

Boston Center for Refugee Health and Human Rights
Affirmative Asylum Interview Checklist
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Before the Interview:

What to Bring:

- ✓ Someone to be supportive such as a friend or family member (they will not be allowed to come into the interview).
- ✓ If you need an interpreter you will need to bring one yourself.
- ✓ Your Interview Notice and an ID. These may be needed when you go through security.
- ✓ A good luck charm such as a religious object, beads or an amulet.
- ✓ A book to read or something else that is calming to do while you wait.

What to Do:

- ✓ Review your case file. Make sure that it is accurate, complete, and that your papers are in order.
- ✓ Make sure you have met with your lawyer and discussed the interview.
- ✓ Be certain you know the correct date, time, and place where you are meeting your lawyer.
- ✓ The day before the interview you may want to go to the building where the interview is scheduled. This will help you know how long it will take to get there, help ensure you won't get lost, and make you more comfortable with the location.
- ✓ Arrive at least an hour before your interview is scheduled. Remember that buses and subways can slow you down. If you are working- arrange to take the whole day off. If you have children, make sure someone is available to take care of them all day.
- ✓ Come well dressed. Wear minimal jewelry.
- ✓ Use the toilet, stretch your muscles, and breathe deeply several times before the interview begins. This will help make you more comfortable and will improve your body language.

During the Interview:

Body Language:

Remember that messages are also conveyed by *nonverbal* language (e.g. tone of voice, facial expression, hand gestures, body position, and eye contact).

- ✓ Sit up straight.
- ✓ Keep your hands on your legs and away from your mouth.
- ✓ Keep both feet on the ground. Do not cross your legs.
- ✓ Look directly at the Asylum Officer. Remember to make eye contact while speaking. Eye contact is a way to show respect in the US. Explain the etiquette in your country.

Speaking:

- ✓ Tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.
- ✓ Tell your story accurately, honestly, and passionately.
- ✓ When you don't remember the answer to a question, say that you don't remember- don't try to make something up!
- ✓ Speak loudly and clearly and a little slower than usual. Using shorter sentences will make it easier for everyone to understand and if there is an interpreter this will make translation easier.
- ✓ Show respect to everyone during the interview. Refer to the Asylum Officer and your lawyer as "Sir" or "Madam".
- ✓ When the Asylum Officer asks you a question, wait until s/he finishes the entire question, and then take a deep breath before responding. This will make sure you hear the entire question and give you a little time to think before you respond.
- ✓ If you feel bad or uncomfortable, you can ask the Asylum Officer to take a break to give you a chance to calm down.
- ✓ If you make a mistake, admit it and correct it. Nobody is going to hold it against you if you make a mistake, but they will hold it against you if they think you are lying.
- ✓ Never memorize your answers. Know your facts, but memorizing will make you look rehearsed and you will not be able to handle when questions are asked out of order.
- ✓ Try not to be defensive.

Keep in Mind:

- ✓ This is your chance to tell your story. Only you know what has happened to you and you are the expert. Make sure you don't leave without telling your story.
- ✓ It's OK to show emotions.
- ✓ This is not the end. If you receive a Notice of Intent to Deny, you will have an opportunity to submit more evidence and/or disagree with the decision.
- ✓ Keep breathing!

After the Interview:

- ✓ Make sure you know if the decision will be mailed to you or if you will need to return.
- ✓ Come to the Refugee Center to discuss what happened.