Thank you for agreeing to assist your client in filing their I-589 asylum application and supporting materials. As a reminder, you are assisting the client to prepare and file, but the client is a pro se asylum seeker and will continue the process on their own after this project is complete. If you or the client have any questions about this, please reach out to The Advocates.

This check list provides an overview of the different steps that we anticipate in the process of preparing and filing an asylum application for a pro se asylum seeker. When in doubt, please connect with The Advocates during office hours or reach out with questions. The checklist covers:

1. Getting Started
2. Client Meetings/Preparing the Application
3. Finalizing the Application
4. Filing the Application with the Immigration Court
5. Closing/Wrap Up

**Expectations:** This project will last approximately 2 months and take several hours-long meetings. This is to ensure accuracy and because it takes time to build trust.

**What if I have questions?** Please do not hesitate to contact us.

* **Office Hours:** The Advocates will hold recurring office hours on Thursdays from 1-2 p.m. to support your work on this case. Please feel free to reach out any time or attend office hours with questions or to request support or review.
* Please also view Dropbox resources

1. **Getting Started**

* Register as a volunteer with The Advocates at <https://www.theadvocatesforhumanrights.org/Volunteer/Represent> (if you haven’t already done so)
* Attend or watch training videos (see dropbox)
* There are additional resources on The Advocates’ volunteer portal (<https://www.theadvocatesforhumanrights.org/Volunteer_Portal/Attorneys>) (pwd: probono). The online trainings are an incredibly helpful overview and are recommended before beginning work with your client. Register to access online trainings at <https://www.theadvocatesforhumanrights.org/Online_Trainings>
  + Working with clients who have experienced trauma
* Review information available about the client (see transmittal email)
* Check the EOIR Automated Case Information system at <https://acis.eoir.justice.gov/en/> to identify
  + If your client has a pending removal case before the immigration court [If not, discuss preparation and filing steps with The Advocates.]
  + If/when your client has upcoming hearings
* Familiarize yourself with the questions and instructions for the latest version of the I-589 form. https://www.uscis.gov/i-589 (As of June 2024, use the March 2023 form)
  + Review the annotated I-589 form available in the Dropbox
* Familiarize yourself with relevant country conditions
  + Training materials, if available
  + Pro se country conditions packets (see Dropbox, 2. Preparing the Application, Country Conditions)
* If your client is not fluent in English, familiarize yourself with tips on working with interpreters in the Dropbox resources.
* Identify who on your team is registered/will register **with the Executive Office for Immigration Review** (EOIR) and go through the registration process. At least one team member will need to be registered because you are assisting the client to file in immigration court. ***Note: that team member will also need to be the person signing as preparer on the I-589 asylum application.*** Please see the Dropbox file for instructions.

1. **Client Meetings/Preparing the Application**

* During your first meeting with the client, review the limited representation agreement with the client to explain that you are helping them with preparing and filing their asylum application but that you will not be representing them in their case in the immigration court.
  + Answer questions the client may have and sign the form
  + Provide a copy of the signed form to the client, keep a copy for your records, and provide a copy to The Advocates
* During the first and subsequent meetings, learn your client’s story and draft responses to the questions in the I-589 form. Remember that this is the client’s story and you are helping them explain it in a way that is responsive to the questions in the form.
  + We anticipate that you will have at least three meetings with your client to learn their story, draft the asylum application, and finalize and sign the asylum application.
    - Complete all questions in the I-589 form (even if the answer is N/A)
    - TIP: the first four pages of the form are biographical information, and this can take longer than anticipated to complete! The questions on these pages can be an opportunity to develop a rapport with your client.
    - TIP: the questions in the form contain a lot of legalese. Have a copy of the annotated I-589 available.
    - TIP: it is okay to ask the client open-ended questions to start conversations, e.g., why are you afraid to return to your country?
* Flag issues or questions with The Advocates
  + We are attempting to collect relevant information in the intake process, but you will be having more in-depth conversations with the client.
  + TIP: we are open for all questions, but if you identify any of the following during your meetings with clients, please contact us as soon as possible to discuss:
    - Any immediate family with the client in the U.S.
    - Dual citizenship or time spent outside of the country of origin (apart from brief transit)
    - Criminal convictions in the U.S. or other countries
    - The client’s case is not venued at the Fort Snelling immigration court
* Every client’s story will be different. For some, their information may only fill up the boxes in the I-589 form (or carry over to Supplement B in the I-589 form).
* Draft Declaration
* Collect other evidence relevant to your client’s story. For example:
  + Passports or identification cards
  + I-94 records, if they presented themselves for inspection at the border (e.g., entered using the CBP One app)
  + If they have children, do they have birth certificates for them or another way to demonstrate their relationship?
* Translate materials that aren’t in English and have certificates of translation
  + The Advocates has some volunteers who may be able to assist with translations; however, please note that we may need significant advanced notice to identify a volunteer who can prepare a translation, or we may not be able to identify a volunteer translator.
  + TIP: identify materials that may need translation during your first or second meeting with your client, if possible, to provide ample time for volunteer translators to be able to assist you.
* Research and prepare relevant country conditions
  + The Table of Contents in the Pro Se Country Conditions materials in the Dropbox can be a good starting point, but you will need to tailor and supplement it for your client’s specific circumstances.

1. **Finalizing the Application**

* See the Dropbox for samples and templates. The asylum application will include:
  + A cover page for filing with the immigration court
  + The completed and signed I-589 form for *each eligible family member*
    - Are you using the current form?
    - Have you reviewed every question on the I-589 with your client in their best language?
    - Has your client signed page 9 of the **I-589** as well as Supplements A **and** B (even if blank)?
    - Have you, as attorney and preparer, signed the **I-589**? (Note: the person signing as preparer should be the same person signing the EOIR-61)
    - Does each question on the **I-589** have a response? [Pay close attention to check boxes, particularly for dependents]
    - Have you included your client’s Additional Family Members (Spouse, Children under 21 years of age and unmarried) as derivatives on the I-589? [**NOTE:** If the family member is also in removal proceedings, a copy of the principal applicant’s form I-589 will also need to be submitted in their case, with a cover page pertaining to the derivative. That filing should also include proof of relationship, like a marriage license or birth certificate, if available. Also, because of the Circumvention of Lawful Pathways Rule in place, it is best practice for *each* family member to submit a principle claim even if they are also the derivative on another family member’s claim, provided an asylum argument can ethically be made.]
  + A table of contents for exhibits with paginated exhibits
    - **Table of Contents with Tabs and pagination (**Do page numbers for Exhibit List materials coincide with Table of Contents page numbers? [It is recommended, though not required, to follow the template in the [Immigration Court Practice Manual](https://www.justice.gov/sites/default/files/pages/attachments/2016/02/04/practice_manual_-_02-08-2016_update.pdf#page=218).]
  + Exhibits separated by cover pages with numbered pages. Exhibits may include:
    - Copies of ID documents, e.g., passports (with certificate of translation, if not in English)
    - I-94 information, if applicable
    - Client’s original signed declaration (with a translation and certificate of translation, if not in English)
    - Country conditions, with relevant portions highlighted
    - Copies of medical records, if relevant (e.g., your client experienced FGM)
    - Copies of relevant records noted in the asylum claim (e.g., school records, political party memberships, etc.)
    - Expert declarations, if applicable (unlikely in this pro se project)
    - **TIP: other than the client’s original signatures on the I-589 form and declaration, DO NOT include originals in submissions to the court. The client should keep these and bring them to hearings, in case they are requested for inspection.**
    - **TIP: it is best practice to put labeled flags on the Tab divider pages along the right side so the court can easily navigate the filing.**
  + Certificate of service on DHS
  + EOIR 61 Limited Representation Form
    - Are you using the current form?
    - The preparer of the I-589 must sign and file the EOIR-61. Be sure to include a description of all items being filed in the E-61 form (e.g. I-589, supporting evidence, and change of address form)
  + Change of Address, if applicable. *Note*: if your client’s address has changed (i.e. their most recent address is not the one on their hearing notice), your client needs to also file a E-33 change of address form. See the Dropbox materials for more change of address information).
  + **\*Remember: all documents must be translated into English and include a certificate of translation\***
  + **\*Remember: the original signature pages should be provided to the court [but not original exhibits, unless specifically directed by the court]**

1. **Filing the Application with the Immigration Court**

* **Order of Filing (3 separate filings/packets):**

1. EOIR-61
2. I-589 Cover Sheet
3. Form I-589
4. I-589 Certificate of Service
5. Supporting Documents/Evidence Cover Sheet
6. Table of Contents
7. Supporting Documents
8. Supporting Documents Certificate of Service

* You’ll need three copies for filing:
  1. For the court
  2. For service on DHS
  3. To be file-stamped for the client and your records:
     1. If in person, ask the clerk to file-stamp your copy
     2. If mailing, provide an additional copy and an envelope with appropriate postage to request a file-stamped copy to be returned to you.
* **Options for submitting asylum package**

First, verify whether your client’s case has been initiated with the court and confirm the court’s venue by inputting your client’s A number here: <https://acis.eoir.justice.gov/en/>.

**Option 1:** If your client’s case has been docketed and is venued at Fort Snelling, you may file:

* **In person/by hand at Fort Snelling** 
  1. **Immigration Court clerk’s window for filing and file-stamped copy**
  2. **DHS drop box for service**
* **By Mail**

**Looming Deadline?** FedEx/USPS Priority Mail Express

**Comfortable Margin?** Certified Mail

**Mailing Instructions**

**The original copy of the filing is mailed to the immigration court. The mailing address for the Fort Snelling Immigration Court is:**

Fort Snelling Immigration Court

Bishop Henry Whipple Federal Building

1 Federal Drive, Suite 1850

Fort Snelling, MN 55111

**A copy of the filing is mailed to the Office of the Principal Legal Advisor (OPLA). The address for the Fort Snelling OPLA office is:**

OPLA, Minneapolis-St. Paul

1 Federal Drive, Suite 1800

Fort Snelling, MN 55111

**Option 2:** If your client’s immigration case has been docketed but is not venued at the Fort Snelling Immigration Court, their asylum filing will need to be mailed to the immigration court where their proceedings are venued and to the OPLA office assigned to that immigration court. The address of the court can be found on <https://acis.eoir.justice.gov/en/>. The associated OPLA office can be found online.

**Option 3:** If your client’s immigration case has *not* been docketed (i.e. the EOIR website indicates “***No case found for this A-Number***”), you should contact The Advocates for Human Rights for further instructions and templates.

1. **Closing/Wrap Up**

* Provide a copy of file-stamped documents filed with the court to the client
* Keep a copy of file-stamped documents for your records for seven years (or pursuant to your record retention policies and disclose those to the client in your closing letter)
* Biometrics. If your client is in removal proceedings before the immigration court, **a copy of the first 3 pages of the filed I-589 and the court’s biometrics instructions must also be mailed to the USCIS Nebraska Service Center (use USPS for this mailing). This is important to ensure your client receives a biometrics appointment notice, which is required. The address for the USCIS Nebraska Service Center is:**

USCIS Nebraska Service Center

Defensive Asylum Application with Immigration Court

P.O. Box 87589

Lincoln, NE 68501-7589

* The Advocates will send out a closing letter to each client after their I-589 has been filed. Please let an Advocates staff member know when the application has been filed, and provide a copy of the filing, so a closing letter can be sent. You may also feel free to send a closing letter from your firm or office.
  + - The closing letter from The Advocates will include reminders on updating their address with the court and DHS within 10 days of moving.
    - The letter will also explain documents the client will receive: receipt, biometrics notice, etc.