

Advocacy Day

Facilitator Curriculum and Guide

At a time when **more than 123 million people have been forced to flee their homes around the world**, understanding of their plight and support for their needs is diminishing in too many places.

We can make a difference.

Amid new and protracted humanitarian crises and historic levels of forced displacement, speaking out on behalf of refugees is more important than ever. During JRS/USA's Advocacy Day we will encourage policymakers to provide critical humanitarian assistance to refugees overseas and welcome refugees and asylum seekers within our own borders.

JRS/USA Advocacy Day is an event (both virtual or in person) to provide constituents with the opportunity to learn about issues facing forcibly displaced persons and to encourage members of Congress to take action on their behalf.





WELCOME

to the JRS/USA Advocacy Day *Facilitator and Curricular Guide*

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This facilitator guide can be used by educators of all stripes – high school, college, campus ministry, and others – to enhance the student’s advocacy experience such that it becomes a life-long activity. The guide would offer sample lesson plans, reflection questions, and other resources to assist faculty and staff in introducing refugees and advocacy in the curriculum they teach.

On behalf of those we serve, we sincerely thank you for advocating for the rights of the vulnerable. We look forward to forming a partnership that will help build welcoming and supportive communities in the U.S. while changing the lives of many around the world.

If you have any thoughts, comments, or questions regarding this toolkit, please contact clara.sayans@jrsusa.org or visit www.jrsusa.org/take-action.

JRS/USA Overview

Jesuit Refugee Service/USA

The Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) is an international Catholic non-governmental organization founded in 1980 as a work of the Society of Jesus. Our mission is to accompany, serve, and advocate for the rights of refugees and other forcibly displaced persons. JRS is now present in 57 or 58 countries, addressing the educational, health, social, and emergency needs of refugees and other forcibly displaced persons.

Our services are available to refugees and displaced persons regardless of their race, ethnic origin, or religious beliefs. To get you started, the following is a list capturing some of JRS's programs serving refugees and other forcibly displaced persons across the globe. Familiarize yourself with the many ways in which JRS works to make a difference. Additional information on JRS programs can be found at: www.jrsusa.org.

JRS/USA also serves forcibly displaced migrants in the U.S. through Caminar Contigo and the Detention Chaplaincy Program.

Caminar Contigo, JRS's binational program at the USA – Mexico border seeks to secure support and assistance for recently arrived asylum seekers, refugees, and immigrants immediately at the Border and in their process of integration into their receiving communities across the U.S. The Jesuit Refugee Service/USA chaplaincy programs provide pastoral and religious assistance to meet the needs of non-citizens detained by the Department of Homeland Security in five U.S. federal detention centers.

JRS/USA also advocates to defend and protect refugees at home and abroad by representing them to Congress and U.S. Government officials. JRS/USA also organizes supporters to raise awareness and advocate on refugees' behalf.

JRS believes that to journey with refugees is the most important way for us to express solidarity with them and our concern for their well-being. In a world where refugees are more than ever in need of welcome, protection, and justice, and yet are increasingly rejected, demonized, and denied their fundamental human rights, JRS offers accompaniment to refugees as a sign of hope and a way towards healing. In even the most desperate of situations, we remain with refugees to assure them that the world has not forgotten them, and that they are not alone.



The State of Global Displacement

Today, we are in the midst of one of the largest periods of global displacement since World War II. People around the world are forced to flee their homes in fear of violence, persecution, or human rights violations. It is important to remember that these refugees are diverse in their ethnicities, countries of origin, and needs. JRS aims to structure its education, psychosocial, and training programs to best support this vulnerable population in the ways that matter most. These displacement statistics from the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) highlight the experiences of refugees across the world.

REFUGEES WORLDWIDE

- More than 123 million individuals are forcibly displaced worldwide as a result of persecution, conflict, or generalized violence.
- 1 in 67 people is now forcibly displaced. This includes over 42 million refugees, 73.5 million internally displaced persons, and 8.4 million asylum seekers and 5.9 million other people in need of international protection.
- 47 million children are forcibly displaced.

INTERNALLY DISPLACED PEOPLE

- More than 73.5 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) have been uprooted from their homes because of war and violence but have not yet crossed an international border in search of shelter and safety.
- In 2024, conflict and violence triggered 20.1 million new internal displacements across 45 countries and territories.
- Natural disasters triggered another 45.8 million internal displacements in 167 countries and territories.

The State of Global Displacement

continued

OTHER PEOPLE IN NEED OF INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION

- People who are outside their country or territory of origin, typically because they have been forcibly displaced across international borders, who have not been reported under other categories but who likely need international protection including protection against forced return, as well as access to basic services on a temporary or longer-term basis.

ORIGIN AND LOCATION OF REFUGEES

- The largest number of refugees are from Afghanistan (5.8 million), Syria (6 million), followed by Venezuela (5.9 million), and Ukraine (over 5 million).
- The countries hosting the largest number of refugees are: The Islamic Republic of Iran (3.5 million), Turkey (2.9 million), Colombia (2.8 million), and Germany (2.7 million).
- The majority (67% of people fleeing conflict remained near their country of origin, often residing in a neighboring country. Many of these are low-income countries which continue to host a disproportionately large share of the world's displaced people, both in terms of their population size and the resources available to them. In fact, these nations represent

LIVING CONDITIONS OF REFUGEES

- Refugees live in widely varying conditions, from well-established camps and centers to makeshift shelters or living in the open.
- More than half of all refugees live in urban areas.
- They all await one of three possible solutions:
 - repatriation to their country of origin
 - integration in their host country
 - resettlement in a third country

For more information, please [download the ON THE MOVE Guidebook](#)

How to prepare for JRS/USA Advocacy Day

JRS/USA will schedule meetings with your members of Congress, prepare materials on policy issues to be discussed, and host a webinar a week before Advocacy Day to review the issues in detail, discuss logistics, and answer any questions.

Here is a timeline to help you prepare outside of your regular program meetings:

Late March – Deadline to RSVP. We will use your home address to determine your Congressional delegation, place you in groups, and schedule your meetings.

Early April – Talking points and Congressional bios will be shared with participants and JRS/USA will host a training webinar for participants to review all materials (webinar details will be sent directly to participants).

Shortly Before Advocacy Day – Final meeting schedules will be shared with participants.

Advocacy Day! – On Advocacy Day, you can anticipate having approximately 3-5 meetings with Congressional offices throughout the day, between the hours of 10am-5pm ET.

*Please contact **Clara Sayans** at clara.sayans@jrsusa.org, or your program leader if you have any questions.*

Other ways to start getting ready

- Register for [JRS/USA Action Alerts](#)
- Read our [latest statements](#)
- Read about past [Advocacy Day events](#)
- Invite a JRS speaker to your institution
- Invite a speaker from a local refugee or migrant serving organization
- Organize a simulation exercise, [get ON THE MOVE](#)

Curricular Approaches to Facilitate Advocacy Day

Sample lesson plans for high school students

Using Our Voices:

A JRS Advocacy Day Plug and Prelection for High School Students

5 one-hour meetings, 1 two-hour meeting

Participants

15-20 max plus group leader

Materials

- sample leave-behinds. [See 2024 materials.](#)
- JRS Simulation and set up. [Access ON THE MOVE](#)

Content

Day 1: The Voice of the Migrants

- Basic Terms (Migrant, Refugee, Asylum, Resettlement) - [Guidebook](#)
- Physical Artifact “Show and Tell” (Refugee-made good)

Materials used in the border crossings)

- Written narrative of a migrant journey – [INSIDER stories from JRS/USA](#)
- [Interviews with migrant voices](#)

Discussion: Who is making the journey? Why are they leaving their homes?

Day 2-3: [ON THE MOVE](#) - “Journey into Exile” Simulation

Day 2: The Voice of JRS

- Narrative history of JRS
- Video of JRS ministries in the field
- Webquest / Scavenger Hunt / Tour of JRS website

Discussion: How does JRS try to help? How is it aligned with Jesuit values?

Curricular Approaches to Facilitate Advocacy Day

Day 3: The Voice from the Hill

- Data visualization of key migration/refugee stats – UNHCR Global Trends [report/ video](#)
- Newspaper article on a recent piece of proposed legislation on immigration
- Video clip of political actors ways of speaking about migrants and refugees
- Brief summary of JRS' current legislative priorities – [Action Alerts](#) and [Statements](#)

Discussion: What kind of legislation would be most helpful to migrants? What are the obstacles to getting it passed?

Day 4: Finding Your Voice

- Advocacy Day presentation from JRS staff
- Q&A with JRS staff
- Student testimonials from previous participants – [2024 Advocacy Day Wrap-up story](#)
- Story of a “successful” Advocacy Day legislative effect
- Sign-Up demonstration

Day 5: Using Your Voice

- Hill Staffer presentation on meeting expectations and tips for effectiveness (Tips for both live and Zoom)
- Role play exercise of an Advocacy Day meeting
- Writing a sample advocacy letter/Demonstration of JRS e-mail action system

Discussion: What's important to know about migrants and refugees and why? How well does advocacy for migrants fit the mission and culture of our school?

Curricular Approaches to Facilitate Advocacy Day

Sample lesson plans for college/university students

Resources

- Talking Points document and Congressional bios received via email from JRS/USA. ([See 2024 Talking points](#))
- Advocacy Day Partner Packet and Advocacy Day Flyer ([See 2024 Partner Packet](#))
- Students' own research
- Shared document for students to add their work

Preparation

- **Assign roles (2 students each)**
 - Background of Congressperson / Introduction speakers (students who are particularly good at facilitating groups)
 - Issue #1 research / Issue speaker (typically Asylum) (students who are interested in this topic)
 - Issue #2 research / Issue speaker (typically Funding) (students who are interested in this topic)
 - Issue #3 research / Issue speaker (changes from year to year) (students who are interested in this topic)
 - Advocacy effort conclusion / Conclusion speakers (students who are particularly good at extemporaneous speaking)
 - Social media research / Social media wranglers (students who particularly good at social media)
- **Guidance to students**
 - Exchange Whatsapp or other platform contact information with your partner(s)
 - Regardless of your role, in addition to the JRS-provided materials, do your own research and practice your pitch so you're confident in the issues (use the JRS script as a guide)
 - Draw on your own history or that of someone you know. How do these topics connect to your life?
 - Make your contributions to the shared document well in advance so others can make use of your work

Curricular Approaches to Facilitate Advocacy Day

- **Hold a minimum of three class sessions as preparation**
 - One working session for partnered students to get to know each other and their work
 - One working session sharing their work with each other
 - One working session as a rehearsal for whole group; could involve legislator role play
 - Students could also prepare their own guide as a graded assignment
 - Class project: research and recommend issue advocacy actions



Curricular Approaches to Facilitate Advocacy Day

Advocacy Day meeting template

12 students per meeting as assigned below; In a class of 24 students with four scheduled meetings, for example, each group of 12 can be responsible for two meetings.

- **Introduction: 10 minutes (2 students tag team)**

- Self-introductions: Note whether you are a constituent, your professional title or school name; Mention any personal connection to the Senator/Representative; Share a brief personal story about why this work is important to you, including whether you have worked with refugees in the U.S. or visited humanitarian programs overseas

- **Issue speakers (3): 5 minutes per issue (2 students tag team per issue)**

- Use the talking points as a guideline (try not to read it verbatim!), a personal story is a way to bring the talking points to life!
- Try to have a conversation and develop a relationship with the office/staff person, this can include asking them questions
- You do not need to be an expert on these issues or know every answer
- Be sure to make specific asks, as outlined in the talking points

- **Conclusion speakers: 5 minutes (2 students tag team)**

- Use the talking points as a guideline (try not to read it verbatim!), a personal story is a way to bring the talking points to life!
- Pull in examples from the Issue speakers to connect the conclusion to the content already presented
- Try to have a conversation and develop a relationship with the office/staff person, this can include asking them questions
- You do not need to be an expert on these issues or know every answer
- Be sure to make specific asks, as outlined in the talking points

- **Social media managers (2 students tag team): During the meeting, share 3 updates & photos; After the meeting, share 1 thank you**

- Post to social media tagging @jrsusa, #JRSAdvocates, School tags, or others relevant to the issue or organization

Curricular Approaches to Facilitate Advocacy Day

After the meeting

- **Hold two or more class sessions as follow-up**
 - One reflection session using questions in this facilitator guide
 - One working session to complete the assigned projects
- **Form groups of six students (one student from each role)**
 - Complete the feedback form together
 - Create a visual (e.g. infographic, flyer, poster, etc.) to educate others about their experience or plan a teach-in to do the same
 - Thank you letters (email, giant greeting card, etc.) with personal stories, take-aways and follow-up actions they've taken on or haven't taken on
 - Meetings with university administrators to advance the support of refugee/migrant issues

Additional session to implement the assigned project (e.g. posting of visuals around campus, poster session, teach-in, postcard writing session, etc.)--an action to go beyond the Advocacy Day meeting.



Extra-Curricular Approaches to Facilitate Advocacy Day

Sample lesson plans for co-/extra-curricular programming in HS and college/university (e.g. social justice, community engagement, Campus Ministry)

Immigrant and Refugee Action Program

Participants

15 max plus group leaders (three groups of 6-7 with leaders)

Materials

- sample leave-behinds. [See 2024 materials.](#)
- JRS Simulation and set up.
 - [Access ON THE MOVE.](#)
- Leadership meetings (outside large group meetings).

Advocacy Leader (3) Roles

Work with teams to do in-depth research on topics, create one pagers/leave behinds on topics (using JRS's is an option), and organize pitches. Delegate and ensure work is being done. Research who you're meeting with and schedule meetings, if not done by JRS Staff.

Program Leader Role

Remind students of pre-meetings, ensure JRS has all the information they need, and run meetings.

Content

Opening Prayers can be [found here](#) if desired and feel free to use the [Examen to Accompany Refugees](#)

- **Meeting 1:** Groups and Group Leaders provided (for research and advocacy on the three topics), Overview of the program, an Intro to JRS, and the larger issues with JRS Staff.

Extra-Curricular Approaches to Facilitate Advocacy Day

Meeting 2: [Advocacy 101](#) (nuts and bolts, a few program-specific pieces too, they do advocacy planning outside of meetings on their own with group leaders)

- [Basic Template](#) for first-timers

Meeting 3: What is [Catholic Social Teaching](#) Presentation, ask students at the end how their topics fit into Catholic Social Teaching for a more in-depth understanding of the topics and teaching. Discuss as a group

Meeting 4: Start with “[Home](#)” Poem

- Personal stories or videos of personal stories/films.
- Feel free to use all the resources recommended at the end of this guide.

Meeting 5: ‘ON THE MOVE’ towards Advocacy Day

- [Simulation from JRS](#)

Meeting 6: (2 hours, possibly over dinner): [Advocacy Day Training](#) (students have their topics down and run through them with folks pretending to be elected officials from political parties. You may consider inviting state, local or retired legislators.

Advocacy Day

On-Campus Action/Call in Day in a campus central space

- Action Alerts from JRS and phone scripts
- Sign up sheet of volunteers



Sample Activities for Post-Advocacy Day Programming

- Reflection and Accompaniment Conversation
 - [2024 Reflection Guide](#)
- Organize a club or join a preexisting one to continue the work.
 - [See the JRS Action Team toolkit.](#)
- Teach-in on campus or school-wide assembly.
 - [Find in this link different ways to engage your community.](#)
- Campus advocacy day table to call and sign action alerts by groups.
 - [Sign up for JRS Action Alerts to be updated.](#)
- Infographic, poster or flier on the experience to post around campus or for a poster session, teach-in, etc.
- Art exhibit or art creation.
- Host a non-violent demonstration on campus.
 - See the [JRS Circle of Silence](#) initiative.
- Host a vigil on campus for people who have died during their journey.
- Volunteering or service-learning in the community



Resource Bank

Access to Asylum at the U.S. Southern Border

- [**STORY**](#)
- [**The Jesuit Border Podcast**](#) seeks to highlight the work that the Catholic Church and others are doing to address the needs of migrants along the U.S.-Mexico border.
- [**Living on the Line: Voices from the Border**](#) or [**Asylum**](#) by Edafe Okporo
- Except Readings from [**Voices of the Border: Testimonies of Migration, Deportation, and Asylum**](#), Tobin Hansen and María Engracia Robles Robles, ME, Editors

Humanitarian Assistance Funding

- [**STORY**](#)
- [**Fact Sheet PRM**](#)
- [**Those We Throw Away Are Diamonds**](#) by Mondian Dogon
 - A stunning and heartbreaking lens on the global refugee crisis, from a man who faced the very worst of humanity and survived to advocate for displaced people around the world
- [**When Stars Are Scattered**](#) By Victoria Jamieson and Omar Mohamed
 - Omar and his younger brother, Hassan, have spent their lives in a refugee camp in Kenya, waiting for better opportunities. Omar's desire to attend school brings hope and a chance to change their future, but it also means leaving his brother, the only family member he has left every day.

Additional issues impacting refugees

- [**STORY**](#)
- [**The Beautiful Things That Heaven Bears**](#) by Dinaw Mengestu Sepha Stephanos
 - A former Ethiopian Revolution refugee, now runs a struggling grocery store in Washington, D.C., with fellow African immigrants.
- [**"At 14, I Walked Through the Desert"**](#) by Soledad Castillo (via The Guardian) - First-person account of a woman who traveled from Honduras to the United States as an undocumented migrant.
- [**"Which Way Home"**](#) (film) - A group of young, unaccompanied Central American children struggle to make their way through Mexico, in order to ultimately reach the United States and jump the border to a new home.
- [**La jaula de oro**](#) (film): tracks 3 teens on their journey to the US from Guatemala
- [**The Infiltrators**](#) (film): A rag-tag group of undocumented youth, Dreamers, deliberately get detained by Border Patrol in order to infiltrate a for-profit detention center.
- [**From War to Welcome**](#): An overview of JRS services in Poland supporting refugees fleeing Ukraine

Resource Bank

UN HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES (UNHCR)

UNHCR is the UN Refugee Agency. It is a global organization dedicated to saving lives, protecting rights, and building a better future for refugees, forcibly displaced communities, and stateless people. It works to ensure that the rights of refugees, migrants, and asylum-seekers are upheld. Additionally, UNHCR collects updated research on the global state of refugees and publishes an annual Global Trends Report, which serves as a resource to the public. www.unhcr.org

REFUGEE COUNCIL USA (RCUSA)

RCUSA, a coalition of 25 U.S.-based non-governmental organizations, is dedicated to refugee protection, welcome, and excellence in the U.S. refugee resettlement program. RCUSA advocates for the rights of refugees in the U.S and around the world. www.rcusa.org

CENTER FOR MIGRATION STUDIES OF NEW YORK (CMS)

CMS is a think tank and an educational institute devoted to the study of international migration, to the promotion of understanding between immigrants and receiving communities, and to public policies that safeguard the dignity and rights of migrants, refugees, and newcomers. CMS publishes timely and evidence-based research on refugees, migration, and the role of Catholic institutions in immigrant integration. cmsny.org

INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT MONITORING CENTER (IDMC)

IDMC is a research organization dedicated to producing expert analysis on internal displacement. Its mission is to provide high-quality data, analysis, and expertise on internal displacement with the aim of informing policy and operational decisions that can reduce the risk of future displacement and improve the lives of internally displaced persons (IDPs) worldwide. The IDMC provides a Global Internal Displacement Database and publishes reports on the drivers of internal displacement across the world. www.internal-displacement.org

Tips and Tricks

For being a good facilitator

Registrations start two and a half months before the event. If you register as a group leader, you will receive a registration form for your group. Three weeks before the event you will need to send the form to JRS/USA, and two weeks before, attend the training for group leaders. At that time, talking points and other materials will be available.

- Contact JRS to organize a group (virtual or in person).
- Attend JRS training for group leaders and mobilize your group to attend the training for advocates.
- Prepare the talking points:
 - Standard issues: protect access to asylum, humanitarian assistance funding
 - Third issue: it depends on bills in Congress each year, e.g. 2024 was climate change
- Book a room for the meetings
- Choose a platform for the meetings; it's best to have one link for all meetings
- Designating two people to share speaking roles on each issue helps everyone engage and creates an informed 'backup' in case one person doesn't show up
- Designate someone to record notes on the exchange / communicate takeaways with JRS
- Know all of the parts yourself so you can jump in when needed or if someone no-shows/stumbles on topics.

For advertising the event

- Create a flier with details and contact information using the partner packet provided by JRS/USA.
- Visit/reach out to classes and instructors
- Reach out to appropriate student clubs
- Ask campus ministry/community engagement departments (centers, international studies, political science, public affairs, migration/refugee/humanitarian assistance/human development majors or minors), debate/public speaking/young democrats/republicans, for names of recommended students (look at course catalog or organizational structure for departments/centers/majors/minors for possible alignments)

Tips and Tricks

- Post on social media platforms (*before during and after the day*) using the partner packet provided by JRS/USA.
- Add to newsletters the partner packet provided by JRS/USA.
- Have students make a fun TikTok or Instagram Reel about their meetings and the topics at hand

For after the event

- Complete a Feedback Google Form. The link will be included in Talking Points
- Send a thank you email to the Congressional office
- Include Leave Behind information. The link will be included with final meeting schedule.
- Reflection and Accompaniment Conversation – [2024 Reflection Guide](#)
- Organize a club or join a preexisting one to continue the work. [See the JRS Action Team toolkit.](#)
- Teach-in on campus or school-wide assembly. [Find in this link different ways to engage your community.](#)
- Campus advocacy day table to call and sign action alerts by groups. [Sign up for JRS Action Alerts to be updated.](#)

Reflection Question Bank

Pre-Advocacy Day

- Research and focus on the Representative's or Senator's positions, identity and/or affiliations, even though most likely you will be meeting with staffers.
- How do values and strategy conflict at times? Is there a correct answer to which path to take?
- What is the difference between charity and justice? Where does advocacy fall? Is one more important than the other?
- Why does voting matter?

Advocacy Day

- How will these policies make an impact on people's lives?

Post-Advocacy Day

- What was the most challenging part of advocacy day?
- What was the most fulfilling part of advocacy day?
- What use is the advocacy you did without follow up? What does follow up look like?
- What still needs done? Who will do it?

Credits

This document was created collaboratively with Jesuit Refugee Services, high school, and university faculty and staff.

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Jesuit Refugee Service is an international Catholic organization serving refugees and other forcibly displaced people. Founded as a work of the Society of Jesus (Jesuits) in 1980, in direct response to the humanitarian crisis of the Vietnamese boat people, JRS today works in more than 50 countries worldwide to meet the educational, health, and social needs of more than one million refugees every year.

JRS/USA is the U.S. office for JRS based in Washington, DC. JRS/USA provides support to the broader JRS network - through funding, oversight, monitoring, and evaluation - to JRS projects and programming throughout the world. JRS/USA also serves forcibly displaced migrants in the U.S. through our Detention Chaplaincy Program.

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