



## OVERVIEW

### INTRODUCTION

Laws in the U.S. aim to protect the rights of all people, including refugees. Every person who lives in the U.S. is responsible for upholding the rule of law and taking responsibility for their personal safety. The police enforce the law, maintain public order and safety, and protect individuals' civil rights. Refugees coming to the U.S. may have different experiences and perceptions of law enforcement and public safety. As such, this lesson gives CO providers guidance on navigating discussions and delivering key messages to refugees on the role of police in the U.S. and how to interact with police in their communities.

### KEY MESSAGES

- The role of the police in the U.S. is to maintain public order and safety, enforce the law, and protect the civil rights of individuals in communities across the country.
- Refugees may encounter police in a variety of situations in their communities and should be aware of appropriate ways to interact if they encounter police in any setting.
- Refugees have certain legal rights during police encounters including the right to an interpreter, the right to remain silent, and access to a lawyer if accused of breaking a law and/or arrested.
- While the local Resettlement Agency will assist refugees in learning about U.S. laws, it is also the responsibility of refugees to know and follow the laws.
- Refugees, like all people in the U.S., can face consequences if they break the law even if they do not know about the law they broke.

### LESSON OBJECTIVES

After this lesson, participants will be able to:

- Explain the role of the police in the U.S. and within their community
- List situations where they may encounter police in their communities
- Identify the proper steps to take when encountering police in different settings and situations
- Explain their rights to an interpreter and to legal assistance if they are accused of breaking a law and arrested
- Recognize their roles and responsibilities in relation to public safety, particularly when interacting with police

## APPLYING SUPPLEMENTAL LESSON PLANS

This supplemental lesson plan is not required, but may assist Cultural Orientation (CO) providers who are looking for ways to enhance the Rights and Responsibilities section of their CO curriculum. CO providers and their supervisors can decide to incorporate this lesson into their curriculum based on the needs of the refugee populations they serve.

The lesson plan is a suggested guide and can be adapted according to circumstances and the creative wisdom of CO providers and their supervisors. It can be used in whole, or in part, depending upon need and time available.

The lesson includes the following sections:

- **Overview**
- **Activity Bank**
- **Appendix**
- **Additional Resources**

This lesson can be used with the following companion resources:

- [How to Interact with the Police in the U.S. fact sheet](#)
- [How to Interact with the Police in the U.S. podcast](#)
- [How to Interact with the Police in the U.S. video](#)

## SESSION PLAN

The following is a proposed session plan of how the activities provided in this lesson can be used together. CO providers may decide to select only one or two activities based on other lessons being delivered, the group of participants, and/or time and resources.

Title	Description Overview
<b>Six Words Discussion</b>	The Six Words Discussion allows participants to safely explore and compare their expectations and experiences around public safety and police interactions in the U.S. and abroad.
<b>How to Interact with the Police Activity</b>	The How to Interact with the Police Activity allows participants to list situations in which they may interact with police in the U.S. and describe appropriate actions to take.
<b>Public Safety and Police Interaction Scenarios</b>	The Police Interaction Scenarios uses specific situations to help participants build their skills in appropriately responding and interacting with police in their communities.
<b>Bring in a Guest Speaker</b>	Using a guest speaker from law enforcement, such as a local police officer, can create an opportunity for positive exchange between participants and the guest speaker about public safety and the role of police in the community.

## SESSION PREPARATION

- Review the key vocabulary for the lesson
- Provide participants with How to Interact with the Police in the U.S. materials ([video](#), [fact sheet](#), or [podcast](#))
- Select scenarios
- Prepare guest speaker

## MATERIALS NEEDED

- [How to Interact with the Police in the U.S. video](#)
- [How to Interact with the Police in the U.S. fact sheet](#) (1 per participant)
- Speakers and media player for podcast or video
- Copies of [How to Interact with the Police in the U.S. Guided Discussion Worksheet](#) (1 per participant)
- Copies of [scenarios](#) (as selected)
- Flip-chart
- Markers

## KEY VOCABULARY

- 9-1-1
- Civil rights
- Emergency
- Law
- Legal rights
- Police
- Public order
- Right to remain silent
- Safety
- Stay calm
- Traffic violation

# ACTIVITY BANK

## SIX WORDS DISCUSSION

### PURPOSE

To explore and compare expectations and experiences around public safety and police interactions in the U.S.

### INSTRUCTIONS

1. Explain to participants that during this session they will learn more about the role of police in the U.S. Take time to create a safe and comfortable space for participants to meaningfully engage in the topic.
2. Share with participants two to three images from the [Appendix](#). Inform participants to identify six words either in response to the images shown or they can select six words based on their own experiences or perceptions about police in the U.S. Participants can write down their words or share orally.
3. After all participants share their six words, ask the following questions:
  - What similarities did you observe in the words shared?
  - What differences did you observe in the words shared?
  - What do these words show us about perceptions of police?
4. After the debrief, and as relevant, share the key messages for this lesson with participants. Explain that together you will discuss further the role of the police in the U.S.
5. Ask participants: What questions do you have that you want answered today? Assess questions and note any questions from participants that may require follow-up after the session.

### MODIFICATIONS & TIPS

- Before the session, review materials and resources on trauma-informed care provided under the Additional Resources section of this lesson plan.
- It is important to create a positive learning environment that promotes trust and safety, so participants can ask and answer questions on the topic. For more guidance, complete CORE's online course, [Creating a Positive Learning Environment](#).
- For one-on-one CO, customize the information as appropriate to the specific case.

## HOW TO INTERACT WITH THE POLICE ACTIVITY

### PURPOSE

To list situations in which participants may interact with police and be able to describe appropriate actions to take.

### INSTRUCTIONS

1. Read to participants the short story ["Walking Home from Work"](#) provided in the [Appendix](#).
2. Ask participants: What has happened so far in the story? If you are the friend in the story, what is your advice? What should you do next? Make note of responses.
3. Next ask participants: When do you think you may need to interact with police? Make a list of responses and confirm clarify responses as needed. Some example of responses may include:
  - If you have an emergency and you call 9-1-1, police may arrive to assist you.
  - You may encounter police if stopped for a traffic violation.
  - If you attend large public events, sometimes police will be on-site.
  - If there is a suspected disturbance or violation of noise ordinances, someone may call the police to investigate.
  - If you are suspected of violating a local regulation, such as fishing or hunting without a permit, the police may approach to issue a warning or fine.

(Instructions continue on next page)

## INSTRUCTIONS CONTINUED

4. Next, ask participants: How should you interact with police? Make a list of responses. Let participants know you will return to their responses after reviewing the [video](#) ([fact sheet](#) or [podcast](#)).
5. Play the How to Interact with the Police in the U.S. video or share the fact sheet or podcast.
6. Use the [How to Interact with the Police in the U.S. Guided Discussion Worksheet](#) to review the content of the video, fact sheet, or podcast.
7. Compare information learned in the video, fact sheet, or podcast to the participants' responses to the earlier question: How should you interact with police?
8. Close by returning to the story from the beginning of the activity. Ask participants if their answers have changed in terms of what they would do next? If so, have them explain.

## PUBLIC SAFETY AND POLICE INTERACTION SCENARIOS

### PURPOSE

To build knowledge and skills on how to interact with police in U.S. communities, including understanding rights to an interpreter and legal assistance.

### INSTRUCTIONS

1. If not provided previously, share the How to Interact with the Police in the U.S. [video](#), [fact sheet](#), or [podcast](#) with participants and use the [How to Interact with the Police in the U.S. Guided Discussion Worksheet](#) in [Appendix](#).
2. Provide participants with the scenarios found in the [List of Scenarios](#) in the [Appendix](#). Discuss the scenarios with participants and cover key messages of the lesson.
3. Ask participants: What could be the consequences of breaking the law? When asking this question, participants may ask about how breaking the law influences their immigration status. The following are general answers to these kinds of questions, but any specific questions should be directed to a legal expert:
  - In the U.S., you can face consequences if you break the law, even if you did not know about the law you broke. For this reason, it is very important to not only understand some norms about the laws but also to talk to a qualified criminal lawyer about your situation if you are ever arrested.
  - There are immigration consequences for committing certain crimes. The consequences for some criminal offenses may be deportation (return) to your home country. For example, convictions for drug crimes (even violations, or simple possession of a drug like marijuana), theft, or conduct causing physical harm to others (such as fist-fighting or physical discipline of children) may result in arrest and lead to removal from the U.S. This is not a complete list, but provides some examples.
  - Criminal convictions may prevent you from being able to travel internationally and return lawfully to the U.S.

## MODIFICATIONS & TIPS

- You may add additional scenarios or reduce the number of scenarios, as relevant, for your given context.
- If appropriate, and with agreement from participants, change the scenarios into role plays that you conduct with the participants for one-on-one sessions or they conduct in pairs for group sessions.
- You may want to discuss what parents' roles are with their children around educating them on police interactions. See the Additional Resources section for information.

## INSTRUCTIONS CONTINUED

- If you are ever arrested, you should talk to an immigration attorney before submitting ANY applications to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) or traveling abroad.
- When you apply for lawful permanent resident status and/or for U.S. citizenship, you will need to report any and all criminal arrests or citations, no matter what the outcome, even if your case(s) were dismissed. USCIS performs a mandatory background check that will show your entire criminal record, including any prior contact with the police, even if the police were wrong to arrest you. If you do not include information about your criminal arrest history, you could be accused of fraud and/or misrepresentation and possibly be subject to deportation under U.S. immigration law.
- If you have prior arrests or criminal convictions, it's important to consult an immigration lawyer before submitting any immigration applications.
- If you have questions, such as where to find an immigration attorney, be sure to ask the staff at your resettlement office who can direct you to proper resources and people to answer your questions.

## BRING IN A GUEST SPEAKER

### PURPOSE

To create a positive exchange of information between local law enforcement and participants around public safety and the role of police in the community.

### INSTRUCTIONS

1. Before the start of the session, prepare the guest speaker with appropriate information about the participants and refugee resettlement in the community. For guidance on using community guests in CO, review [CORE's Promising Practice: Including Guests from the Community](#).
2. Before the guest speaker arrives and is introduced, ask participants: What is the role of the police? If not provided previously, review with the How to Interact with the Police in the U.S. [video](#), [fact sheet](#), or [podcast](#) with the participants.
3. Explain to the participants that for today's session there will be a guest speaker from local law enforcement. Next, ask participants: What questions do you have for the guest speaker? Record responses. Explain to the participants that either they can ask the questions they've provided, or you can ask the questions if any of them do not feel comfortable doing so.
4. Introduce the guest speakers and have participants introduce themselves.
5. Have the guest speaker provide a presentation or conduct a general question and answer session. The setup will depend on what was agreed upon prior to the session.

### MODIFICATIONS & TIPS

- Before the session, you and, if possible, the guest speaker should review materials and resources on trauma-informed care provided under the additional resources section of this lesson plan.
- To promote consistent messaging, provide the guest speaker with the How to Interact with Police video, fact sheet, or podcast.
- You may also want to work with the guest speaker to do a modified version of the Public Safety and Police Interaction Scenarios.

# APPENDIX

## SIX WORD DISCUSSION IMAGES

These are suggested images. CO providers may also use photos they have already identified for U.S. laws or public safety, as well as those featured in the *Making Your Way Curriculum*.



## WALKING HOME FROM WORK

A few months ago, I was walking home from work with another friend. It was in the very early morning hours. Nobody on the streets. No cars on the road. As we walked, we suddenly realized a police car was following about fifty feet behind us. We tried not to pay too much attention, but when I glanced over my shoulder, the car was still there and getting even closer. I asked my friend, "What should we do?" My friend suggested that we walk faster since we were almost to the corner, where we can then turn to enter our apartment complex. As we started to walk faster, the police car sped up, turned on the car lights, and then pulled over next to us. The officer got out of the car and asked us to stop. The officer then asked, "What are you doing?" I was nervous. I did not understand. I did not speak English well. I looked at my friend for what to do next.

## HOW TO INTERACT WITH THE POLICE IN THE U.S. GUIDED DISCUSSION WORKSHEET

Use the following worksheet to guide participants in understanding the material provided in the How to Interact with the Police in the U.S. [video](#), [fact sheet](#), or [podcast](#). Providers may add additional statements and information based on client needs.

### PART I: CATEGORIZE TIPS

After sharing the video, fact sheet, or podcast, provide participants with the different images on the following page. Ask participants to categorize images into "Do's" and "Don'ts" when interacting with police. Use this to review the following tips:

- Stay calm and control your emotions.
- Be respectful. Don't argue.
- Keep your hands visible and out of your pockets.
- Don't run or reach for anything suddenly.
- Stay in one place and be still.
- If you are in a vehicle, stay in the vehicle and keep your seatbelt fastened.
- Don't touch or stand too close to a police officer.
- Carry your I.D. and the phone number of someone who can help you, if needed.
- Ask if you are free to leave and, if so, depart calmly.

### PART II: DISCUSSION

Depending on the group, ask participants the following discussion questions. The answers provided are based on the video, fact sheet, and podcast, but you may add to the list.

1. What are your rights if you encounter a police officer?
  - You have a legal right to an interpreter.
  - If you are accused of breaking a law and are arrested, you have the right to remain silent and talk to a lawyer before being questioned.
  - If you cannot afford a lawyer, the court will pay for one to represent you.
2. What do you do if you need an interpreter? *Time permitting, you may want to have participants practice reading the card provided on the back of the fact sheet.*
  - It's okay to say you don't understand.
  - **Ask first and receive permission** to provide the Refugee-Police Interaction Card, or recite the information on the card: I am a resettled refugee. I am in the United States legally. I speak \_\_\_\_\_ . I need an interpreter. Please call \_\_\_\_\_ .

"Do"

"Don't"



## LIST OF SCENARIOS

Select scenarios prior to the lesson. You can adjust or remove scenarios based on your local context. You are also encouraged to review additional resources provided below on knowing your rights to supplement key messages provided. If you have a police officer as a guest speaker, you may invite them to work through these scenarios and role play as appropriate.

### SCENARIO 1:



Anita is celebrating her birthday and has family members at her house. They are playing loud music and having a good time. There is a knock at the door. There are two police officers. They are responding to a noise complaint. What should Anita do?



#### Key Messages:

- Be aware of local laws. She is responsible for knowing the laws and can be punished for breaking a law, even if she is not aware she has broken a law.
- Do not invite the officer into the house. She does not need to let them in unless they can show a signed warrant that lists her address as a place to be searched or has her name on it as the subject. If a warrant is provided, be sure to read the warrant carefully first.
- Be respectful. Don't argue.
- Don't run or reach for anything suddenly.
- Stay in one place and be still.
- If she does not speak English, she should ask for an interpreter.
- Remind her about responsibilities around being a good neighbor, which includes keeping noise levels at a minimum as to not disturb others.

## SCENARIO 2:



Nora is on the way home when she sees a police car behind her and its lights go off. What should she do?



### Key Messages:

- Safely pull over and stop the vehicle.
- Keep your hands visible and keep your seatbelt fastened.
- Don't run or reach for anything suddenly.
- Upon request, show police your driver's license, registration, and proof of insurance.
- Don't touch the police officer.
- Carry her I.D. and the phone number of someone who can help her, if needed.
- Ask if she is free to leave and, if so, depart calmly.
- If she does not speak English, she should ask for an interpreter.

## SCENARIO 3:



Myint and Aung visit a public park to go fishing. It is illegal to fish at this location and Myint and Aung also do not have a permit. A police officer arrives. What should Myint and Aung do?



### Key Messages:

- Be aware of local laws. They are responsible for knowing the laws and can be punished for breaking a law, even if they are not aware they have broken a law.
- Stay calm and control their emotions.
- Be respectful. Don't argue.
- Keep their hands visible and out of their pockets.
- Don't run or reach for anything suddenly.
- Stay in one place and be still.
- Don't touch or stand too close to a police officer.
- Carry their I.D. and the phone number of someone who can help them, if needed.
- Ask if they are free to leave and, if so, depart calmly.
- If you are issued a ticket, you will need to take additional steps to pay it or contest it. Lack of response to any ticket can lead to further consequences, including additional fines. If you do not understand the ticket provided, ask the staff at your resettlement office who can direct you to proper resources and people to answer your questions.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Disclaimer: These links are being provided as a convenience and for informational purposes. This is not an endorsement and CORE cannot verify the accuracy of the content on external sites. Please contact the site owners for answers to questions regarding content.

## RESOURCES ON TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE

- [U.S. Department of Health and Human Services: Trauma-Informed Resources Specific to Immigrant or Refugee Populations](#)
- Trauma-Informed Care: Movement Towards Practice [webinar](#) and [information guide](#) from Switchboard
- Trauma-Informed Care: Preventing Crises and De-escalating Difficult Situations [webinar](#) and [information guide](#) from Switchboard

## RESOURCES FOR PARENTS AND YOUTH

- [Practices in Modern Policing: Police-Youth Engagement](#)
- [Embrace Race: Moving 'The Talk' to 'The Walk' for Black Children](#)
- [Center for Racial Justice in Education: Resources for Talking about Race, Racism and Racialized Violence with Kids](#)

## RESOURCES FOR BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS WITH POLICE

- [Strengthening Relationships between Police and Immigrant Communities in a Complex Political Environment: Multicultural Outreach and Engagement Programs for Police Agencies](#)
- [Building Trust with Immigrant Communities: Best Practice for Law Enforcement Agencies in Smaller Cities and Towns](#)

## RESOURCES ON RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- [Know Your Rights from ACLU](#)
- [Immigrant Defense Project FAQ](#)
- [Know Your Rights Guides from CAIR](#)
- [Immigration Consequences of Crimes Summary Checklist](#)

### Cultural Orientation Resource Exchange

8719 Colesville Road, 3rd Floor • Silver Spring, MD 20910

[www.coresourceexchange.org](http://www.coresourceexchange.org)



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