



Diocese of
OWENSBORO

Catholic Accompaniment and Reflective Experience (CARE) Program



What is the CARE Program?

The Catholic Accompaniment and Reflection Experience (CARE) is a new pilot initiative launched by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' Office of Migration and Refugee Services in the fall of 2018. The Diocese of Owensboro began incorporating this program in the summer of 2019.

The CARE Program is committed to connecting Catholic volunteers and parishes with fellow community members who are undocumented immigrants, unaccompanied children, and their families in need of accompaniment and emotional, social service, and spiritual support when integrating into their communities or attempting to comply with immigration proceedings such as reporting to U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) for check-ins or attending immigration hearings.

CARE also aims to empower undocumented and mixed status families and local community supporters to raise awareness and educate about current immigration realities and advocate for change and increased leadership roles in their community.

Catholic Social Teaching - Principles of Migration

- I. People have a right to find opportunities in their homeland.
- II. People have the right to migrate to support themselves and their families.
- III. Sovereign nations have a right to control their borders.
- IV. Refugees and asylum seekers should be afforded protection.
- V. The human dignity and human rights of undocumented migrants should be respected.

Why is it important to support our undocumented immigrant neighbors and their families?

The Catholic Church approach to migration and immigration is rooted in the Gospel, Sacraments and in the rich tradition of Catholic Social Teaching.

CARE is the pastoral response to the uncertainty and fear that many of our immigrant neighbors are experiencing.

“This atmosphere of welcoming is increasingly necessary in confronting today's diverse forms of distancing ourselves from others. This is profoundly evidenced in the problem of millions of refugees and exiles, in the phenomenon of racial intolerance as well as intolerance toward the person whose only "fault" is a search for work and better living conditions outside his own country, and in the fear of all who are different and thus seen as a threat.”

St. John Paul II, *Welcoming the Poor: Reigniting Hope, Origins 27:36* (February 26, 1998): p. 605

Why would undocumented immigrants and their families need accompaniment now?

Our immigrant neighbors face the challenge of navigating the extremely complex US Immigration system, but without support or assistance, this task can seem almost impossible.

With the new interpretation of who is now considered a priority for ICE apprehension and removal or deportation many individuals in the undocumented immigrant community who were not previously priorities for removal are now priorities and their families are afraid to engage in daily life or attend their ICE check-ins or immigration court proceedings for fear that they might be targeted for removal and be forced to be separated from their families. These policy changes have already resulted in many cases of undocumented individuals around the country arriving for their ICE check-ins and being told to prepare for deportation or in some cases actually being deported. In the first few weeks of 2017, immigration arrests rose by 32.6 percent and ICE arrests of immigrants with no criminal record doubled. Since the start of 2018, some of the most positive outcomes related to cases where immigrants have participated in ICE check-ins have been cases where the immigrant has been accompanied to the ICE check in by their legal representative, their family, and by a support group of concerned citizens and fellow parishioners.

How can I get involved?

Accompaniment may entail standing beside someone on their journey and spiritually supporting them throughout that process, but it may also take the form of smaller actions that can assist and provide comfort and support. Acts of accompaniment might include:

- Assisting undocumented immigrants who are required to check in with ICE on a semi-regular basis or the continual support of an immigrant family as a family member attends their mandatory immigration hearings and court proceedings.
- Assisting an unaccompanied child and their parents to enroll the child in school.
- Giving a family a ride to a medical appointment or helping them receive an identification card.
- Just being present to listen to an individual's stories.
- Offering to pray with individuals.
- For other examples please see the resource [10 Things You Can Do To Accompany Immigrants](#) ([English](#) and [Spanish](#) versions available).

Accompanying an individual through these daily acts can provide comfort, spiritual and emotional support. It can build solidarity between Catholic volunteers and immigrants and their families as well as build bridges of understanding and mutual interest within communities.

Parishes can host an information session to learn more about the CARE Program and how to create a CARE Parish Team that centers around accompaniment, and building awareness, solidarity and public support for new policies that support immigrant families.

For more information, please contact:

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