

## NEW!! DETENTION VISITATION TRAINING - "Conversation with Friends

The Interfaith Coalition on Immigration (ICOM) is doing its second training program for volunteer visitors to civil immigrant detainees at the Ramsey County Detention Center. Called "Conversation with Friends," volunteer visitors do in-person visits to civil immigrant detainees held at the detention center for Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). The present visitation schedule is the second and fourth Sunday of every month, 7pm - 8pm.

### **Training Dates and times:**

Session 1 - Sunday, Sept. 18, 6:30pm - 8:30pm;

Session 2 - Sunday, Sept. 25, 6:30pm - 8:30 pm;

Sunday, Oct. 2 - Refresher training (for those trained in the first class (but who have not yet been a visitor), 6pm - 7:30pm;

Make up session for first timers, 7:30p - 9:30pm.

**Training Location:** La Conexion de las Americas

3019 Minnehaha Ave, Suite 20

Minneapolis, MN 55406

**Trainers:** Rev. Paula Bidle, Chaplain; Rev. John Guttermann, Visitation project lead for the Interfaith Coalition on Immigration

**Questions?** - see the "FAQs" below. Still have questions, reply to this email. Preregistration is NOT required (BUT, notice of your intent to attend will be helpful).

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### **FAQs:**

1. What if I am interested, but not yet sure I want to be a visitor? That's ok. There is no obligation. Attend all or part of the training, then decide.
2. Is there a background check? Yes. All who decide to be a visitor must complete a form that is submitted to the Ramsey County Sheriff for a background check.
3. Will there be an orientation at the jail? Yes. You will be expected to attend an orientation at the Ramsey County Detention Center. This will occur after your training is complete. Detention center staff conducts the orientation. During your orientation your picture will be taken for a volunteer photo identification card. Usually your volunteer ID will be given to you the first time you visit. That card is the property of the county and must be returned when you leave the visitation program.
4. I have been convicted of a crime or I have done civil disobedience: can I still be a visitor? Maybe. The jail staff makes the final decision and a number of factors will be weighed when considering your situation. A very rough rule of thumb is that if you have been convicted of a crime or been held at the jail within the last year, you are more likely to be denied permission to be a visitor. On the other hand, past convictions do not necessarily mean that you cannot be a visitor.
5. I am not religious; can I still be a visitor? Yes. There is no faith requirement or faith commitment required to either be a visitor or to be visited. Visitors are expected to respect the faith of those they are visiting.
6. I am a pastor, imam, rabbi, or counselor, do I still need to attend this training? Yes.
7. I only speak English; can I still be a visitor? Yes. Some in the core group are English only speakers (including the lead organizer). On the other hand, it helps if you can speak another language - Spanish is especially helpful and more Spanish speakers are needed. We have visited people from several countries, including Liberia, Ethiopia, Mexico, the Latin American nations, and Jordan.

8. How long have you been doing this? After a year-and-a-half of negotiation with detention center staff and the Ramsey County Sheriff, visits began on March 27, 2011, with a core group of nine volunteers.
9. What should I do before the first training class? If you have time, watch the movie, The Visitor (available at [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com) or through iTunes or at many other video outlets). The film weaves into its story an accurate portrayal of the U. S. detention and deportation system that is the too common experience of hundreds of thousands of immigrants. This 2008 'comedy /drama' won the best director at the 2009 Film Independent Spirit Awards. 105 minutes.
10. Anything else I should do before the first class? Read the attachment to this email announcement.