



**University of the District of Columbia
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Immigration and Human Rights Clinic
Asylum Office Interview Preparation Guide:¹**

Below is a script for the asylum office to follow/adapt to prepare a client for an affirmative asylum interview.

- Date:
- Time:
- My name is Officer
- Language
 - o InterpreterExplain telephonic monitoring if applicable or use of a telephonic interpreter
- How are you feeling today?
 - o *Attorney: Let client know it's OK to share if they are nervous, anxious, feeling sick, or didn't sleep well.*
- Purpose of the interview is for me to understand why you are seeking asylum, give me an opportunity to gather evidence to support your claim.
- I'll be taking notes, those will be confidential, too.
- All of the evidence will be carefully considered to make a decision on your case.
- You have representatives here today, do you want them to represent you in your interview?
- Oath – do you understand? Telling the truth is very important and the consequences can be serious if you do not tell the truth during this interview. Stand and raise your right hand, swear to tell the truth, whole truth, and nothing but the truth during the interview today. We will sign a form at the end of the interview about this oath.
 - o Swear in interpreter if applicable.

The interview will proceed in three parts:

1. Review an application and make sure it is complete and true
2. Understand why you applied for asylum
3. I'll explain what happens next. There will be no decisions today. That's a normal part of the process.

I will be asking a lot of questions and it's very important for us to understand each other.

¹ Updated on 10/21/20 after remote COVID interview.

- You can say, I don't remember, or I don't know.
- It is OK to estimate
- Sometimes things are difficult to talk about, so if you need a break, let me know.
- It's important that we focus the interview, it could take days, weeks to talk about your life.
- I am going to use a hand motion to ask you to stop, I'm not trying to be rude.
- I will give you an opportunity to add anything important at the end. And your attorney will also have a chance to give a statement or ask you some clarifying questions.
- Do you have any medical issues or health concerns that affect your ability to speak to me today?
- Are you comfortable proceeding with the interview?

- Did anyone help you prepare your application?

- Who prepared your written statement?

- Have you reviewed everything in your file? Is it all true and complete?

- Review the form... in detail...
 - Verify every page and box, for the most part.
 - Employment – have you worked at all since coming to the U.S.?
 - *Attorney: Prepare your client to answer honestly and explain why they worked without authorization, if they had to.*

- Review the changes and sign with # of changes indicated [at the end of the interview during COVID]

- How did you meet your attorney?

- In a moment, we will discuss why you've applied for asylum. We may not be able to discuss everything in your app. I know you have a lot to tell me, but we have a limited amount of time to discuss your eligibility for asylum. At the end, you'll have a chance to discuss anything we haven't talked about today

Client Specific:

- Can you share why you cannot return to your home country?
- When did you first start having problems?
- What happened next?
- *Ask about family members, colleagues, etc, remaining in country, as relevant

- *Ask about attempts to seek protection elsewhere
- *Ask about how left the country – avoiding detention/surveillance/persecutor's knowledge?
- *Ask about attempts to report to police/government in home country?
- *Ask about attempts to live elsewhere? Why not safe?
- *Ask about threats received since leaving home country?

Is there anything else you would like to discuss?

Mandatory Bar Questions:

Attorney: You should prepare the applicant and all derivatives to answer these questions. Sometimes the AOs will ask derivatives the questions together, sometimes separately. Sometimes at the beginning and sometimes at the end of the interview.

I have to ask these questions for everyone.

- Have you traveled outside the U.S. since you came here?
- Where have you traveled outside the U.S. before you came here?
- Have you ever received or offered a permanent offer of refugee status or permanent residence in any other country?
 - Ask about specific immigration statuses that you had in other countries?
- Have you ever harmed anyone?
- Have you ever been arrested?
- Have you ever committed any crimes in any country?
- Have you ever been charged with a crime in any country?
- Have you ever been convicted of a crime in any country?
- Have you ever served in the military, police, or other law enforcement organization?
- Have you ever been a member of a terrorist organization?
- Terrorist activities may include using a firearm or explosives or other weapons, hijacking, kidnapping, or assassination.
 - Have you ever helped anyone to do any of these things?
 - Have you ever encouraged anyone to these things?
 - Have you ever attempted or planned to do these things?
 - Have you ever been accused of doing any of these things?
- Have you ever harmed or helped to harm another person for any reason?
- Have you ever supported a group that advocated violent means to overthrow a government?
 - Have you ever provided money, food, housing, or other support to a person or group involved in terrorist activities?

- Have you ever recruited members or raised money for a person or group involved in terrorist activities?
 - Have you ever received any military or weapons type training?
- Do you have any plans to engage in any illegal activities here in the United States?

Do you have anything else to add about why you are afraid to go back to your home country?

Have you understood all my questions today?

[Advise about decision –pick up in vs. **mail out [during the pandemic, only option is mail out]**.
Referral to court rather than “denial.”]