

Know Your Rights: CBP Home

Disclaimer: This resource provides general information. It is not legal advice specific to your situation. We recommend that community members exercise caution and speak to an immigration lawyer about their individual cases.

What is Project Homecoming?

President Trump's [Project Homecoming](#) pressures immigrants to "self-deport" using the *CBP Home* mobile application. The government is promoting *CBP Home* in their videos, press statements, and speeches, saying it is a safer way to leave the U.S.

The program promises immigrants \$1000 after they leave, plus help with the cost of airfare if they use the new CBP Home app to leave.

Warning! Not all immigrants without status qualify to use this program. It is a good idea to talk to an immigration lawyer about the risks of using CBP Home for your situation.

Note: You can still leave the U.S. without using CBP Home. There is no legal requirement to use CBP Home to leave the country. If you leave without using CBP Home, the government will still make a record of your departure.

Is it safe to use CBP Home app?

We don't exactly know. The government only gives general statements about what happens when an immigrant starts the CBP Home process. We do not know how many immigrants have successfully used CBP Home to leave or how many immigrants have tried to use the program but weren't allowed to because they were ineligible.

CBP Home also requires immigrants to register under Trump's "alien registration" requirement. This registration process is not without some risks ([you can read about that process here](#)).

For this reason, we don't have enough information to say for sure if it's safe to use CBP Home. We can say for sure that not everyone who is in the country without immigration status is eligible to use CBP Home.

Who can use CBP Home?

The government's list of [Frequently Asked Questions](#) say these are the people who can use CBP Home:

- 1) If you do not have a criminal record **and** you were previously stopped or turned yourself into immigration authorities like Border Patrol (BP). -OR-
- 2) If you were given parole to enter the country or Temporary Protective Status (TPS).

It also seems that when an immigrant uses CBP Home, their information needs to [match](#) information already in the government's system. This likely means that someone who has never been stopped by immigration officials or sent an application to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) may not be eligible. CBP Home also requires immigrants to complete the “[alien registration](#)” requirement, and it may be that this registration process gives the government the record needed to complete the CBP Home process. As part of the “alien registration” process, you will have to provide your fingerprints to the government at a USCIS biometrics (fingerprint) appointment.

Can I return to the U.S. legally if I use CBP Home?

Probably not, or not for a long time. If you do not qualify to return to the U.S. when you leave, you will not be able to come back legally, even if you use CBP Home. The CBP Home app does not give you special protection or a right to return. The government has not been taken the time to explain this point in their push to get immigrants to sign-up.

If you want to come back to the U.S., you will have to get a visa. You may be able to get a visa:

- if you have an eligible relative that lives in the U.S.,
- if a business sponsors your visa to work in the U.S. or
- by applying for a tourist visa or other temporary visa.

Even if you have an eligible relative or company willing to sponsor you, it still will be hard for you to get a visa. If you use CBP Home, you likely will not be able to return to the U.S. legally for many years. Using CBP Home means you admit that you do not have legal status, and this will make it hard to be approved to return. Remember also that certain criminal convictions, even low-level crimes, could be used by the U.S. government to deny you a visa.

Some immigrants might have the option to request to return to the U.S. through our refugee system. However, this is a very complicated and low chance process. Part of the reason is that the Trump administration does not want new refugees to come to the U.S. and is cutting off the funding to the refugee program.

What to expect if you leave the U.S., then want to return

If you were in the U.S. as an adult (over 18-years old) without lawful status for **6 months to 364 days**, you cannot get a new visa until you wait outside the U.S. for **3 years**.*

If you were in the U.S. as an adult without status for **1 year or longer**, you cannot get a visa until you wait **10 years outside the U.S.***

* You may be able to return sooner, if you qualify for a waiver.

Special situations for immigrants currently in immigration court

If the government gives you a deportation order and you leave after living in the U.S. for 1 year or longer, **then return to the U.S. without a visa**, you can **never** get a new visa. (In some cases, you may be able to ask for this punishment to be forgiven, but first you must stay outside the U.S. for **10 years**.)

If you leave the U.S. and miss an immigration court hearing without a good reason, you cannot get a visa to return until **5 years** after you leave the U.S. Using CBP Home may not be counted as a “good reason” for missing your hearing. In these cases, you may need to ask that your court case be closed **before** you leave.

If you do not show up for an immigration court hearing, the Immigration Judge can order that you receive a deportation order (this is called an “*in absentia*” order of removal). In this case, missing the hearing and getting the deportation order means an immigrant cannot return until 10-years have passed.

For more information in English and Spanish about the laws that may make it harder for someone to return to the U.S., please see this National Immigration Project [community explainer](#).

Will the CBP Home app help me buy an airplane ticket and get a passport (or other travel documents)?

It depends. If you qualify to use CBP Home to leave, you can ask the government to help you pay for a plane ticket. It seems that the government has done this for many people using commercial and charter flights. But if you do **not** already have a passport, you may not qualify to use CBP Home or the process may take a very long time to hear back from the government representatives.

Will they really send me the \$1000 bonus after I leave?

Probably, if you complete all the steps. When you use CBP Home, you will have to let the government locate you using your cell phone. That's how they confirm you are outside the U.S. if you [leave by land](#). If you leave by plane or boat, CBP will confirm your departure. The government will send you a letter with the payment details after the government confirms you are outside of the U.S. We believe these payments are now all wire transfers.

If I am in detention, can I get the \$1000 bonus if I leave?

The government is offering immigrants in detention the \$1000 bonus if they agree to “voluntary departure,” instead of fighting their deportation cases. By doing this, they avoid getting a deportation order on their record. This could make it easier for them to return to the U.S. in the future (but does not change any of the waiting times for being in the country without permission). The government may also help pay for the flight home.

What if I have unpaid immigration fines?

If you use CBP Home to leave the country, the government says they will cancel any fines you received for not leaving the U.S. after a deportation order. But they may not cancel other fines, such as fines for not registering under the “[Alien Registration](#)” program. So, this benefit is only for people with deportation orders (or voluntary departure orders that they did not follow).

If I use the CBP Home app, can I be arrested before leaving the U.S.?

Yes. The government says that CBP Home users are a lower priority for arrest. But they do **not** promise that you won't be arrested, and with more funding and staff, it may be easier for the authorities to arrest you.

If you use the CBP Home app, the government gives your information to Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). ICE then reviews your information for any safety or security concerns. This means there is a risk of arrest before you leave the country, especially if you have [a criminal history](#). ICE looks for people with arrest warrants, who overstayed a visa, have a deportation order, or whose immigration applications were denied.

In at least one community example, CBP stopped an immigrant at the airport before boarding their flight to their home country. They were only allowed to board their flight after showing proof that they

were enrolled in CBP Home. This suggests that CBP may have considered arresting the passenger, even though they were already leaving, but stopped when they saw they had enrolled in CBP Home.

Conclusion

Under the Trump administration, immigrants and their loved ones are facing relentless pressure to leave the U.S. While CBP Home is presented as a safer alternative than leaving on their own, it is not available to everyone in the U.S. without immigration status. Community members should proceed with caution and are encouraged to speak with an immigration attorney about their individual situations.