

## Driver Instructions for Immigration Court in Chicago (revised 3/12/20)

**Destination:** US Immigration Court, 525 W. Van Buren, Suite #500, Chicago  
(<https://www.justice.gov/eoir/chicago-immigration-court>). 312-697-5800.

Note: This is the “released” court where individuals who are not being detained/incarcerated go to court. There is a separate “detained” court location that you are not going to use.

**Travel Time:** Allow up to 4.5 hours, particularly during rush hour, to provide for driving, taking a break during the commute, parking, and walking to the Immigration Court. You may need to allow a little more time if you are trying to get your rider to one of the National Immigrant Justice Center’s information sessions (see below).

**Tolls:** The cost of tolls each way is \$7.90 (\$15.80 round trip). If you have an I-Pass, the cost is reduced by one-half and you don’t have to stop at the toll booths. If you wish to purchase an I-Pass, go to <https://www.illinoistollway.com/> and click on I-Pass at the top of the page to create an account. You will put down a \$10 deposit for each transponder and put a set amount of money in your account to pay for toll fees in advance; you can choose to automatically be charged a desired amount of money if your account runs below a set figure.

**Parking:** Parking is available in the vicinity for about \$25 per day if you reserve a parking spot online and pay in advance (see ParkWhiz and SpotHero); otherwise the cost of parking may be twice as much (the parking garage at 550 W. Jackson the entrance for driving in is on Quincy, which is ½ block north of Jackson, was \$17 for valet parking without a reservation). [Click here](#) for locations of nearby parking. The Union Station Self Park parking garage, 320 S. Canal, across the street (north side) from the Immigration Court building has been torn down.

**Train Alternative:** Instead of driving all the way, you can drive to the Big Timber Road Metra Station in Elgin, IL, and then take the Milwaukee District West train Chicago Union Station. The released court is only 1.5 blocks from Union Station. Tickets are easily purchased on the free Ventra App or at vending machines at the station. The ticket cost about \$9 each way per person. There is only one train from the Big Timber Road station - there are no transfers. More information: <https://metrarail.com/>. Parking at the Metra Station is less than \$3 for 18 hours. You can pay either at a kiosk in the parking lot or on the “ParkMobile” app.

The trip to Chicago is expensive (i.e, gas, tolls, and parking). Please remember that you are welcome to request reimbursement for your costs; see the second page of the driver form for details.

### Trip Preparations

1. Review the Driver Information Sheet for details. Determine whether the rider will have an attorney waiting at the court or is unrepresented.
2. Expect minors to be accompanied by an adult.
3. Plan on arriving at the court 45 minutes ahead of the hearing time (or depart Madison about 4.5 hours before the hearing time). **If something happens in route that will result in your being late or missing the hearing, either have the rider call his attorney immediately or call the court at the number given above. The judge may adjust the court schedule if you provide an estimated time of arrival if you are delayed for good cause. Missing a court date is grounds for deportation.**

4. It would be nice to bring something to drink and a snack for yourself and your rider(s) as a trip to Chicago can be a long day.

### **Procedure upon Arrival**

1. Enter the building at the Lobby level.
2. Take the rider to the fifth floor where the court room is located. Take the elevator. Once there, pass through security (see security procedures below). Food and drinks are not permitted (only water).
3. After passing through security, your rider will have to go to the wall toward the waiting area and look for his/her name. After your rider locates his/her name, your rider will have to sign-in on the appropriate list located at the bottom of the list in which the name appears (this is how the court will know that your rider has arrived). If your rider does not have an attorney, he/she will need to sign in on the "Unrepresented Respondent" list. There are court staff are usually around to assist with this. If your rider's attorney is present, then you just need to help your rider meet that attorney. **Note: The security staff generally are not bilingual, so you may need to use Google Translate to convey this necessary step.**

Notes: The rider (i.e., not the driver) can find out who the judge will be, and confirm the hearing date and time, by calling 1-800-898-7180 and entering the A# (nine digit number on the most correspondence from Executive Office of Immigration Review or EOIR). This can be done while in transit if necessary. National Immigrant Justice Center (NIJC) staff are on the 5<sup>th</sup> floor to assist with any general information relating to the court or immigration relief. The NIJC helpdesk is located in the Pro Bono room located directly after you pass through the security checkpoint on the 5th floor. NIJC staff members are usually at the court around 8:45 am to begin informing individuals about information sessions they offer in the morning and early afternoon. The morning session will start anytime between 9 to 9:30 am. Individuals have hearings at varying times, so NIJC staff try to accommodate as many people as they can. The afternoon session may start at 12:45 pm or soon thereafter.

4. Ask the individual for permission to observe the court session. With the permission of the individual, you may go with the individual to the courtroom (see procedures below). **Note: The court has a Spanish speaking staff member who will translate the judge's statements, including the right to request an attorney if the individual does not have one at the time of the court hearing; this will result in the scheduling of another hearing.**

**Driver Communications with Court Officials or ICE:** If you attend the court session, the judge or the ICE attorney may ask you what you know about the individual. You may also be approached anywhere inside or outside the building. It is important that you be prepared to say that you are there to offer a ride to court and attend the court session only, and will not be able to answer questions about the individual. ICE may try to gain information from you about the individual so a simple "I am just here to provide a ride and support" is important.

**Driver Communications with the Rider:** Never offer advice or opinions related to the rider's immigration case. You are only providing transportation and logistical support. But do be cordial and sociable. Consider bringing water and snacks, and music in the rider's language (or tuning the car radio to stations that the rider will like).

Note: For your information, if it is anyone's first time to appear in court and is unrepresented, the individual may ask the judge for time to find an attorney. Usually the individual will be given anywhere from two weeks to six months before the second hearing. At a second hearing, if the individual is still unrepresented, the individual may be asked to speak on his/her own behalf on the charges from the government.

**Observing Court:** Generally, immigration court proceedings are open to the public. An overview of when immigration court hearings might be closed to the public as well as general guidelines for behavior when observing immigration court hearings are available at the following link: [Observing Immigration Court Hearings](#). Note: the use of electronic devices, including audio/visual recordings of hearings and taking photographs, is prohibited in immigration court, but you may take notes.

**Security Procedures:** All visitors to the Chicago Immigration Court must undergo security screening through a metal detector machine as well as a handbag screening each time they visit the Immigration Court. Shoes may be required to be removed, if needed. Visitors must not bring any cameras, video or recording equipment.

**Lunch and Snacks:** There is a small restaurant off of the Lobby. There are a few restaurants (along Clinton) and a Starbucks in the area. Food and drink cannot be taken into the courtroom.

**Submit Driver's Report:** After the trip, submit the volunteer driver's report on the Volunteer Drive Information Form. If requesting expense reimbursement, indicate this on the sheet and provide a parking receipt. There is no reimbursement for meals.

**Reminders about Being Approached by ICE or Law Enforcement on the Street or When in the Vehicle:**

- ICE and law enforcement must have a valid judicial warrant (signed by a judge) to search your belonging or your vehicle, or to arrest or detain your riders. Say "I do not give you permission to search my belonging or my vehicle based on my 4<sup>th</sup> Amendment rights unless you have a valid judicial warrant." Unless presented with a valid judicial warrant, you do not have to open your car door, trunk, or belongings to ICE or law enforcement.
- If ICE or law enforcement ask questions, you may say that you wish to remain silent.
- It is permissible (and recommended) to ask someone to take a video or make an audio recording of the interaction with ICE or law enforcement.
- Make notes about the interaction in detail, including the type of officers, their names, badge numbers, and contact information of any witnesses other than the riders.
- Do not interfere with ICE or law enforcement officials exercising a valid judicial warrant.
- Have the rider call his/her attorney immediately to report what happened. The driver should contact the Dane Sanctuary Coalition's Volunteer Driver's Project coordinators.

A video of an experience that a volunteer driver in another state had with ICE agents can be viewed at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8z7HkHVP6oU>. A longer version with an interview can be seen at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JNNfdhll7MI>. We do not expect a driver to have all the background knowledge this driver had. He is the executive director of an immigrant rights organization. The key point is that he kept repeating that the officers did not have a judicial warrant and therefore he did not have to and would not open his car door. This is an excellent example of how a volunteer driver may have to be persistent in exercising 4<sup>th</sup> Amendment rights.