

An immigration lawyer's tips for noncitizens

Based on a conversation with Hena Mansori, immigration unit attorney supervisor at the Cook County Public Defender's Office.

1

Recognize deportable offenses

Learn which offenses can affect your immigration status. There are two common categories of deportable offenses: aggravated felonies, which includes over 30 offenses and crimes of moral turpitude, which can be very vague.

2

Report your status

If arrested, tell your defense attorney that you are not a citizen and provide them with an accurate immigration history. Anything you tell your attorney is confidential and won't be shared with ICE.

3

Request an immigration attorney

Your defense attorney is obligated to find out the immigration consequences of any pending charges. Ask them to consult an immigration attorney, so you can get accurate advice and avoid collateral consequences.

4

Review any plea deal

Alternative sentences, such as probation, can also count as a conviction under immigration law. Talk with your lawyer about whether any deal could hurt your immigration status. Even if you are a lawful permanent resident, a criminal conviction could complicate tasks, such as traveling out of the country.

5

Know your Rights

Regardless of your immigration status, you have the same rights as anyone else in criminal court, including the right to an attorney.