

Preparing for an Asylum Office Interview Guidance for Afghan Asylum Seekers

Common Questions

1. When will the interview occur?

Usually, you will receive an interview notice about 4 - 6 weeks after you file your asylum application. The interview will be about 2 – 3 weeks after you receive the notice. (A sample notice is attached.)

2. Who needs to attend the interview?

You; your spouse; and your children, if they are in the United States with you and if your children are unmarried, and were under age 21 when you filed for asylum. If you are attending your interview as a single parent with young children, you should bring along someone who can provide childcare.

3. What should I bring to the interview?

- A facemask for each person attending the interview
- The interview notice
- Passport or other identity documents, including a work permit, for yourself, your spouse, and your children, if you have them
- I-94 card or I-94 online print-out, if you have one
- Birth certificates for your children and marriage certificate for your spouse, with English translations, if you have them
- A copy of the asylum application you filed
- Copies of any other documents that you would like the asylum officer to consider
- Water (You cannot bring food into the Asylum Office, but you can bring water.)

4. Do I need to bring an interpreter?

If you speak Dari or Pashto, the asylum office will provide a telephonic interpreter for your interview. If you cannot speak any English, you may want to bring along someone who can help you communicate with others before the interview begins.

5. How long will the interview last?

The interview may last from 2 – 4 hours and sometimes longer.

6. What if I need to reschedule my interview?

Changing your interview date could delay your case and make it harder to get employment authorization in the future. If you must request rescheduling, send a letter to the Asylum Office in English, explaining why you need to reschedule. The Chicago Asylum Office's address is 181 W. Madison Street, Suite 3000, Chicago, IL 60602.

7. How do I get to the Chicago Asylum Office?

The Chicago Asylum Office is located at 181 W. Madison Street, Suite 3000, Chicago, IL 60602. It is on the corner of Madison and Wells. When you arrive, go to the reception desk in the lobby and show your interview notice. The receptionist will give you a card and tell you to go in the elevator to the 30th floor. On the 30th floor, you will walk through glass doors into the Asylum Office.

Any documents you want to provide to the Asylum Office must be translated into English and include a signed statement that the person who translated the documents is proficient in English and the document language and translated the document to the best of their abilities.

How to Prepare for the Interview

- Review your asylum application and all documents you are providing to the Asylum Office. Practice the dates and names that are important to your asylum application. Try your best to always provide the same details when asked questions about your asylum case.
- Practice providing answers to the following questions:
 - Why are you afraid to return to Afghanistan?
 - What harm did you or your family members experience in Afghanistan?
 - What is the reason someone harmed you in the past or wants to harm you in the future?
 - Are the people who want to harm part of the government in Afghanistan or to the Taliban?
 - If the people who want to harm you are not connected to the prior government in Afghanistan or to the Taliban, why can't you get protection from the government?
 - What will happen to you if you have to go back to Afghanistan? Why?
 - Why can't you go somewhere else in Afghanistan to be safe?
- Be specific. Practice providing answers about why it is not safe for **you** in Afghanistan and why **you**, in particular, will be harmed. Do not give general answers like "Afghanistan is very dangerous."
- **Remember:** Take your time. Ask for a break if you need one. If you don't understand a question, say "I don't understand" or "Can you repeat that?" If you don't know an answer, say "I don't know."

What to Expect at the Interview

- Everything you say at the interview is confidential. It cannot be shared outside the U.S. government.
- At the interview, you will be in an office with the Asylum Officer. An interpreter will be provided for you on the phone if you need one.
- At the beginning of the interview, the Asylum Officer will review the first part of your asylum application to make sure all of the information about your family and personal history is correct. If anything is incorrect, the Asylum Officer will correct the application.
- After reviewing your personal information, the Asylum Officer will likely ask why you are applying for asylum. Be prepared to provide a short answer about the most important reasons why you need asylum. Be sure to describe your situation in particular and not conditions in Afghanistan generally. The Asylum Officer will then ask you more questions to get more details about your case.
- There are several questions that the Asylum Office asks everyone. Do not be offended by these questions. It is important to answer the questions honestly.
 - Have you ever had citizenship in another country or applied for asylum in another country?
 - Have you ever been a member of a terrorist group or a group that uses violence, or have you ever helped an organization that uses violence? For more information about this question, please see the terrorism bar explanation sheet.
 - Have you ever harmed someone or helped harm someone?
 - Have you ever committed any crime or been arrested or detained?
 - Have you worked for the military, police, or security forces, or received training from them?
- If you are applying for asylum with your spouse and/or children, the Asylum Officer will likely want to ask your spouse some questions too. The Officer will not ask questions of young children.