



CARECEN

Central American Refugee Center

ACCOMPANIMENT PROGRAM VOLUNTEER ROLE

The Central American Refugee Center (CARECEN) is a nonprofit that has served the immigrant communities on Long Island for more than four decades through legal services, community education, social services, and advocacy. CARECEN's Rapid Response programming provides robust *pro se*/self-help representation assistance to hundreds of Long Island's recently arrived noncitizens who would otherwise be unable to secure legal assistance. We seek dedicated volunteers (no prior legal experience required!) to further assist these individuals, each of whom is in removal proceedings and appearing before the immigration court either in-person in Lower Manhattan or virtually, through our Accompaniment Program.

Overview of the Role

Approximately 70% of individuals who are in removal proceedings appear unrepresented. (There is no right to counsel at the government's expense in immigration court, as is the case in criminal court.) Immigration court is terrifying – the judge is determining whether or not to deport an individual – and is more so when appearing without an advocate.

CARECEN's Accompaniment Program partners noncitizens assisted through our Rapid Response programming with volunteers to stand alongside them at court. Judge dependent, proceedings are either in-person at one of the three immigration courts in Lower Manhattan or virtual through Webex. The volunteer will accompany the noncitizen to court or will meet the noncitizen at a third-party location, like a library, to assist them in accessing Webex. All volunteers will be trained prior to and receive continued training if desired.

Primary Duties

- Attend mandatory training prior to partnering with a participating noncitizen.
- Accompany the individual to court, either in-person or virtual.
- Advocate when permitted on behalf of the noncitizen, including answering simple questions or explaining circumstances to the judge.
- Timely report a summary of the court appearance to CARECEN.

Qualifications

- ** No prior legal experience required. **
- Spanish-, French-, and Creole-proficient speakers is strongly recommended, but not required

If you are interested in participating or learning more about CARECEN's Accompaniment Program, please visit www.carecenny.org/volunteer to sign up.