



What to Expect the First Time You Go to Immigration Court in Minnesota

This fact sheet talks about what to do before a hearing in immigration court and what to expect when you get to the courthouse. It does NOT help you fill out forms or apply for permission to work. It does NOT have information about asylum, different types of visas, or other programs. LawHelpMN's self-help library has other fact sheets on those topics at lawhelpmn.org/self-help-library/immigration

(Spanish) Para leer esta hoja informativa en español, visite: LawHelpMN.org/es

(French) Pour lire cette fiche de renseignements en français, consultez la page internet: LawHelpMN.org

(Haitian Creole) Pou li fèy enfòmasyon sa a nan kreyòl: LawHelpMN.org

(Oromo) Waraqaa dhugaa kana afaan Oromoo dubbisuuf, gara: LawHelpMN.org

(Russian) Чтобы прочитать этот информационный бюллетень на русском языке, перейдите по ссылке: LawHelpMN.org

(Somali) Si aad u akhrido warqaddan xogta aruursan Soomaali, gal barta: LawHelpMN.org/so



This fact sheet was developed in collaboration with the Immigrant Law Center of Minnesota, Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid, Southern Minnesota Regional Legal Services, The Advocates for Human Rights, and the Volunteer Lawyers Network. It was supported by funding from the State of Minnesota Department of Human Services.



Check If You Have a Hearing

What happens the first time I go to immigration court?

Immigration court decides about deportation cases. The first time you go to court is for a **master calendar hearing**. These are short hearings to find out next steps in your case. Immigration court is part of a government agency also called the “Executive Office of Immigration Review” (EOIR).



Don't miss your hearing!

If you miss your hearing, **the judge will order deportation**. You are then at risk to be deported any time. Go to your hearing even if you don't have a lawyer. Tell the court every time you move. This is to make sure you get any notices the court sends you.

How do I check if I have a hearing?



By Phone. Call the EOIR hotline at **1-800-898-7180**. Enter your A-Number or “Alien Registration Number.” (Visit immigrationhelp.org to find your A-Number.) Use the menu of options to check the date and time of your hearing. The hotline is in English and Spanish. Push 2 for help in Spanish.



Online. Visit acis.eoir.justice.gov. Enter your A-Number. Look at “Next Hearing Information” and “Court Contact Information.”

Check for everyone in your family with an A-Number. Sometimes hearings are scheduled on different days for different cases even if the hearings are for members of the same family. If you **DO NOT** have a hearing scheduled yet, call or look at the website 1 time every day.

Before Your Hearing

Where is my hearing?

You can go to your hearing in person or do it by video.



In-person at the courthouse.

Follow the steps in the “Day of Your Hearing: What to Expect” section of this fact sheet.



Webex video on a computer, phone, or tablet.

The Webex link might be in the hearing notice you got from the court. Visit lawhelpmn.org or scan the QR code for Webex instructions. It has links to every judge’s virtual courtroom.



Who should come to the hearing?

Everyone in the family who has a hearing should go, including children. You can ask the judge if young children need to come to future hearings. But they do need to go to their first hearing. The judge might ask children to stay in the waiting area. Bring someone who is living in the United States legally (someone who has legal papers) to watch them.

What should I bring with me?

- Any immigration documents you have
- An ID, if you have one
- 3 copies of any forms you are submitting
- A notepad and a pen to write down important information
- A folder to keep documents you are given

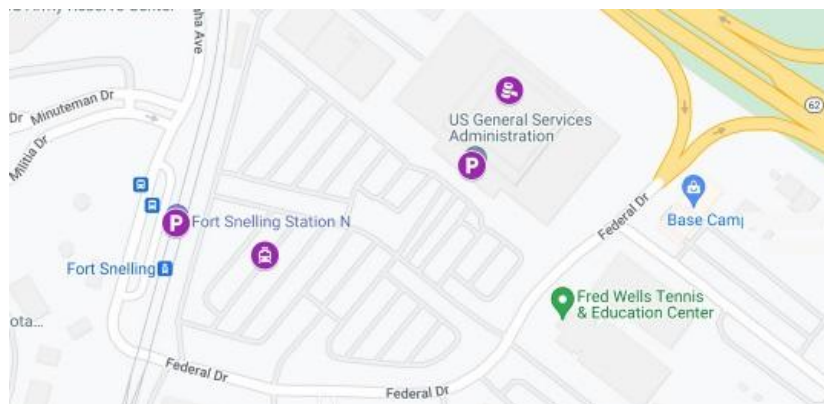


Day of Your Hearing: What to Expect

How early should I arrive?

Get to the courthouse 30 minutes to 1 hour before your hearing time. Plan to be at the courthouse for 4 hours. Your hearing might be 15 minutes long. But you could have to wait a long time for it to start.

How do I get to the courthouse?



Scan the QR code to get directions on Google Maps.



Courthouse.

Fort Snelling Immigration Court
Bishop Henry Whipple Federal Building
1 Federal Drive, Suite 1850
Fort Snelling, MN 55111
Phone number: (612) 725-3765, #0 for the front desk



Parking.

There is free parking in front of the courthouse. Go through a guard station to get into the lot. Show your ID. There is also a parking lot nearby at the Fort Snelling Station N.



Train.

The courthouse is near the **Fort Snelling Station N**. This stop is on the Twin Cities Metro Transit Blue Line. Visit: metrotransit.org to figure out the best route.

Where do I go inside the courthouse?

Step 1: Go through security.

There are security guards when you enter the courthouse. You need to:



Take off your shoes and belt. Empty your pockets. Put everything you brought with you through an X-ray machine. This includes your phone, purse, and backpack. Take computers, tablets, and electronics out of your bag. Put them in a separate tray. Do not bring weapons to the courthouse. Do not bring cologne, perfume, or deodorant sprays.



Walk through a metal detector. If the metal detector beeps, a security guard asks you to spread your arms and legs. They wave a wand across your body to find the metal. The metal detector might beep because of jewelry.

Step 2: Go to the waiting area (room # 1850) and check-in.

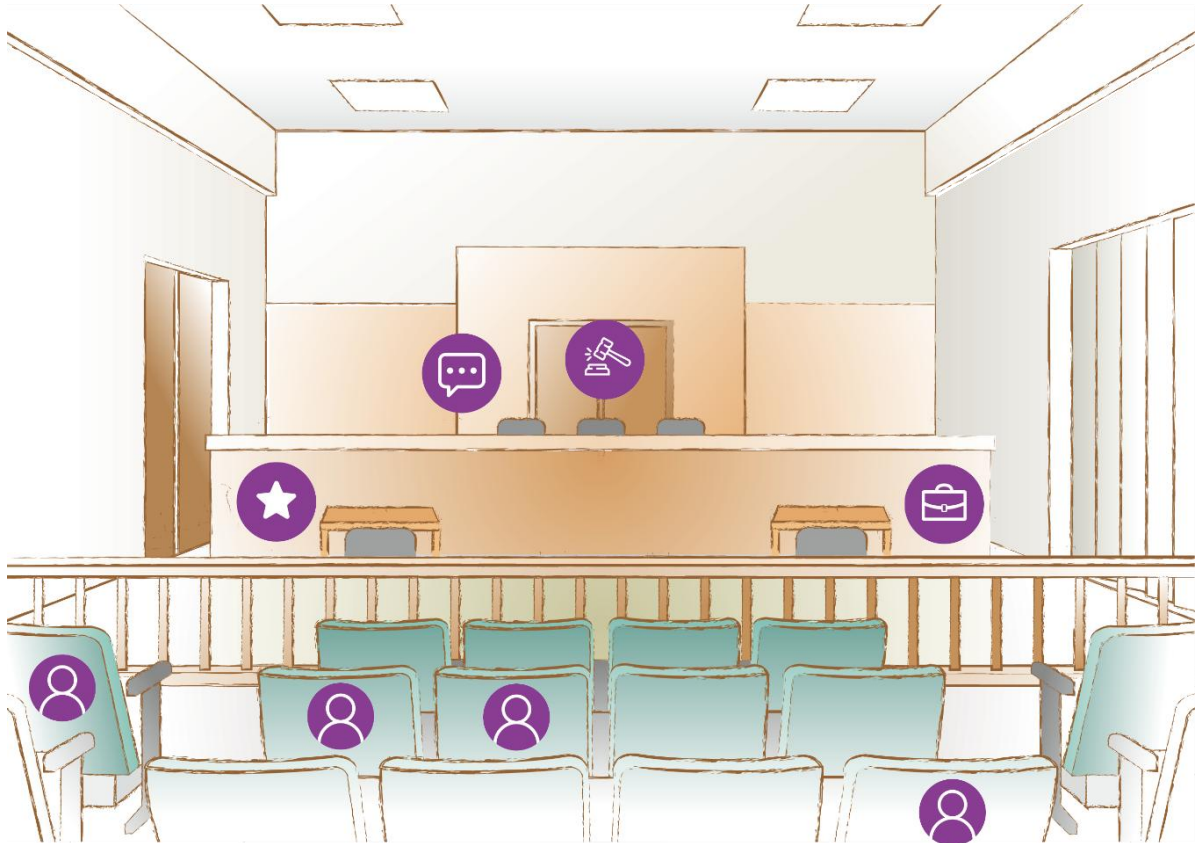
To get to the waiting area:

- Turn down the first hallway on your **left** after security. Turn before the elevators.
- Follow that hallway all the way to the end.
- The Court waiting room is on the left. It is room # 1850.

In the waiting room, check in at the filing window or with the person sitting at a table. The person asks for your A-Number and if you have a hearing today. There may or may not be someone who speaks Spanish at the check-in desk.

Step 3: Stay in the waiting area until someone calls you into your courtroom.

Who is in the courtroom during my hearing?



You. Your job is to tell the judge why you should stay in the United States.



Government lawyer. Their job is to get you deported. They are your opponent. They may be in the courtroom or on a video screen.



Judge. Their job is to listen to you and the government lawyer. The judge is the person who decides if you will be deported. They are neutral. They may be in the courtroom or on a video screen.



Interpreter. A person to help you communicate with the court in the language you are most comfortable using. They might be in the courtroom or on a video screen.



People sitting in the back of the courtroom. They could be waiting for their own hearings. They could also be volunteers there to make sure rights aren't violated.

What happens during a master calendar hearing?

Everything that is said during the hearing is recorded. Answer all questions the judge asks you honestly.

During the hearing, the judge:

- Says the **date** and name of the court.
- **Introduces** themselves, you, the interpreter, and the government lawyer.
- Asks you some **basic questions**, like:
 - Can you confirm your name, address, and the language you are most comfortable using? (The judge tells you how to update your address with the court if needed.)
 - Did you get a Notice to Appear?
 - Do you have a lawyer? Do you want more time to find a lawyer?
 - Do you know why you are in court?
 - Do you have any questions for me?
- Gives you a list of **places where you can talk to a lawyer for free**.
- Asks you questions to see what **programs you might be eligible for**. They might ask:
 - Are you afraid to go back to your home country?
 - Do you have a child, parent, or spouse who is a U.S. citizen or a lawful permanent resident?
 - How long have you been in the United States?

During the hearing, you can:

- Ask the judge for an **interpreter** in the language you are most comfortable using.
- Ask the judge to **clear the courtroom** if you need privacy. You might want privacy to talk about violence at home, sex trafficking, or mental health issues.
- Ask the judge for **more time** to find a lawyer.
- Tell the judge if your **address changed**.
- **File forms** if you have them ready.
- Ask the judge for **copies of forms** you need, like an application for asylum or a change of address form.
- Ask the judge if your **young children** need to be at future hearings.

What if I am not comfortable using English?

During your hearing, you have the right to communicate in the language you are most comfortable using. **The court must provide you with an interpreter**. Bring someone you trust who speaks English to the hearing to help you ask for an interpreter. You can ask to reschedule your hearing if an interpreter is not there. Don't let anyone pressure you to continue the hearing in English.

After Your First Hearing

What should I do next?

After your first hearing, the judge will probably schedule another hearing. It will happen in a few months. **Before your next hearing, talk to an immigration lawyer.** They ask questions to see what programs you might be eligible for. The lawyer can also give you deadlines.

Call the free lawyers on the list the judge gave you. You can also search for free lawyers on [LawHelpMN.org](https://www.lawhelpmn.org). Free lawyers are in high demand. You are not guaranteed a free lawyer just because you ask for one. You can also hire a private lawyer if you can afford one. A judge might say, “Don’t come back to court without a lawyer.” This is wrong. **If you don’t find a lawyer, you still need to go to your second hearing.** You can speak for yourself if you can’t find a lawyer to help you.

What programs can I apply for to stay in the United States?

A lawyer can tell you what programs you are eligible for. The most common ways to stay in the United States are to apply for:

- **Asylum.** You might be eligible for asylum if you are afraid to return to your home country because you were harmed or will be harmed due to your race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or because you belong to a particular social group. **You need to apply for asylum within 1 year of your last entry to the United States.**
 - **Example:** Marco last entered the United States on February 1, 2024. When does he have to apply for asylum? **He should apply by January 31, 2025.**
 - You should still apply even if it has been more than a year. There are some exceptions, like if you had a medical issue. Visit [immi.org](https://www.immi.org) to learn more.
- **U Visa.** You might be eligible for a U Visa if you were the victim of a violent crime in the U.S. and cooperated with U.S. law enforcement. See our fact sheet, [Victims of Crime and U Visas](#).
- **Special Immigrant Juvenile Status.** You might be eligible for this program if you were abused, neglected, or abandoned by a parent. You must be under 21. See our fact sheet, [Special Immigrant Juvenile Status](#).

Can I work while I am waiting for my next hearing?

You need permission from the government to work. Visit uscis.gov/i-765 to learn more.

Fact Sheets are legal information NOT legal advice. See a lawyer for advice.

Don't use this fact sheet if it is more than 1 year old. Ask us for updates, a fact sheet list, or alternate formats.

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