

# **FAQs: How can churches help undocumented immigrants?\_12405**

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## **How can churches help undocumented immigrants?**

Based on information provided by the Baptist General Convention of Texas immigration task force. For more information, contact Jim Young, director of the BGCT Missions Equipping Center, at (888) 311-3900.

A logo for a ministry to immigrants. The text is arranged in three lines: the top line reads 'WE ARE HERE' in green, the middle line reads 'ILLEGALLY' in red, and the bottom line reads 'Ministry to Immigrants' in a smaller, black font.

**'WE ARE HERE  
ILLEGALLY'**  
Ministry to Immigrants

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**Q. Can a church get in trouble for helping an undocumented immigrant?**

**A.** It depends on the kind of help offered.

**Q. What kind of assistance is permitted?**

**A.** A church is free to provide basic benevolence services—food, clothing, shelter and medical help—to anyone.

**Q. Is a church obligated to ask about anyone's immigration status?**

**A.** Normally, the only time a church needs to ask is before hiring someone.

**Q. Is there ever a time when a church would be required to determine someone's immigration status before providing basic benevolence?**

**A.** If a church receives government funds for its community benevolence program, the government might require recipients to present legal identification.

**Q. Is a pastor or church leader under any legal obligation to report an undocumented immigrant?**

**A.** No.

**Q. Can a church get in trouble for employing an undocumented immigrant?**

**A.** Yes. And employment extends beyond church staff positions. If a church provides benevolence ministry to an undocumented immigrant and he or she offers to mow the yard, paint a room or perform some other service for the church in gratitude, that can present a legal problem.

**Q. Can a church help people fill out forms and help them with immigration issues?**

**A.** Yes, but it is advisable to obtain expert advice from an attorney who

specializes in immigration law.

**Additional Resources on Immigration:**

- [Proposed federal Legislation to Legalize Undocumented Farm Workers: The Agricultural Jobs, Opportunity, Benefits, and Security Act of 2003](#)
- [Undocumented Immigrants: Fact and Figures from the Urban Institute Immigration Studies Program, 2004](#)
- [The Border Security and immigration Reform Act of 2003, section by section summary](#)

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