have done this ourselves on occasion, but can also outsource this task to other organizations.)
  - Assistance in reaching family members in another part of the United States.

We hope your community will consider putting together a small group of committed members of your congregation who would like to sponsor the needs of a migrant in detention in our area.

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Q: Does a whole congregation need to make a collective decision about whether to support someone from the Detained Migrants Project?

A: No. A small group of committed individuals is all that is necessary.

Q: How many people are needed to form a Detained Migrants Project team?

A: A team of three individuals or two family groups is ideal.

Q: Do we need to have language facility?

A: Ideally, at least one member of the team will speak a language common among the detained population. We most frequently use Spanish.

Q: Can we choose which person we would like to help, or which level of need we feel comfortable filling?

A: Yes. All migrants being helped by the Detained Migrants Project have completed an intake process that includes an inventory of their current needs. Your team may examine the current list of cases and make a selection from them. You should be aware, however, that an individual's needs may change over time.

Q: How do we communicate with our friend in detention?

A: You will need to establish an account on at least one telephone, preferably the person with language ability. This account will allow you to receive calls from the detention facility.

Q: I don't feel as though I know how to do many of the things detained migrants might require. Is there someone who can provide training?

A: Yes. Someone from the Detained Migrants Project will always be available to answer questions and to provide training for unfamiliar tasks. Help sheets are also available, as are templates for letters of support or character references.

Q: How do we get started?

A: Take some time to discuss what level of commitment you feel comfortable with. If you are not ready to form a team, you are invited to contribute to the fund that makes our work possible. When you do feel ready, contact someone at the Racine Interfaith Coalition by calling 262-635-9532 or emailing [ricracine1993@gmail.com](mailto:ricracine1993@gmail.com).