



IMMIGRANT LEGAL ADVOCACY PROJECT

INSTRUCTIONS FOR GOING TO YOUR FIRST IMMIGRATION COURT HEARING

Your first hearing in Immigration Court is called a “Master Calendar Hearing.” This is only your first hearing in front of a judge. Your case will not be decided at this time. You will be given another date in the future where you can present your full case to the judge. This letter explains what to do when you attend this hearing on your own without a lawyer.

Even if you do not have a lawyer, you still must go to this hearing. It is extremely important that you show up for your hearing on time. **If you do not attend or are late, the judge may order you sent back to your country without a hearing.**

Where do I go for my Immigration Court Hearing?

Check any paperwork you have with the date and time of your hearing to find out where your hearing is scheduled. This may be on a paper called the Notice to Appear (NTA) or another type of document. You should also call the Immigration Court at 1-800-898-7180 to confirm the date, time, and location of your hearing. If your Master Calendar Hearing is scheduled in Boston, Massachusetts, follow the instructions on this sheet. If your hearing is scheduled somewhere else, you must go to that location or get help from a lawyer to change the location of your court.

If your court hearing is in **Boston, Massachusetts**, the court will be located at this address:
JFK Federal Building, Room 320 (3rd Floor)
15 New Sudbury Street
Boston, MA 02203

You should leave early because getting stuck in traffic or getting lost are not excuses the court will accept for missing your hearing. It is a good idea to take a bus or train so you don't have to worry about getting lost. It is very difficult to drive in Boston and very expensive to pay for parking.

What should I bring to my Immigration Court Hearing?

1. Any paperwork with the date and time of your hearing with your “A Number” (Alien Registration Number) written on it;
2. Your current address information; and
3. All your family members should attend. Each member of your family who has paperwork with the date and time of their hearing or a Notice to Appear (NTA) with a date for court must go to the Master Calendar Hearing. This includes babies and small children.

What do I do when I get to the Immigration Court?

1. When you enter the JFK Federal Building, go through security.
2. Check in at Room 320 on the third floor. To do this, go to the glass window, show the clerk your paperwork with the date and time of your hearing, and ask which courtroom number you must go to. Then, find your judge's courtroom, which may be on the 3rd floor or the 8th floor. At your judge's courtroom there may be lists on a table or the door. If there are, sign your name and "A Number" on the list for your judge. If you do not know who your judge is, where to sign in, or what to do, ask at the window where you checked in.
3. Wait in your judge's courtroom. If the courtroom is full, wait in the waiting area near the courtroom. You may have to wait for many hours because the courts are busy and judges call people with lawyers first. As people leave the courtroom, you can look in to see if there is room for you. If the judge is looking for you but you are still in the waiting area, someone should come into the waiting area and call your name. Do not leave the court until you have seen the judge. If they forget to call you, ask someone at the information window in Room 320.

What will happen at my Immigration Court Hearing?

1. When the clerk calls your case, go up in front of the judge. There will also be a lawyer for the U.S. government at one table. You will sit at the other table. If you need an interpreter, the court will provide one. You are not allowed to bring your own interpreter to court. Make sure you let the judge know if you need an interpreter or if you do not understand the interpreter that has been provided for you. It is very important that you understand what is being said to you.
2. During the hearing, the judge will ask you some basic questions about who you are and where you live. It is important that you answer all questions honestly. The judge may also tell you about your rights in Immigration Court and how important it is that you attend all court hearings. The judge may ask you if you have a lawyer and if you want more time to find one. You will not be asked about what happened in your home country or details about why you want to stay in the United States. This comes later in a longer, more private hearing with the judge when you will present your case. At this Master Calendar Hearing, you will probably only talk to the judge for about 5 minutes or less.
3. If you have changed your address and have not already sent Change of Address form(s) to the court, you can give these form(s) to the judge during your hearing. (You can find those forms here: <https://ilapmaine.org/self-help-guides#IC>). If you have already mailed these forms to the court, however, you do not need to do this.
4. At the end of the hearing, the judge will give you a new notice with the date and time of your next hearing. Listen carefully because the judge may also tell you if you need to bring your children to the next hearing or if they can stay home. It is very important that you keep this notice and attend your next hearing. You should also continue to check your case by calling the Immigration Court (1-800-898-7180) to make sure the date and time of your next hearing has not changed.

**** REMEMBER: Do not leave the court without talking to the judge and receiving a new notice with the date and time of your next hearing. If you have problems, ask for help at the glass window in Room 320.****

****IMPORTANT NOTICE: If you have already mailed an application for asylum (Form I-589) to the Immigration Court before your first Master Calendar Hearing, you should speak to an immigration lawyer before you go to Court. A lawyer can explain how what happens at the hearing may impact how you can get a work permit.****