

8 Tips for a Successful Asylum Interview

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If you have come to the US seeking protection from persecution in your home country based on race, religion, nationality, membership in a social group, or your political opinion, then you may be eligible to apply for asylum. If you are granted asylum, you, your spouse, and your children will be allowed to remain in the United States permanently—but achieving asylum is not an easy process.

You must submit an extremely detailed application in order to prove that you have already been the victim of persecution, or you have reasonable fear that you will face persecution in the future based on one of the aforementioned reasons. If you are submitting an “affirmative” application (meaning you have not been arrested or placed in removal proceedings), then you will also have to participate in an interview with an Asylum Officer (AO) where he or she will test your credibility and the details of your application.

This meeting is integral to your chances of being granted asylum, and you will probably only have one shot at it, so it is vital that you do everything you can to ensure you have a successful interview. Below we have detailed eight useful tips to help you prepare and successfully handle your asylum interview.

1) Practice makes perfect - Your asylum application will include as much information as possible that could help prove that you are in danger of persecution, and you will need to know every detail of your application top to bottom. You may be asked questions like “What happened on [this date]?” and you will need to know the answer and be able to explain. Prepare as much as you possibly can by reviewing your application and actually sitting down and practicing potential questions that the AO could ask. If you are going to utilize an interpreter, practice with him or her ahead of time as well.

2) Make travel arrangements - You cannot afford to be late or miss your interview. Visit the location of your interview ahead of time so you know exactly where

it is located, make sure you have concrete travel arrangements, and leave early on the day of the interview.

3) Prepare physically and emotionally - The interview is both physically and emotionally exhausting. Get plenty of sleep the night before, eat a good meal the day of, and make sure you are prepared to recount extensive details of potentially embarrassing, difficult, or traumatic events in your life.

4) Wear appropriate clothes - Wear clean and neat clothing that will easily allow you to show any scars or physical signs of persecution that may be relevant to your asylum application.

5) Correct mistakes - If you discover that there are inconsistencies, mistakes, or neglected details in your application, share those with the AO at the start of the interview and explain them if necessary. These flaws could cause the AO to question your credibility, so you need to clarify them right away.

6) Be honest, detailed, and consistent - Do not hold anything back. Tell the truth of your situation, include every detail you can possibly recall, and make sure your story is consistent with the details you included in your application.

7) Don't be afraid to cry - AO's understand that most asylum applicants have been through traumatic and terrifying situations that often involve a great deal of emotion. It is okay to cry and show emotion during your asylum interview.

8) Utilize an attorney - An experienced immigration attorney like those at Rotella & Hernandez can help you effectively prepare for and execute the asylum interview. Hiring an attorney gives you the best possible chance for a successful asylum application. If you are seeking asylum in the United States, please do not hesitate to give us a call today.

Patricia Hernandez is a founding partner of Rotella & Hernandez, LLC, a full service immigration and family law firm. Ms. Hernandez focuses her practice exclusive to the area of U.S. Immigration and Nationality Law. Ms. Hernandez's life calling is to help immigrants. To that effect, she has represented countless immigrants from all over the world in seeking asylum, in Immigration Court proceedings, in applications for residency and citizenship and in family based petitions including same-sex marriage and fiancé petitions. Ms. Hernandez can be reached at 786.571.8472.