

WHAT TO DO IF THE FBI OR DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY WANTS TO QUESTION YOU

The FBI and other law enforcement agencies are increasing their attempts to question and monitor many people over the next few weeks and months. Keep the following tips in mind if this affects you.

When law enforcement officers ask you to answer questions:

- If you are approached in person by an officer, ask if you are “free to leave.” If you are, consider walking away. If officers come to your home, you do not have to answer the door or let them in unless they have a warrant from a court authorizing them to search your home. You can ask them to leave a business card under the door and tell them you will call them if you decide to talk to them.
- Ask if the interview is “voluntary.” If you are told that it is your decision whether to be interviewed, consider saying “no.”
- **You have the right to remain silent and not answer questions**, even if you are not free to leave.
In some states, you must give your name if an officer asks for it, but you do not have to say anything else. If you are a “nonimmigrant” (you are **not** a “nonimmigrant” if you are undocumented, out of status, a legal permanent resident (green card holder), or a citizen), you may be required to provide information related to your immigration status, but you can do so through a lawyer. Ask for the officer’s business card, and tell the officers your lawyer will call when you are ready to speak with them.
- **Consult a lawyer before agreeing to answer any questions.** The law is complicated – you can have a problem even though you don’t know it.
Officers may pressure you to answer questions before you can talk to a lawyer. For example, officers may suggest that talking to a lawyer makes it look like you have something to hide. If you want to talk to a lawyer, do not let the officers stop you. There are many reasons why you might want to consult a lawyer. **A lawyer can protect your rights.**

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If you need free legal advice about an interview, call the **American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Ohio** at **216.472.2200**, American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC) at 202.244.2990, Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) at 202.646.6034, or Muslim Public Affairs Council (MPAC) at 800.898.3558.

- If you agree to be interviewed, you can set the day, time and place for the interview. Tell the officers if you need an interpreter. Do not answer questions if you need an interpreter and a free interpreter is not provided.

If you agree to be interviewed:

- Have a lawyer present the entire time you are questioned. If you do not have a lawyer, consider having someone you trust (someone who is a citizen or has valid immigration status) be a witness to the interview or tell the officers that you want to tape the interview.
- If you agree to answer some questions, you can still refuse to answer other questions.
- Nothing is “off the record” when you talk to an officer. Everything you say will be recorded in some way, and anything you say can be used against you.
- Lying to a federal officer is a crime, but remember that you can refuse to answer any question.
- Lying on an application for an immigration benefit can also get you in trouble with the law.
- Laws that deal with charitable contributions can be complicated. If you are asked about your charitable contributions, strongly consider not answering those questions.
- If you are asked to sign anything, including a statement summarizing your interview, do not sign it unless you have carefully read it, you understand everything it says, and you agree to everything it says. It is always best to have a lawyer review documents before you sign them. Be careful about signing away your rights.