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**Church Welfare Assistance to Undocumented Aliens  
in the United States**

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**Question:** In general, can priesthood leaders give Church welfare assistance to undocumented aliens?

**Answer:** Wherever possible, priesthood leaders should render welfare assistance to undocumented aliens as they would to any member, applying welfare principles outlined in Church handbooks, including:

- The bishop is entrusted with the responsibility of using the resources of the Lord's storehouse to care for the poor and needy members of the ward. Bishops may draw on the general fast-offering fund as needed to provide short-term shelter, medical assistance, and other life-sustaining aid.
- When possible, the bishop provides members with commodities or services instead of giving them money or paying their bills. Members can then use their own money to pay other obligations. Where bishops' storehouses are not available, fast offerings may be used to buy essential commodities.
- The bishop asks those who receive assistance to provide service to the extent of their ability. (*Handbook 1, 45-47*).

In some instances, immigration laws may limit the welfare assistance that priesthood leaders can provide undocumented aliens. The general rules are described below. Priesthood leaders should call the Office of General Counsel for help in exceptional cases (*Handbook 1, 158*).

**Question:** May bishops provide fast offering assistance to undocumented aliens?

**Answer:** Generally, yes. Bishops should apply the welfare principles as outlined in Church handbooks, with the following considerations in mind:

Where possible, bishops should provide other assistance before paying rent for known undocumented aliens because paying rent or otherwise providing shelter arguably could violate immigration laws.

The Church should never provide transportation that appears to further an undocumented alien's unlawful presence in the United States. For example, bishops should not provide funds

specifically to assist undocumented aliens to move out of state or to travel to obtain illegal work. Minor or incidental transportation can be provided where needed, and bishops, home teachers, and others can offer rides to Church meetings, to the doctor, to the grocery store, or to meet other, similar needs.

The Church should not appear to employ known undocumented aliens when it provides service opportunities. Assistance may not depend on or correlate with the amount of work performed. For example, if a family receives \$100 worth of food, the bishop should not require 20 hours of labor at \$5.00 an hour. Nor should the bishop require aliens to keep time cards or records for service as if it were a job. Service in Church facilities should be combined with service in other community venues. With these cautions, bishops should continue to observe the welfare principle of providing the opportunity to work for assistance received.

**Question:** May a bishop provide employment referrals to undocumented aliens?

**Answer:** Generally, yes. Bishops may refer undocumented aliens to Church employment centers or to potential employers. Employers are responsible for determining the work eligibility of prospective employees; many employers, however, may not legally employ undocumented aliens. Bishops should not attempt to match undocumented aliens with specific jobs or encourage employers to hire ineligible workers.

**Question:** May undocumented aliens serve as Deseret Industries trainees?

**Answer:** No.

**Question:** Does the Church sponsor aliens who wish to immigrate?

**Answer:** No. Individual members may make their own determinations about whether to sponsor aliens seeking to immigrate or remain in the United States.

**Questions:** May priesthood leaders encourage undocumented aliens either to remain in the United States or return to their home countries? How may priesthood leaders assist undocumented aliens who have legal issues?

**Answer:** Priesthood leaders should never explicitly or implicitly encourage aliens to reside illegally in the United States. Priesthood leaders should encourage members concerned with their status to seek legal advice. Where practical, the bishop may refer the member to existing community legal resources (such as legal aid clinics or *pro bono* programs) that offer relevant services. The bishop may also consider ward resources as identified by the ward welfare committee. The bishop must not comment or provide advice on the merits of any legal matter, interfere with the member's representation by the member's attorney, attempt to terminate legal

representation, participate in substantive discussions with the attorney, reveal the member's confidences to the attorney, or become legally or practically aligned with one side or another in adversarial matters, such as domestic relations disputes, landlord-tenant disputes, or deportation proceedings that include criminal allegations.

**Question:** Do priesthood leaders have an obligation to ask about or report an undocumented alien's status?

**Answer:** No.

**Question:** May worthy undocumented aliens serve missions?

**Answer:** Please refer any questions about missionary service to the Missionary Department.

**Legal questions regarding the principles outlined in this document, general welfare assistance, undocumented aliens and related topics should be referred to the Church's Office of General Counsel at Church headquarters, 800-453-3860 x-2-6301**