

The Safety & Fairness for Everyone (SAFE) Network

WHAT IS SAFE?

The [Safety & Fairness for Everyone \(SAFE\) Network](#) is a unique collaboration among governments, immigration legal service providers, and advocates working together to build and implement universal representation programs at the local and state level. SAFE programs were launched to counter the fundamental and urgent injustices facing immigrants in the nation's immigration enforcement system and are grounded in the belief that every person facing deportation should be entitled to high-quality legal representation regardless of income, race, national origin, or history with the criminal legal system.

SAFE utilizes a four-pronged approach for expanding justice and fairness for immigrant communities:

- **Build a critical mass of publicly funded programs at the local and state level** that drive momentum for federal change and build the infrastructure needed to implement universal representation at scale;
- **Generate evidence and proof points** of the transformative impact, feasibility, and political will in support of universal representation;
- **Create narrative change and develop public champions** in support of universal representation; and
- **Support community-led advocacy and campaigns** to build momentum for universal representation and advance systemic change.

SAFE's goal is to leverage leadership and evidence at local and state levels to drive federal change through [Fairness to Freedom](#) - a campaign co-led with the National Partnership for New Americans to pass legislation that would establish a universal right to federally funded legal representation for anyone facing deportation who can't afford it.

SAFE began in 2017 with 12 member sites and has since grown to 25 member sites. In that time, Vera supported members by providing in-depth financial, administrative, and research resources to support the launch, growth, and sustainability of universal representation programs.

Safety and Fairness for Everyone (SAFE) Network Partners

Alameda Co., CA
Long Beach, CA
Oakland, CA
Sacramento, CA
San Francisco, CA
Santa Ana, CA
Connecticut Coalition for Immigration Representation
Denver, CO
Atlanta, GA
Chicago, IL
Cook Co., IL
Baltimore, MD
Prince George's Co., MD
Ramsey Co., MN
St. Paul, MN
Nevada - PLAN & UNLV
Columbus, OH
Philadelphia, PA
Austin, TX
Bexar Co., TX
Dallas, TX
Harris Co., TX
San Antonio, TX
Dane Co., WI
Madison, WI



THE PATH FORWARD

Now with growth in the field to more than 55 jurisdictions, including 10 states, that currently publicly fund deportation defense across the country, SAFE is evolving our membership model to expand our membership more robustly to better harness the momentum and collective expertise of this powerful group of local and state programs. With an expanded membership, SAFE is working on deepening and diversifying our Network's existing technical assistance, research and data support, and advocacy support with the goal of being responsive to your needs; supporting the growth and expansion of strong, sustainable, and values-driven programs; and better uniting local and state programs and leveraging them for federal change.

It is more important than ever to elevate a coordinated movement of local and state programs that demonstrate meaningful and effective policies that promote dignity, safety, and due process for immigrants and our communities. **We hope that you will join us. [Apply here!](#)**

Benefits of SAFE Network Membership

- **Access to SAFE Network programming.** Join us for regular general Network programming and specialized cohorts and leadership groups addressing program design and implementation, advocacy, communications, and research. (*New Calendar kicking off in 2024.*)
- **Access to members-only peer listservs and resource library** for law practitioners, community organizations, and government supporters that houses materials and trainings on technical legal issues, zealous and person-centered lawyering, policy and budget campaigns, race equity, and immigrants' rights advocacy.
- **Research and data empowerment tools:**
 - SAFE database and regular reporting, if desirable;
 - customized data reporting tools and templates (*forthcoming in 2024*); and
 - data-driven site profiles describing local immigration trends.
- **Strategic advocacy, communications, and campaign support**, including access to talking points, storytelling opportunities, and lobbying support.
- **In-depth onboarding call and Vera point of contact for strategy support and implementation guidance.**
- **Inclusion in the [Fairness to Freedom](#) coalition.** Get involved with our campaign, co-led by the National Partnership for New Americans (NPNA), calling on Congress to pass legislation that establishes a universal right to federally funded legal representation for anyone facing deportation. (Endorse the campaign [here!](#))
- **Connection with a national network of allies** working toward shared goals to share best practices and expertise with, learn from, and trouble shoot with.

Membership Requirements

- **Participation in a publicly funded deportation defense program as a government partner, legal services provider, or advocacy partner** and a commitment to supporting, growing, and sustaining that program.
- **Commitment to the principle and vision of universal representation**—that everyone deserves due process and dignity, regardless of race, country of origin, language, contact with the criminal legal system, or the nature of their defense. Programs that include carveouts for people who have prior contact with the criminal legal system are not eligible for membership.
- **Assigned point of contact to participate in Network-wide programming.**
- **Completion of an annual survey** that allows Vera to monitor trends, campaigns, and programming requests.
- **Consideration of requests to participate in Network activities as a speaker, panelist, or featured program.**
- **Signing of a partnership Memorandum of Understanding, if applicable.**
- **Listing as a member on our SAFE website.**

VALUES THAT GUIDE OUR WORK

In addition to advancing Vera's values of Collaboration, Respect, Independence, Commitment, and Race Equity, we strive to advance and embody the following values through our work and partnerships and encourage our partners to share feedback about how we can continue improving upon these values through our partnerships.

Equity & Inclusion:

- We fight for the dignity of all people – no one is more deserving of dignity and due process than others.
- We support representation systems that can be equitably accessed regardless of race, national origin, income, language, or prior contact with the criminal legal system.

Transformation:

- *Ourselves:* We are always learning. We are committed to continued personal and professional transformation.
- *Our work:* Representation has a transformational impact on people's lives. We are constantly learning, adapting, and transforming our work to have a greater and more positive impact.
- *The system:* The immigration and criminal legal systems need to be radically transformed. Universal representation is one part of a bigger fight to transform these systems more deeply and radically.

Community:

- We center and uplift the voices of those most impacted by our detention and deportation system.
- We support each other and our partners. We use our voice and power to empower others.
- We strive to create systems that allow everyone to thrive.
- We engage in our work with courage, integrity, and empathy.

Accountability:

- We are transparent with our partners about our goals, priorities, measures of success, and decision-making.
- We use our values to guide our work and as a lens to evaluate relationships, reflect and course-correct, when necessary.
- We acknowledge and repair harm when we do not live into our values and improve systems/decisions to address the discrepancy.

Solidarity:

- We work in solidarity with other movements and organizations in recognition of the intersecting oppressions that need to be addressed to achieve liberation.
- We advance the universal representation movement as part of the immigrant rights and racial justice movement as a whole and resist calls to pit groups against each other.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- **This sounds great! What is the process for joining?**
 - Speak with program partners to determine partnership interest. Ideally, SAFE would partner with a coordinated program that includes government partners, legal services providers, and advocacy and organizing groups. However, SAFE can partner directly with individual organizations and/or government partners if that is preferable locally.
 - You can find a [brief application here](#). Upon submission, Vera will follow up to schedule a call to discuss the details of the application and partnership.
 - If you aren't sure if SAFE membership is right for you, please reach out to urep@vera.org to request a call to discuss the potential partnership.
 - Upon acceptance, sign a partnership agreement with Vera.
- **Is funding available as part of SAFE membership?**
 - While SAFE does not provide “catalyst funding” packages to incentivize public investment as part of our standard suite of membership benefits anymore, we may provide limited funding in certain strategic circumstances on a case-by-case basis.
 - We hope that you will find our Network programming and convening spaces, research and data support, and advocacy tools to be of great value to your work.
- **What can we expect in 2024?**
 - Announcement of SAFE expansion, happening Spring 2024.
 - Regular virtual programming, including general Network webinars and specialized cohorts and leadership groups focused on high-interest topics throughout the year. In 2024, Vera will increase programming on program design and implementation, advocacy, communications, and research. We will reduce our offerings of substantive legal technical assistance that include Continuing Legal Education credits.
- **Are there membership costs for joining SAFE?**
 - No. SAFE membership benefits are free to members.

- **What does collaborating around programmatic data look like?**
 - Programmatic data has been key to demonstrating the impact of programs, public investment, and to supporting advocacy for program growth and sustainability.
 - SAFE seeks to support your program by leveraging data about its impact to promote program sustainability and growth. We have a variety of tools to do so based on the interest and needs of your program, including:
 - **SAFE database and report generation:** Vera created the SAFE database (a cloud-based database) to collect client-level data to support local programs by reporting on aggregate program impact and leveraging that data in advocacy. Note that use of Vera’s database is not required but is available to SAFE programs that would like to receive standardized reports to illustrate program impact. Vera has also used this national data set to report on and inform policy and advocacy efforts—for example, to highlight [the senselessness of civil immigration detention](#) and provide data-driven arguments against the use of criminal carveouts.
 - **Customizable data tools and templates:** For members that do not wish to utilize the database, these tools will help empower programs to utilize existing data collection systems to present streamlined reports, highlighting compelling data points.

- **We would love to join the SAFE Network, but we do not have a publicly funded deportation defense program. Can we join?**
 - SAFE is currently focused on partnering with publicly funded programs, but we would love to hear from you and see how we can collaborate and support your efforts. Please reach out to us at urep@vera.org to set up a call.

For more information or if you have any other questions, please email us at urep@vera.org.