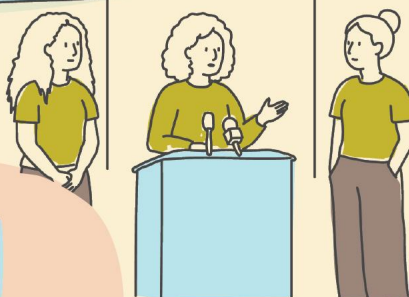
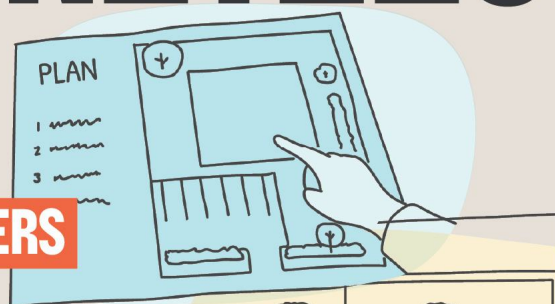




SUPPORTING IMMIGRANT COMMUNITIES

**A PREPAREDNESS &
RESPONSE GUIDE**

FOR SHELTER PROVIDERS



SUPPORTING IMMIGRANT COMMUNITIES

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RESPONSE GUIDE
FOR SHELTER PROVIDERS

The development of this guide **Supporting Immigrant Communities: A Preparedness & Response Guide for Shelter Providers** was co-led by Jose "Che" Ramirez and Dr. Melissa Chinchilla. We acknowledge the invaluable contributions of frontline providers from homeless service organizations across Los Angeles and our legal aid partners who helped shape this resource guide. Their expertise, thoughtful feedback, and commitment to serving their communities were essential to developing this toolkit. We extend our deep appreciation to Sonja Diaz, Founding Director of Unseen, whose early support was instrumental in advancing this work. We are also grateful to the wider Unseen team—Joselen Contreras, Rosie Chien, Kacey Bonner, and Jean Guerrero—who helped strengthen this toolkit through their project management support, detailed review and feedback, and thoughtful recommendations.

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INTRODUCTION

Supporting Immigrant Communities: A Preparedness & Response Guide for Shelter Providers is designed to equip homeless service providers with the knowledge and tools needed to effectively serve immigrant communities amid a rapidly evolving federal immigration policy landscape.

Across the United States, an estimated 13.7 million undocumented individuals face intersecting challenges that heighten their risk of homelessness, including economic instability, barriers accessing services, and legal uncertainty. These challenges are compounded by a shifting federal immigration climate marked by increased enforcement activity, the erosion of previously recognized “sensitive location” protections, and a growing climate of fear that deters individuals and families from seeking essential support. At the same time, many homeless service providers are limited in their ability to respond to these realities, with gaps in protocols, training, funding, and legal knowledge.

This guide responds to these urgent needs by offering practical guidance on participant engagement, site preparedness, and service delivery, with the goal of strengthening provider capacity and supporting the safety and dignity of immigrant communities experiencing homelessness.

FOUNDATION: LEGAL PROTECTIONS & RESPONSIBILITIES



This section outlines the key federal and state laws that protect immigrants' rights when accessing shelter and housing services. These laws prohibit discrimination, ensure language access, and safeguard privacy regardless of immigration status. California provides additional protections that strengthen these rights and require shelters to maintain inclusive, non-discriminatory practices. Shelter providers are encouraged to implement clear policies, limit immigration-related inquiries, and communicate available services transparently and in multiple languages.



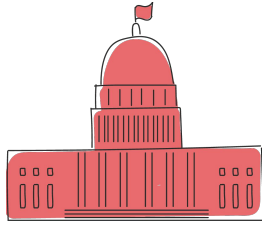
FEDERAL PROTECTIONS



STATE OF CALIFORNIA PROTECTIONS



SHELTER PROVIDER RESPONSIBILITIES



FEDERAL PROTECTIONS

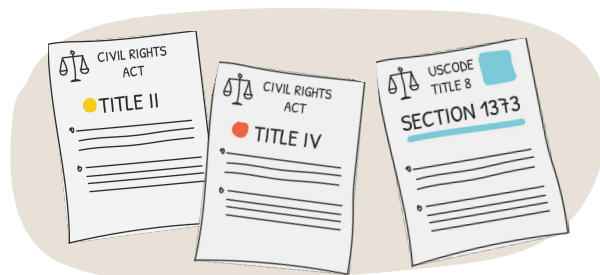
Undocumented immigrants are protected under the Due Process and Equal Protection Clauses of the Fifth¹ and Fourteenth² Amendments. Many shelter and housing programs, particularly those that function as a residence, are also subject to the Fair Housing Act (FHA), which prohibits discrimination based on race, color, national origin, and other protected characteristics.

While traditional emergency or short-term shelters may fall outside the scope of the FHA, they remain subject to other civil rights laws. Shelters open to the public may be covered under Title II of the Civil Rights Act of 1964,³ and providers receiving federal funding must comply with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964,⁴ including requirements to provide meaningful language access and avoid national origin discrimination.

Federal law restricts some benefits, such as long-term housing assistance, cash aid, and nutrition programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, to individuals with eligible immigration status. However, many essential, life-sustaining services remain available regardless of status, including emergency shelter, food access, crisis services, and outreach.

Section 1373 of Title 8⁵ limits restrictions on the voluntary sharing of immigration status information with federal authorities, but courts, including the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit, have clarified that this applies only to immigration status and not to other personal or confidential information, such as a client's location or service history. In practice, providers should not share client information with immigration authorities unless legally required, and staff are not required to collect or disclose immigration status.

Providers should stay informed about changes in laws and enforcement practices by monitoring updates from federal agencies, state and local guidance, and trusted legal or advocacy organizations. Participating in trainings and consulting with qualified legal partners can help ensure accurate interpretation and implementation.



¹ U.S. Constitution. Amend. V.

² U.S. Constitution. Amend. XIV, sec. 1.

³ Civil Rights Act of 1964. Pub. L. No. 88-352. Title II. 78 Stat. 241, 243–46 (1964).

⁴ Civil Rights Act of 1964. Pub. L. No. 88-352. Title VI. 78 Stat. 241, 252–53 (1964).

⁵ United States Code. 2024. Title 8, sec. 1373.



STATE OF CALIFORNIA PROTECTIONS

In December 2024, California Attorney General Rob Bonta released an updated edition of a guide⁶ to provide shelters with information and resources needed to maintain safe and welcoming environments for all individuals while protecting their rights and privacy, regardless of immigration status. This December 2024 revised edition is designed to help shelters comply with California law.

California law provides robust protections for immigrants against discrimination based on ancestry, national origin, citizenship status, and other protected characteristics. Under the Fair Employment and Housing Act,⁷ housing providers, including shelter operators, are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, ancestry, and similar factors. Shelter operators may not take adverse actions against individuals due to their actual or perceived national origin or any other protected status.

Prohibited actions include denying shelter access; applying different rules or conditions; or engaging in harassment, coercion, intimidation, or interference with a person's fair housing rights. The California Attorney General strongly encourages shelter operators to adopt clear internal policies to prevent discrimination based on national origin. Shelters are encouraged to consult with legal counsel to stay informed of any changes to the cited laws, regulations, or policies.



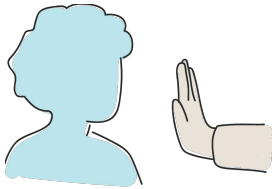
⁶ Rob Bonta, "Promoting Safe and Secure Shelters for All: Guidance and Model Policies to Assist California Shelters in Responding to Immigration Enforcement," California Department of Justice Office of the Attorney General, December 2024, <https://oag.ca.gov/sites/all/files/agweb/pdfs/immigration/shelter.pdf>.

⁷ California. Fair Employment and Housing Act. California Government Code §§ 12900–12996.



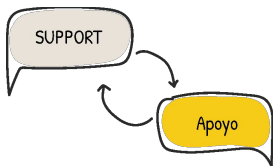
SHELTER PROVIDER RESPONSIBILITIES

The following responsibilities are drawn from guidance issued by the California Attorney General and outline key expectations for homeless service providers in serving immigrant communities.



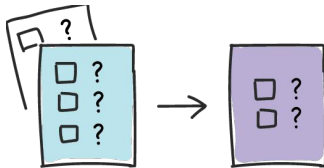
Prevent Discrimination

As a shelter provider, you cannot take adverse actions based on actual or perceived national origin.



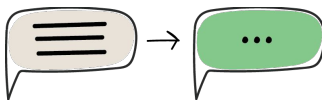
Provide Translation

You are responsible for ensuring that participants understand organizational policies; this includes providing proper translation to non-English speakers.



Limit Document Requests

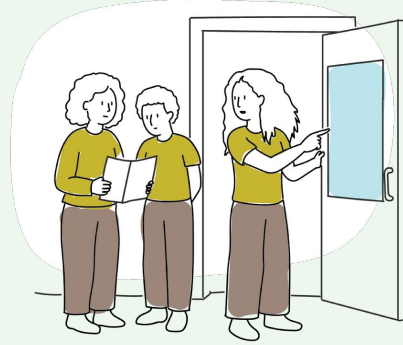
As a homeless service provider, you should avoid requesting immigration status information unless it is absolutely necessary for service provision.



Use Clear Communication

You should clearly communicate what services are available regardless of immigration status. When this information is unclear, you should seek guidance from system administrators or legal counsel to obtain clarity.

AWARENESS: KNOWING YOUR RIGHTS



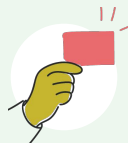
This section explains the legal boundaries governing law enforcement and immigration agents' access to homeless shelters and the rights of shelter residents. It outlines when officers may lawfully enter shelter spaces, the distinction between public and private spaces, and when a judicial warrant is needed. Recent federal policy changes have altered protections for shelters once considered “protected areas,” increasing the importance of staff awareness.



RECENT DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY (DHS) UPDATES



IMMIGRATION AGENT AUTHORITY & LIMITATIONS



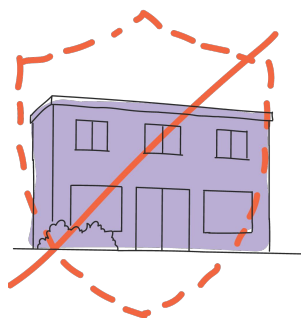
CLIENT RIGHTS



STAFF RIGHTS



INFORMATION SHARING & DATA REQUESTS

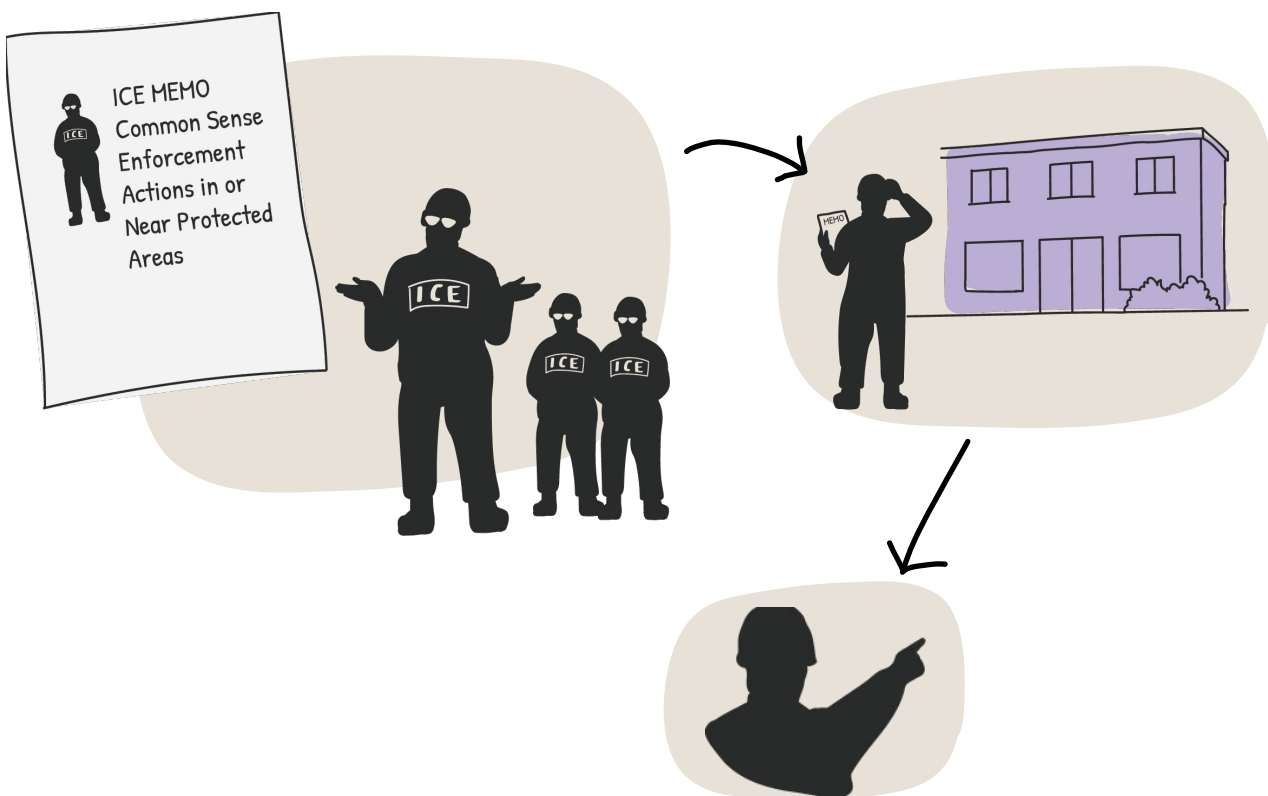


RECENT DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY (DHS) UPDATES

Homeless shelters were previously considered “sensitive locations” or “protected areas,” where immigration enforcement actions generally required prior approval or were limited to exigent circumstances.

Current DHS guidance no longer explicitly designates shelters as protected, meaning enforcement actions may now occur in or around these locations without prior approval.

A January 31, 2025 Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) memorandum, Common Sense Enforcement Actions in or Near Protected Areas,⁸ affirms that DHS will not impose categorical restrictions on where immigration laws may be enforced. Instead, enforcement decisions are left to the discretion of ICE leadership, who must assess each situation on a case-by-case basis, including consideration of the location and surrounding factors.



⁸ Vitello, Caleb. Common Sense Enforcement Actions in or Near Protected Areas. Memorandum. U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. January 31, 2025. Accessed May 14, 2026. U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement

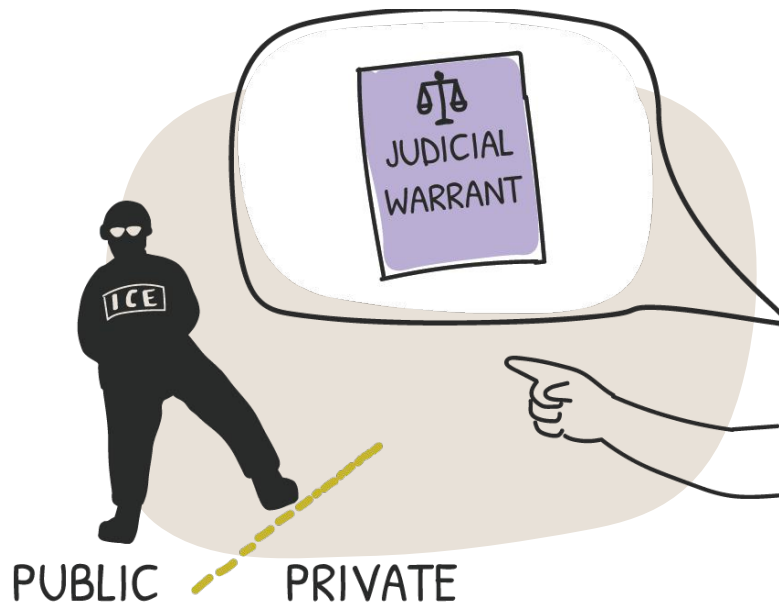


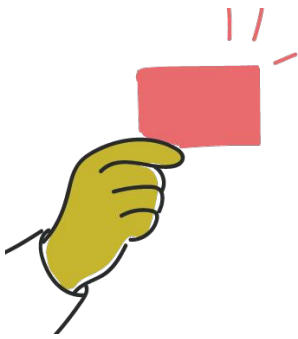
IMMIGRATION AGENT AUTHORITY & LIMITATIONS

Shelter participants are protected from unreasonable searches and seizures under the Fourth Amendment.

The authority immigration officers have to enter a shelter depends on whether the area is considered public or private and whether participants have a reasonable expectation of privacy. Shelters often include public or common areas, such as lobbies or reception spaces, where access is not restricted. In these areas, officers may approach individuals without a judicial warrant. Individuals that are approached by officers have the right to remain silent, to ask for identification and documentation, to document and record what occurs, and to ask to speak to a lawyer.

However, federal agents are not permitted to enter private areas of a shelter, such as sleeping quarters, offices, or restricted program spaces, without a valid judicial warrant. If agents request entry, they must present a judicial warrant signed by a judge that specifically authorizes access to the premises. Shelter staff are not required to grant entry without such a warrant. Refusing entry, requesting to review a warrant, or directing agents to a supervisor does not constitute harboring or obstruction of justice.





CLIENT RIGHTS

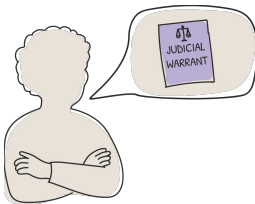
While staff should not provide legal advice, they can share immigration resources, distribute Red Cards, and provide informational materials to help participants understand their rights. An ICE Red Card is a Know Your Rights tool that allows individuals to assert their constitutional protections without speaking, which is particularly helpful for those who are non-English speakers or concerned about saying the wrong thing.

When presented to immigration officers, the card communicates the following:



Right to Remain Silent:

Indicates the individual does not wish to answer questions.



Denial of Consent to Search:

Refuses permission for officers to enter a home or search belongings without a judicial warrant.



Request for Legal Representation:

Asserts the right to speak with an attorney before answering questions or during detention.



Nonverbal Assertion of Rights:

Can be handed to an officer or slid under a door to communicate rights without speaking.



STAFF RIGHTS

Shelter staff also have important rights when interacting with immigration officers. While staff should remain professional and follow organizational protocols, they are not required to answer questions, provide information, or grant access to private areas of the facility without a judicial warrant.

Staff have the right to:



Remain Silent:

Staff are not required to answer questions about themselves, colleagues, or participants.



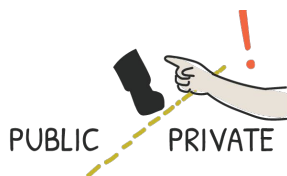
Decline to Share Information:

Staff should not disclose client information, including identity, location, or service history, unless legally required.



Request a Judicial Warrant:

Staff may ask officers to present a valid judicial warrant before allowing access to private or restricted areas.



Refuse Entry to Private Areas:

Staff are not required to allow entry into non-public areas of the facility without a judicial warrant signed by a judge.



Refer to Supervisors or Legal Contacts:

Staff may direct officers to a supervisor or designated point of contact and follow internal protocols.



INFORMATION SHARING & DATA REQUESTS

Federal law does not require service providers or local agencies to collect information about an individual's immigration status. While laws such as Section 1373 limit restrictions on sharing immigration status information, they do not require providers to collect, maintain, or proactively share such information.

In practice, providers should follow these guidelines:



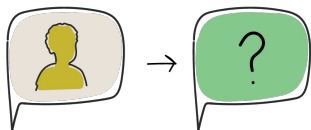
Do Not Collect Unnecessary Information:

Avoid asking about immigration status unless it is specifically required for a program's eligibility determination.



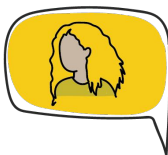
Do Not Disclose Client Information:

Do not share client names, locations, records, schedules, or service history without a valid judicial warrant or subpoena and without speaking to legal counsel.



Do Not Confirm Presence:

Staff should not confirm whether a specific individual is receiving services or is present at a site.



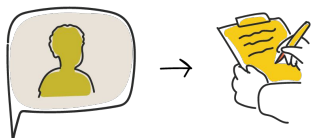
Refer All Requests:

Any request for information should be directed to designated leadership or legal counsel.



Protect Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) and Client Records:

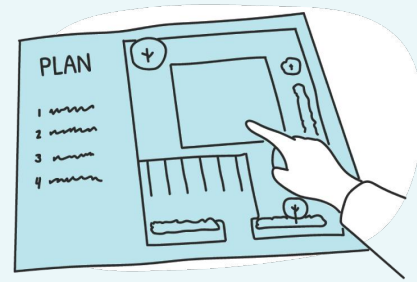
All data systems and client files must be handled in accordance with privacy policies, confidentiality standards, and applicable laws.



Document Requests:

Staff should document any request for information, including who made the request, what was asked, and how the organization responded.

PREPAREDNESS: PROTECTING YOUR SITE & PARTICIPANTS



This section provides guidance for homeless service providers on how to proactively prepare sites for potential visits from immigration enforcement. By taking advanced steps—such as conducting site assessments, clearly distinguishing and marking public vs. private areas, and developing clear organizational policies and staff training—providers can ensure a consistent and lawful response. Proactive planning helps safeguard participants’ rights; protect staff; and maintain a safe, well-managed, and compliant environment during potential enforcement activity.



SECURING YOUR SITE



PROPER SIGNAGE



DEVELOPING AN ORGANIZATIONAL POLICY



TRAINING YOUR STAFF



WARRANTS & DOCUMENTATION



FAMILY PREPAREDNESS PLANS

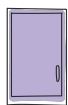


SECURING YOUR SITE

A key first step in preparedness is to conduct a comprehensive assessment of all shelter and program sites to identify and address potential security vulnerabilities.

Shelter types across Los Angeles vary: congregate sites (e.g., A Bridge Home, Tiny Home Villages) are typically fenced and staffed with security, while non-congregate models that utilize motels (e.g., Inside Safe, Pathway Home) often lack physical barriers and may have limited on-site security, making them more vulnerable to unauthorized access. Seasonal shelters located in public facilities, such as recreation centers, can present additional challenges due to shared or open access. Administrative offices and headquarters should also be included in site assessments.

Providers should evaluate each site's layout and implement practical security measures, including:



Ensuring all gates and entry points are fully functional and secured



Confirming that doors to private or restricted areas are locked and properly maintained



Using key fobs, access codes, or controlled entry systems to limit access to authorized individuals



Posting clear signage identifying private spaces



Verifying security staffing coverage (where applicable)



Testing surveillance systems and ensuring they are operational



Establishing visitor check-in and monitoring protocols



Training staff to manage and monitor access points throughout the day

Developing and regularly updating a standardized site assessment checklist can help ensure consistency across locations and strengthen overall preparedness for potential enforcement activity.

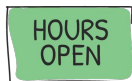


PROPER SIGNAGE

It is essential to clearly distinguish between public and private spaces within your site. Outside officials may only access public or reception areas and are not permitted to enter private or restricted spaces without proper legal authorization.

Providers should post clear signage such as “Private,” “Staff Only,” or “Non-Public Area” to designate restricted areas and implement protocols to limit access to such areas. If walk-in access is not permitted, consider designating the entire facility as non-public and clearly communicating entry requirements.

Additional best practices include:



Posting visitation hours and entry requirements at all exterior access points



Requiring all visitors to check in with staff or security before entering



Ensuring all exterior doors and gates display appropriate signage



Using signage in combination with physical controls (e.g., locked doors, keycard access) to reinforce restricted access

While physical barriers signal limited access, clear signage strengthens these protections and helps deter unauthorized entry, including by immigration enforcement. Staff should also communicate to participants that these measures are in place to support safety and privacy, not surveillance or control.



DEVELOPING AN ORGANIZATIONAL POLICY

Developing a comprehensive organizational policy helps ensure consistent, lawful responses across all sites and protects both staff and participants. This process should be led by senior leadership and formally approved by the Chief Executive Officer or Executive Director. Once finalized, the policy should be implemented through staff training and clearly communicated to participants in an accessible and culturally appropriate manner.

Ten Key Policy Components

1. Purpose & Scope

- Define the purpose of the policy (e.g., to protect the rights, safety, and privacy of participants, staff, and the organization).
- Specify who and what the policy applies to (e.g., staff, volunteers, contractors, and all program sites).

2. Definitions

- Clearly define key terms such as “public space,” “private space,” “judicial warrant,” “subpoena,” and “immigration enforcement action.”

3. Guiding Principles

- Affirm commitment to client safety, privacy, and non-discrimination.
- State that the organization does not voluntarily share client information with immigration agents.
- Align with constitutional protections and applicable state/local laws.

4. Staff Protocols During Immigration Agent Encounters

- Designate specific staff (e.g., site director or program lead) as points of contact.
- Require verification of a signed judicial warrant before granting access beyond public areas.
- Prohibit staff from consenting to entry into private or restricted areas without proper documentation.
- Maintain visitor sign-in procedures for all non-staff individuals.



DEVELOPING AN ORGANIZATIONAL POLICY

Ten Key Policy Components Cont.

5. Information Sharing

- Prohibit sharing client information, records, or databases without a judicial warrant or subpoena and without speaking with legal counsel.
- Establish procedures for directing all requests to legal counsel.

6. Signage & Space Designation

- Require clear signage identifying “Private” or “Non-Public Areas.”
- Ensure staff understand and consistently enforce public vs. private space distinctions.

7. Client Communication

- Clearly communicate that policies and signage are in place for safety—not surveillance or punishment.
- Provide Know Your Rights information in appropriate languages.

8. Training & Drills

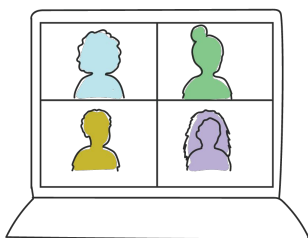
- Conduct regular staff trainings, including scenario-based exercises.
- Ensure coverage across all shifts and program sites.

9. Legal & Community Support

- Identify legal partners and advocacy organizations for rapid response.
- Maintain and post accessible contact information for staff use.

10. Documentation & Reporting

- Require detailed documentation of any immigration agent encounter (e.g., date, time, officer information, actions taken).
- Establish protocols for immediate notification of leadership and legal counsel.



TRAINING YOUR STAFF

Training staff on immigration enforcement preparedness is essential to building a knowledgeable, responsive, and compassionate environment that protects participants' rights while maintaining safe and compliant operations. Effective training ensures staff understand their legal responsibilities, organizational protocols, and how to respond appropriately during enforcement encounters.

For larger organizations, it is recommended to begin with training directors and managers to ensure alignment on policy, expectations, and response protocols, followed by structured dissemination to frontline staff across all sites. The accompanying presentation associated with Supporting Immigrant Communities: A Preparedness & Response Guide for Shelter Providers serves as a tool to support consistent, scalable staff training. Training should be ongoing and integrated into onboarding, regular refresher sessions, and continuous quality improvement efforts to ensure consistency, reinforce best practices, and maintain readiness across all programs, shifts, and locations.

TRAINING SHOULD EQUIP STAFF TO:



Understand Rights and Responsibilities:
Know applicable laws, organizational policies, and client protections.



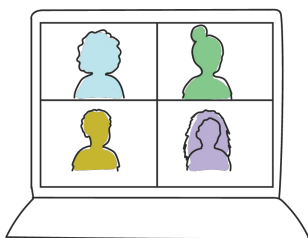
Respond Appropriately:
Navigate interactions with immigration agents in a calm, lawful, and consistent manner.



Protect Safety and Privacy:
Safeguard client dignity, confidentiality, and personal information.

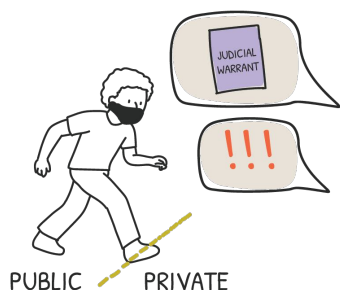


Follow Organizational Protocols:
Act in accordance with established procedures and state/local requirements.



TRAINING YOUR STAFF

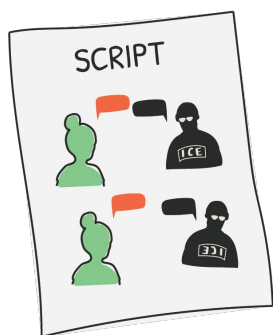
Training staff on immigration enforcement preparedness is essential to building a knowledgeable, responsive, and compassionate environment that protects participants' rights while maintaining safe and compliant operations. Effective training ensures staff understand their legal responsibilities, organizational protocols, and how to respond appropriately during enforcement encounters.



RECOMMENDED TRAINING TECHNIQUES

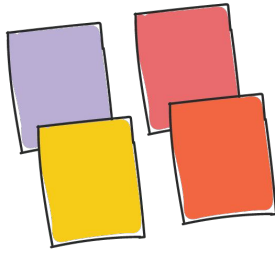
Role-Playing Scenario Training

Role-playing is one of the most effective tools for preparing staff for high-stress situations, such as responding to immigration enforcement. It builds confidence, reinforces practical skills, and helps identify gaps in policies or procedures that can be addressed proactively. Scenarios should be repeated and rotated among staff to ensure broad participation and skill-building.



Quick-Response Scripts Training

Providing staff with standardized quick-response scripts helps ensure consistency, maintain legal boundaries, and support confident communication. Staff should practice these scripts out loud in pairs or small groups, as repetition helps reinforce calm and effective responses during real interactions.



WARRANTS & DOCUMENTATION

It is important for staff to understand the different types of documentation immigration agents may present, as each carry specific legal limitations and implications.



Judicial Warrants

A valid judicial warrant must meet all of the following criteria:

- Issued by a court
- Signed by a judge or magistrate
- Includes the specific address of the location
- Specifies a valid time period (typically within 14 days)
- Clearly describes the place, person, or items to be searched or seized

If a warrant does not meet all of these criteria, it may not be valid, and staff may request that agents leave. A warrant signed by an immigration judge is not a judicial warrant. A valid judicial warrant may authorize entry into private areas, and staff must comply accordingly.



Administrative / Immigration Warrants

Administrative warrants (e.g., ICE-issued warrants) do not authorize entry into private spaces or a search of the premises. They may authorize the civil arrest of a specific individual but do not provide permission to enter restricted areas without consent.



Judicial Subpoenas

Judicial subpoenas may require testimony or the production of documents and must be complied with. These typically include a specified timeframe for response and should be reviewed with legal counsel.



Administrative Subpoenas

Administrative subpoenas, including those issued by immigration authorities, do not require immediate compliance. Staff should not respond on the spot and should refer all such requests to legal counsel for review.

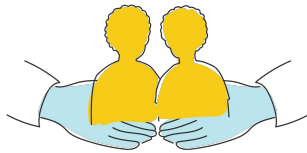


FAMILY PREPAREDNESS PLANS

A Family Preparedness Plan is a proactive tool that helps families prepare for the possibility that a parent, caregiver, or family member could be detained or deported. While this can be a sensitive and emotional process, the goal is to protect children, preserve family unity, safeguard assets, and ensure continuity of care. For families in shelter settings, developing a plan is especially critical to help ensure children remain safe and care arrangements are clearly in place.

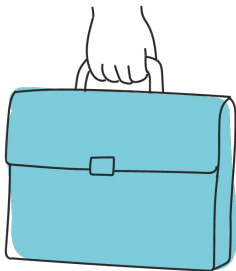


Family Safety & Emotional Well-Being
Legal Preparedness
Child & Dependent Care Arrangements
Important Documents & Information
Communication Plan
Regular Review & Updates
Trauma-Informed Approach
Confidentiality & Privacy



Family Safety & Emotional Well-Being

- Discuss the plan calmly with family members, especially children, using age-appropriate language.
- Emphasize that this is a safety plan, not a prediction, to reduce fear and anxiety.
- Encourage children to memorize or carry important phone numbers.
- Identify safe spaces (e.g., trusted neighbors, relatives, community centers).

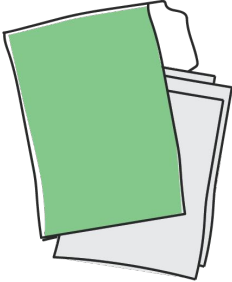


Legal Preparedness

- Consult with an immigration attorney or accredited legal representative.
- Prepare key legal documents, such as:
 - Power of Attorney (for childcare, finances, and decision-making)
 - Caregiver Authorization Affidavit (where applicable)
- Ensure copies of immigration documents are stored securely.
- Confirm compliance with state-specific guardianship and child welfare laws.

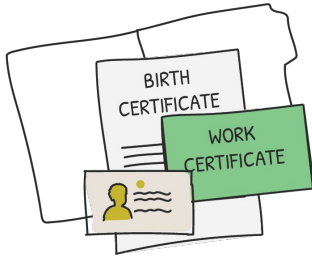


FAMILY PREPAREDNESS PLANS



Child & Dependent Care Arrangements

- Identify primary and backup caregivers.
- Confirm caregivers are informed, willing, and prepared.
- Provide caregivers with:
 - Legal authorization (if required)
 - Copies of birth certificates, school and medical records, and insurance information
- Notify schools and healthcare providers of authorized caregivers.



Important Documents & Information

- Maintain a secure and accessible “Family Emergency File” that includes:
 - Identification documents (e.g., passports, birth certificates, IDs)
 - Immigration paperwork (e.g., work permits, A-number documentation)
 - Medical, school, and vaccination records
 - Emergency contact list (e.g., attorneys, caregivers, relatives, consulates)
 - Financial and household information



Communication Plan

- Create a communication tree (e.g., who to contact first and how information is shared).
- Establish a family emergency code word.
- Ensure all family members:
 - Know at least two phone numbers by memory
 - Can reach caregivers, attorneys, or trusted contacts
- Identify backup communication methods (e.g., messaging apps, email).

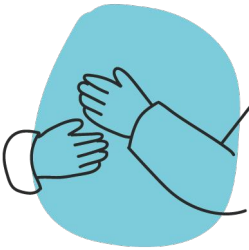


FAMILY PREPAREDNESS PLANS



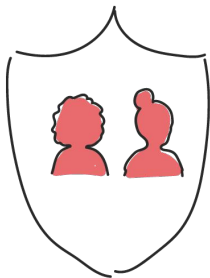
Regular Review & Updates

- Review and update the plan every 6–12 months or after major life changes.
- Confirm all contact information and documents are current.
- Practice the plan through simple, calm drills.



Trauma-Informed Approach

- Recognize that planning discussions may trigger fear or anxiety.
- Approach conversations with empathy, patience, and reassurance.
- Identify mental health and emotional support resources (e.g., counseling, peer support).



Confidentiality & Privacy

- Keep sensitive information secure and share only with trusted individuals or legal counsel.
- Avoid storing sensitive immigration information without proper security protections.
- Ensure staff follow confidentiality protocols to protect family privacy.

RESPONSE & RECOVERY: RESPONDING TO IMMIGRATION ENFORCEMENT ACTIVITY



This section outlines critical steps for responding to immigration enforcement activity during and after an immigration agent encounter at a shelter or service site. It provides practical guidance to help staff protect client rights, maintain site safety, and follow organizational protocols when interacting with enforcement personnel. By understanding how to assess documentation, limit unauthorized access, activate internal response procedures, and document incidents, providers can respond in a calm, coordinated, and legally compliant manner.



REAL-TIME RESPONSE TO IMMIGRATION ENFORCEMENT ACTIVITY



POST-INCIDENT PROTOCOLS & DOCUMENTATION



LOCATING DETAINED PARTICIPANTS



POST-INCIDENT STAFF WELLNESS & SUPPORT

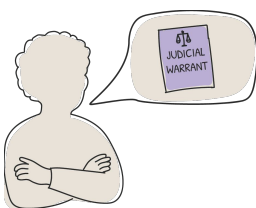


REAL-TIME RESPONSE TO IMMIGRATION ENFORCEMENT ACTIVITY

These are some critical steps to follow if immigration agents show up to your shelter site or administrative facilities.



Do Not Give Consent
Review Documents Carefully
Activate Protocols
Document Interactions

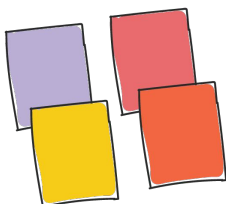


Do Not Give Consent

Do not open the door. Opening the door can be seen as giving consent for officers to enter and search your home and/or facility. Under the Fourth Amendment, immigration or law enforcement officers cannot enter private areas without either:

- A valid judicial warrant
- Consent from someone authorized to let them in

If agents come to your reception space or shelter entry point, do not open it. Instead, ask them to slide any documentation under the door or hold it up to a window so you can see it. If possible, take a photo of the document for your records.



Review Documents Carefully

Check whether the document they present is actually what they claim it is—a judicial warrant or judicial subpoena—and not an administrative or immigration form.

- A judicial warrant or subpoena is issued and signed by a judge and can be enforced.
- An immigration subpoena or warrant signed only by immigration authorities (not a judge) is not a valid judicial order.

If the agents have a valid judicial warrant, they may enter or search the areas listed in the warrant and speak with people present. In that case, remind everyone at the workplace or shelter that they have the right to remain silent and are not required to answer questions.



REAL-TIME RESPONSE TO IMMIGRATION ENFORCEMENT ACTIVITY



Activate Protocols

Activate your agency's protocols, policies, and procedures in the event that immigration agents arrive and/or prepare to enter without the proper warrant.

Notify your supervisor or designated point of contact immediately if agents are at your facility. Provide clear details about the situation, the individual's name/badge, and any information they have provided, including what documents (if any) the agents have presented and any requests or demands they have made.

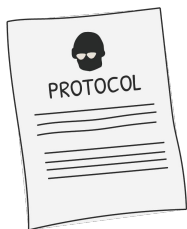
Signal or communicate with colleagues on site to activate protocols/ plans with residents before outside agents enter the property. If agents physically push past into the facility, staff should not engage physically and should instead document and record the incident.



Document Interactions

Documenting enforcement actions are critical for capturing evidence of the interaction and for post-incident write ups. In the event agents proceed to enter your facility, use the following guidance for documenting your interactions.

- Inform officials that you are recording the situation.
- Keep a safe and respectful distance from enforcement personnel.
- Concentrate on observing and recording events rather than engaging with officials.
- Capture photos of officials' identification or badge when feasible.
- Record detailed notes about what occurred as soon as possible after the incident.



POST-INCIDENT PROTOCOLS & DOCUMENTATION

These are some critical steps to follow if immigration agents show up to your shelter site or administrative facilities.



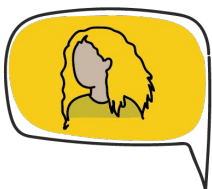
Document the Incident
Notify Leadership & Legal Counsel
Protect Client Information
Communicate Internally
Support Participants
Review & Strengthen Policies



Document the Incident

Write a detailed account of the visit as soon as possible, preferably using an agency approved post-incident form. Include the following:

- Date, time, and duration of the encounter
- Names or badge numbers of agents (if available)
- What was said and done by all parties
- Whether the agents presented a warrant, and if so, what type (administrative vs. judicial)
- Any documents the agents left or requested
- Statements from witnesses (e.g., staff, participants) (if possible)



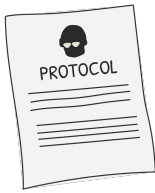
Notify Leadership & Legal Counsel

- Immediately inform your organizational executives, legal counsel, or the designated point person for immigration-related incidents.
- If your shelter partners with an immigration legal aid organization, contact them for advice or next steps.
- Do not share client information with agents unless legally required and reviewed by legal counsel.

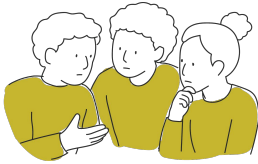


Protect Client Information

- Review what (if any) information was shared.
- Confirm that all staff followed privacy and confidentiality policies (e.g., not providing immigration status without a court order).
- If a breach occurred, consult legal counsel on how to mitigate it.

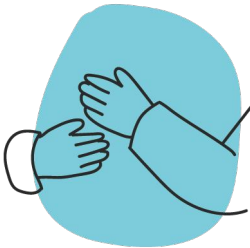


POST-INCIDENT PROTOCOLS & DOCUMENTATION



Communicate Internally

- Debrief staff and leadership as soon as possible.
- Provide factual information about what happened and clarify any misinformation.
- Reaffirm the shelter's policies on non-discrimination, client confidentiality, and response protocols for future visits.



Support Participants

- Reassure residents that they are safe and that their rights are protected.
- Offer emotional support and, if available, connect them to legal or immigrant rights organizations.
- Provide Know Your Rights materials and explain how to handle potential future encounters with agents.



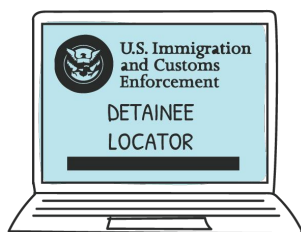
Review & Strengthen Policies

- Evaluate how the incident was handled (e.g., what worked and what can be improved).
- Update internal policies and staff training as needed.
- Conduct refresher sessions on various trainings.



LOCATING DETAINED PARTICIPANTS

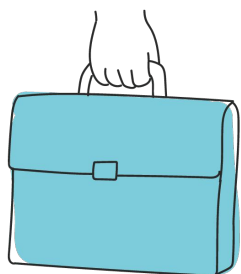
If a shelter participant is detained, staff should be prepared to quickly access reliable resources and connect participants or their families to appropriate support. The following tools and guidance can assist in locating individuals and navigating next steps.



ICE Detainee Locator

The ICE Detainee Locator⁹ (locator.ice.gov) can be used to determine whether an individual is currently in ICE custody and where they are being held. To use the locator, it is helpful to have the person's full legal name, date of birth, country of origin, and, if available, Alien Registration Number (A-Number). The online detainee locator is not always up-to-date, so locating a detained individual may also require calling or visiting local detention centers.

This tool only provides information for individuals who are currently detained. For broader questions about immigration status or legal options, individuals should be referred to qualified legal service providers.



Legal Assistance

Immigration attorneys, accredited representatives, and legal aid organizations can assist with locating detained individuals, securing release, or arranging visits. To verify that an attorney is licensed and in good standing, individuals can search the State Bar of California Attorney website (calbar.ca.gov).¹⁰

Note: Notaries and immigration consultants are not licensed to provide legal advice. They may assist with translation or administrative tasks but cannot advise on immigration cases or communicate with the government on a client's behalf.



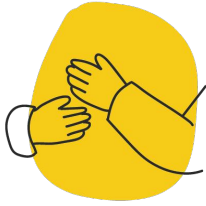
Additional Support Resources

California courts operate Self-Help Centers that may provide assistance with family-related legal matters. A list of available centers can be found on the California Courts Self-Help Centers website (selfhelp.courts.ca.gov).¹¹

⁹ "Online Detainee Locator System," U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, accessed May 11, 2026, <https://locator.ice.gov/odls/#/search>.

¹⁰ "Attorney Search," The State Bar of California, accessed May 11, 2026, <https://apps.calbar.ca.gov/attorney/LicenseeSearch/QuickSearch>.

¹¹ "Find Your Self-Help Center," Judicial Branch of California, accessed May 11, 2026, <https://selfhelp.courts.ca.gov/self-help/find-self-help>.



POST-INCIDENT STAFF WELLNESS & SUPPORT

After an incident, service providers should prioritize staff well-being alongside operational follow-up.



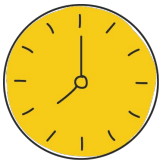
Check In with Staff Promptly:

Create space for team members to share how they are feeling and process the experience, recognizing that reactions may vary.



Normalize Support:

Acknowledge that these situations can be stressful or triggering, and encourage staff to access available wellness resources (e.g., Employee Assistance Program, counseling, peer support).



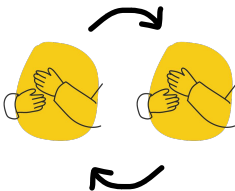
Provide Flexibility Where Possible:

Consider adjusted schedules, coverage, or time off for staff directly impacted.



Facilitate Team Debriefs:

Offer structured, trauma-informed debriefs focused on support, not blame, while also identifying any immediate needs or gaps.



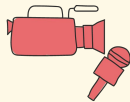
Follow Up Over Time:

Wellness is not a one-time check-in; continue to monitor and support staff in the days and weeks following the incident.

ADVOCACY: PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS



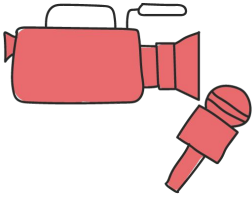
Following an immigration enforcement incident, thoughtful and strategic communication is essential for both internal coordination and external advocacy. This section outlines key considerations for engaging with the media, helping providers balance the opportunity to raise awareness and shape public narratives with the responsibility to protect client safety, confidentiality, and organizational integrity.



STRATEGIES FOR ENGAGING WITH THE MEDIA AFTER AN INCIDENT



PROS & CONS OF MEDIA ENGAGEMENT



STRATEGIES FOR ENGAGING WITH THE MEDIA AFTER AN INCIDENT

After a visit from immigration enforcement, there are several important considerations for your organization.

First, develop a clear plan for communicating what transpired with both staff and program participants. This includes preparing guidance on how staff should respond to questions from participants. It is also essential to anticipate public messaging about the incident, including how your organization will respond if contacted by the media.

If service providers choose to speak to the media after an enforcement incident, they should prioritize safety for themselves and their participants, and clearly define the interview conditions, ideally by both parties. This is especially important when working with unfamiliar journalists. Providers should understand the terms of engagement, such as on the record, off the record, on background, or anonymous, and give consent only when they fully understand and are comfortable with those terms.

If providers choose to engage the media, here are some other measures to consider:



Prioritize Safety:

Avoid revealing specific locations, identities, or immigration statuses when possible.



Designate a Trained Spokesperson:

Centralize communications to prevent mixed messaging.



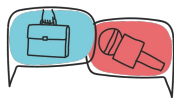
Set Ground Rules:

Clarify interview terms (e.g., on the record, off the record, on background, on condition of anonymity) from the outset.



Vet Journalists Carefully:

Work only with reporters who have demonstrated sensitivity to immigrant and unhoused communities.



Pair Media Work with Legal Counsel:

Coordinate with immigration attorneys and advocacy organizations before making statements.

Encourage immigration journalists to center human stories and draw connections between immigrant rights, workers' rights, and civil rights. Homeless service providers can play an important role by safely sharing compelling human experiences and helping journalists understand that attacks on vulnerable populations represent broader threats to fundamental rights. Effective messaging is essential to advancing narrative change at both local and national levels.



PROS & CONS OF MEDIA ENGAGEMENT

Engaging with the media following immigration enforcement activity can be a powerful tool for raising awareness, shaping public understanding, and advancing advocacy efforts.

However, it also carries important risks that must be carefully considered, particularly in relation to client safety, confidentiality, and potential unintended consequences. Providers should take a thoughtful, strategic approach to media engagement, balancing the opportunity to inform and educate the public with the responsibility to protect participants, staff, and organizational integrity.

Here are some reasons to speak with the media:



Public Awareness and Advocacy:

Speaking with the media can draw attention to the humanitarian impact of enforcement actions, raise awareness of systemic issues, and potentially build public support for the people affected.



Transparency and Accountability:

Media coverage can help the public understand how raids create fear, disrupt services, and harm people seeking safety, countering official narratives that portray enforcement as targeting only “violent criminals.”



Community Education:

Providers can use interviews to share accurate information about immigrants’ rights and available services, countering harmful rumors.



Building Trust with Stakeholders:

Demonstrating openness and responsiveness can strengthen credibility with donors, partner organizations, and the broader public.



PROS & CONS OF MEDIA ENGAGEMENT

Here are some reasons to be cautious:



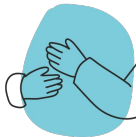
Risk of Retaliation or Targeting:

As recent cases show, shelters and staff who speak out may fear retribution from agents or other government actors. Publicly naming a facility or employee can increase surveillance or future enforcement risk.



Client Safety and Confidentiality:

Even anonymized reporting can unintentionally reveal identities or locations, endangering residents who are undocumented or asylum-seeking.



Trauma and Re-Triggering:

Public storytelling about raids can retraumatize residents and staff who have experienced violence, detention, or displacement.



Potential Misrepresentation:

Inexperienced reporters or outlets may oversimplify, sensationalize, or misframe stories, harming community trust.



Legal and Contractual Constraints:

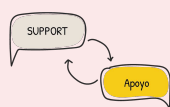
Some organizations may have confidentiality or government contracts that prohibit certain public statements.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT: LATINE IMMIGRANT COMMUNITIES



Increased immigration enforcement activity has contributed to heightened fear and uncertainty among immigrant communities, often creating barriers to accessing critical services. For service providers, this moment calls for intentional, trust-centered approaches that prioritize safety, confidentiality, and cultural and linguistic responsiveness. Shelters should avoid requesting immigration status unless absolutely necessary for service eligibility and clearly communicate that services are provided without discrimination based on immigration status or nationality.

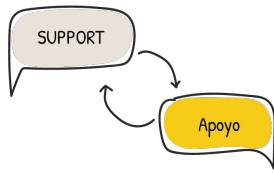
Many Latine individuals and families experiencing housing instability encounter barriers to services due to language differences, unfamiliarity with service systems, concerns about government interactions, and experiences of stigma or exclusion. Providers can strengthen engagement by adopting culturally responsive practices that build trust, reduce confusion, and create welcoming environments. The following practices can help organizations build trust, reduce fear, and ensure equitable access to care.



CULTURALLY COMPETENT OUTREACH & ENGAGEMENT



BUILDING TRUST & PROTECTING IMMIGRANTS

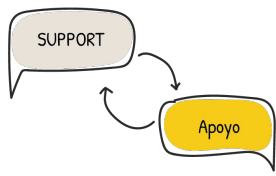


CULTURALLY COMPETENT OUTREACH & ENGAGEMENT

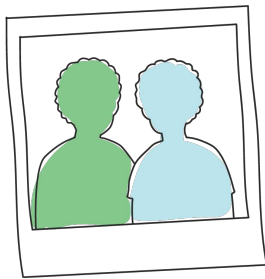
Improve Language Access:

Merely translating documents is not enough. Bilingual staffing is needed to ensure that outreach and service delivery are culturally competent. Navigating complex government safety-net systems is a major barrier and having dedicated, linguistically capable staff helps bridge that gap. Providers should also review forms, signage, outreach materials, and verbal communications to ensure that Spanish-language terminology is clear, accessible, and welcoming. Avoid overly technical, bureaucratic, or enforcement-oriented language that may create confusion or reinforce fears about interacting with service systems.

English Term	Spanish Translation (Main)	Alternative Translation(s)	Example Phrase (Spanish)
Aid	Apoyo	Ayuda / asistencia	Le puedo contar sobre algunos recursos de apoyo disponibles por aquí, si le interesa. No hay ninguna obligación.
Confidential	Confidencial / Privado	Lo que hablamos queda entre nosotros	Lo que hablemos aquí es privado. No lo compartimos con nadie sin su permiso, a menos que haya un peligro inmediato.
Consent	Su permiso	Consentimiento	Para referirle a un programa, necesito compartir su nombre y su situación con ellos. ¿Me da su permiso para hacer esa conexión? Usted decide.
Eligibility	Requisitos para calificar	Elegibilidad	Cada programa tiene sus propios requisitos. ¿Me cuenta un poco de su situación para que veamos juntos qué puede funcionar para usted?
Immigration status	Situación migratoria	Estatus migratorio	No todos los servicios requieren esta información. Si un programa la pide, le explico por qué y qué protecciones existen para su privacidad.
Legal aid	Apoyo legal gratuito	Asesoría legal sin costo	Hay organizaciones que ofrecen ayuda legal sin costo. Pueden explicarle sus derechos y opciones sin que usted tenga que pagar.

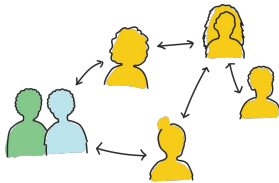


CULTURALLY COMPETENT OUTREACH & ENGAGEMENT



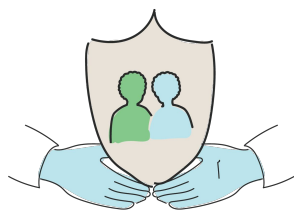
Acknowledge the Role of Family:

In many Latine communities, family and trusted social networks play a central role in decision-making and help-seeking behaviors. Service providers should recognize the importance of family connections when conducting outreach, explaining services, and developing service plans. When appropriate, providers can engage family members and trusted support networks as partners in helping individuals access and maintain services.



Utilize Nontraditional Access Points:

Outreach should be expanded to places where individuals naturally connect, such as medical clinics and trusted community institutions. Trusted neighborhood institutions already have the relationships and cultural competence required to effectively reach and serve vulnerable immigrant populations.



BUILDING TRUST & PROTECTING IMMIGRANTS



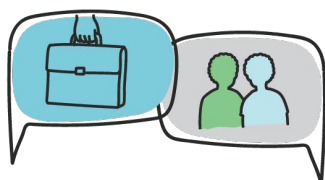
Building Trust & Protecting Immigrants

Many immigrant households avoid seeking assistance because they are uncertain how their information will be used or shared. Providers should clearly explain confidentiality policies, limits on information sharing, and organizational procedures for responding to requests from law enforcement or immigration authorities. These conversations should occur early and be communicated in the client's preferred language.



Clarify Service Eligibility:

Proactively inform communities about which services all residents qualify for, regardless of their immigration status, to counteract fears. Best practices involve creating safe, transparent pathways for engagement so that undocumented and mixed-status families know they can seek housing and support without risking their ability to remain in the country.



Partner with Legal Services:

Foster partnerships between homeless service providers and legal aid to assist immigrants with legal concerns. These partnerships can provide accurate information regarding rights and available benefits, and increase confidence that services are safe and accessible.



For additional resources:

See the Harvard Kennedy School Government Performance Lab's ["Closing the Engagement Gap for Latino People Experiencing Homelessness"](#) which includes a Training and Resource Guide for Culturally Responsive Service Engagement and a Spanish Glossary for Accessible and Inviting Service Delivery. Together, these tools provide practical strategies for improving communication, strengthening trust, and creating more welcoming and effective service environments for Latino and immigrant communities.

APPENDIX A: KNOW YOUR RIGHTS RED CARDS – PARTICIPANTS

FRONT SIDE: WHAT TO DO

IF IMMIGRATION AGENTS APPROACH YOU:

Stay calm
Do **NOT** open the door or run away if outside
Ask for a warrant
Remember: You have rights
You can show this card instead of speaking

*Remember: You have rights (flip card over)

IF IMMIGRATION AGENTS APPROACH YOU:

Stay calm
Do **NOT** open the door or run away if outside
Ask for a warrant
Remember: You have rights
You can show this card instead of speaking

*Remember: You have rights (flip card over)

BACK SIDE: YOUR RIGHTS

YOUR RIGHTS:

You have the right to remain silent
You do **NOT** have to answer questions
Do **NOT** sign anything without a lawyer
Ask to speak to an attorney

YOUR RIGHTS:

You have the right to remain silent
You do **NOT** have to answer questions
Do **NOT** sign anything without a lawyer
Ask to speak to an attorney

LADO FRONTAL: QUÉ HACER

SI AGENTES DE INMIGRACIÓN SE ACERCAN A USTED:

Mantenga la calma
NO abra la puerta ni huya si se encuentra afuera
Pida una orden judicial
Recuerde: Usted tiene derechos
Puede mostrar esta tarjeta en lugar de hablar

*Recuerde: Usted tiene derechos (voltee la tarjeta).

SI AGENTES DE INMIGRACIÓN SE ACERCAN A USTED:

Mantenga la calma
NO abra la puerta ni huya si se encuentra afuera
Pida una orden judicial
Recuerde: Usted tiene derechos
Puede mostrar esta tarjeta en lugar de hablar

*Recuerde: Usted tiene derechos (voltee la tarjeta).

LADO POSTERIOR: SUS DERECHOS

SUS DERECHOS:

Tiene derecho a guardar silencio
NO tiene que responder ha preguntas
NO firme nada sin hablar primero con
un abogado
Pida hablar con un abogado

SUS DERECHOS:

Tiene derecho a guardar silencio
NO tiene que responder ha preguntas
NO firme nada sin hablar primero con
un abogado
Pida hablar con un abogado

APPENDIX B: KNOW YOUR RIGHTS & ACTION BLUE CARD – STAFF

FRONT SIDE: WHAT TO DO

IF IMMIGRATION OFFICERS ARRIVE:

Stay calm and professional
Do **NOT** open doors to private areas
Ask officers to show documentation
Direct them to your supervisor or designated contact
Follow your agency's protocols

REMINDERS:

Do **NOT** consent to searches
Do **NOT** confirm if a staff member or resident is present
Do **NOT** provide documents without review and consulting legal counsel
Administrative warrants do **NOT** allow entry

*Remember: You have rights (flip card over)

IF IMMIGRATION OFFICERS ARRIVE:

Stay calm and professional
Do **NOT** open doors to private areas
Ask officers to show documentation
Direct them to your supervisor or designated contact
Follow your agency's protocols

REMINDERS:

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BACK SIDE: YOUR RIGHTS

YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO:

Remain Silent
You do **NOT** have to answer questions about yourself, staff, or participants
Decline to Share Information
Do **NOT** share resident identity, location, or records unless legally required
Request a Judicial Warrant
Ask for a warrant signed by a judge before allowing access
Refuse Entry to Private Areas
No entry without a valid judicial warrant
Refer to Leadership
Direct all agents to your supervisor or designated contact

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APPENDIX C: SITE SECURITY & PREPAREDNESS CHECKLIST (SAMPLE)

This checklist is designed to help homeless service providers assess and strengthen site security to prevent unauthorized access, ensure client and staff safety, and support preparedness for potential immigration enforcement activity.

Site Access & Perimeter Security

- ☐ All gates, fences, and perimeter barriers are present, functional, and secured
- ☐ Entry points are limited and clearly defined
- ☐ Exterior doors are operational, close properly, and lock securely
- ☐ Access to the site can be monitored and controlled at all times
- ☐ Security personnel (if applicable) are present and positioned appropriately

Public vs. Private Space Designation

- ☐ Public areas (e.g., reception and/or lobby if open to the public) are clearly identified
- ☐ Private or restricted areas (e.g., sleeping quarters, offices, staff-only areas) are clearly marked with signage
- ☐ Signage is visible, consistent, and posted at all relevant access points
- ☐ Staff understand which areas are considered public vs. private

Controlled Access Systems

- ☐ Private areas are secured with locks, key fobs, access codes, or similar systems
- ☐ Access is limited to authorized staff and residents only
- ☐ Systems for issuing and tracking keys, fobs, or access codes are in place
- ☐ Lost or stolen access devices can be quickly deactivated

Surveillance & Monitoring (if applicable)

- ☐ Cameras are installed at key entry and exit points
- ☐ Surveillance systems are operational and regularly tested
- ☐ Footage is recorded and stored according to organizational policy
- ☐ Staff are trained on how to access and report issues with surveillance systems

Visitor Management

- ☐ A clear visitor check-in and sign-in process is in place
- ☐ Visitors are required to identify themselves and state the purpose of their visit
- ☐ Staff are trained on how to respond to unannounced or unfamiliar visitors
- ☐ Protocols are in place for handling law enforcement or external agency requests

APPENDIX C: SITE SECURITY & PREPAREDNESS CHECKLIST (SAMPLE)

Staff Training & Awareness

- ☐ Staff are trained on site security protocols and access control procedures
- ☐ Staff understand how to respond to unauthorized entry attempts
- ☐ Staff know how to escalate concerns to supervisors or designated contacts
- ☐ Staff are familiar with immigration enforcement response protocols and legal requirements

Documentation & Protocols

- ☐ Written policies clearly define public vs. private space and access procedures
- ☐ Immigration enforcement response protocols are documented and accessible to staff
- ☐ Emergency contact lists (e.g., legal counsel, leadership, security) are up-to-date
- ☐ Incident reporting procedures are established and understood

Site-Specific Considerations

- ☐ Congregate Sites: Perimeter fencing and security coverage are adequate
- ☐ Non-Congregate/Motel Sites: Additional measures are in place to monitor access (e.g., staff presence, controlled entry points)
- ☐ Seasonal/Public Facility Sites: Coordination with host facility ensures clear boundaries and access control
- ☐ Administrative Offices: Access to resident records and staff areas is restricted and secure

Ongoing Review & Maintenance

- ☐ Site assessments are conducted regularly (e.g., quarterly or biannually)
- ☐ Repairs to gates, locks, or security systems are addressed promptly
- ☐ Policies and procedures are reviewed and updated as needed
- ☐ Feedback from staff is incorporated into continuous improvement efforts

Certification

Site Name: _____

Date of Assessment: _____

Conducted By: _____

Signature: _____

PRIVATE AREA AUTHORIZED ACCESS ONLY

This area is not open to the public.
Entry is restricted to authorized
staff and residents only.

PUBLIC AREA

Visitors must check in with staff
before proceeding beyond this
point.

APPENDIX E: ORGANIZATIONAL POLICY – IMMIGRATION ENFORCEMENT PREPAREDNESS & RESPONSE (SAMPLE)

Policy Overview

This policy establishes procedures for responding to immigration enforcement activity in a manner that protects client rights, ensures staff safety, and maintains compliance with applicable federal, state, and local laws, as well as Continuum of Care (CoC) contractual requirements and Coordinated Entry System (CES) standards. This policy applies to all staff, volunteers, contractors, and program sites operated by the organization.

Guiding Principles

The organization is committed to providing equitable, non-discriminatory services in alignment with CoC policies, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) requirements, and applicable civil rights laws. Services will be delivered without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, disability, familial status, or immigration status, except where required by federal funding eligibility rules. The organization will protect client confidentiality in accordance with Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) standards, privacy policies, and applicable laws and will not voluntarily share client information with immigration authorities.

Definitions

For the purposes of this policy, the following definitions apply:

Public Space: Areas open to the general public (e.g., reception or lobby areas open to the public).

Private or Restricted Space: Areas not open to the public, including sleeping quarters, offices, and staff-only locations where participants have a reasonable expectation of privacy.

Judicial Warrant: A warrant signed by a judge that authorizes entry or search of private property.

Administrative Warrant: A document issued by immigration authorities that does not authorize entry into private areas.

Immigration Enforcement Action: Any activity conducted by federal immigration authorities, including on-site presence, questioning, or detention.

Staff Protocols During Immigration Enforcement Encounters

The organization shall designate trained senior staff, such as a site director or executive staff, as the sole points of contact for immigration authorities. All staff are required to immediately refer any immigration enforcement personnel to designated leadership and should not independently engage. Staff may request to review any documentation presented and must verify the presence of a valid judicial warrant with the designated trained senior staff prior to granting access to any private areas. Staff shall not consent to entry into private or restricted spaces without proper legal authorization and are not required to provide information beyond what is legally mandated. All interactions should be conducted in a calm, professional manner consistent with organizational protocols.

Information Sharing & Confidentiality

The organization shall comply with CoC data privacy, HMIS confidentiality standards, and all applicable laws governing the protection of client information. Client records, including personally identifiable information and service data, shall not be disclosed to immigration authorities without a valid judicial warrant or subpoena. Staff shall not confirm the presence or location of any client and must immediately refer all information requests to designated leadership or legal counsel.

APPENDIX E: ORGANIZATIONAL POLICY – IMMIGRATION ENFORCEMENT PREPAREDNESS & RESPONSE (SAMPLE)

Site Access & Security

The organization shall maintain clear distinctions between public and private areas across all program sites and ensure that access controls are consistently enforced. Private areas shall be secured through appropriate measures, including locks, key fobs, or controlled access systems. All sites shall implement visitor management protocols, including sign-in procedures, and post signage clearly identifying restricted areas. These practices shall align with CoC program standards and site monitoring expectations.

Client Communication & Engagement

The organization shall provide participants with accessible information regarding their rights, including Know Your Rights materials, in languages appropriate to the populations served. Staff shall communicate that site policies and procedures are intended to ensure safety, privacy, and compliance and are not designed to surveil or penalize participants. Engagement practices should reflect trauma-informed and culturally responsive approaches consistent with CoC expectations.

Training & Implementation

The organization shall ensure that all staff receive training on this policy upon hire and participate in regular refresher trainings. Trainings shall include scenario-based exercises and be implemented across all shifts and program sites to ensure consistency. Training efforts should align with CoC program requirements and continuous quality improvement practices.

Legal & Community Partnerships

The organization shall maintain active relationships with qualified legal service providers and community-based organizations to support rapid response and legal guidance when needed. Contact information for these partners shall be maintained, regularly updated, and accessible to staff at all times.

Documentation & Reporting

All immigration enforcement encounters shall be documented in accordance with organizational and CoC reporting requirements. Documentation shall include the date, time, location, officer information (if available), actions requested, and actions taken by staff. Incidents shall be reported immediately to organizational leadership and legal counsel and, where applicable, in accordance with CoC contract reporting protocols.

Policy Review & Compliance

This policy shall be reviewed regularly to ensure alignment with evolving federal, state, and local laws, as well as CoC contractual obligations and guidance. Updates shall be communicated to staff in a timely manner, and compliance shall be monitored through internal review and supervisory oversight.

APPENDIX F: QUICK-RESPONSE SCRIPTS FOR STAFF

If officers are at the door / reception

“Hello. I’m not authorized to let anyone into private areas. Please show your documentation, and I will contact my supervisor.”

If officers ask to come inside

“I do not consent to entry into any private or restricted area. Please slide the warrant under the door or hold it up so I can review it.”

If officers present paperwork

“Thank you. I need to review this with my supervisor or legal counsel before responding.”

If the document is not signed by a judge

“This does not appear to be a judicial warrant signed by a judge. I cannot grant access to private areas based on this document.”

If officers ask about a client

“I’m not authorized to share information about any client, including whether someone is here. Please direct that request to our designated contact.”

If officers ask questions about staff or operations

“I’m not able to answer questions. Our supervisor or legal contact will speak with you.”

If officers try to move past reception

“This is a private area. I do not consent to entry. Please wait here while I contact our designated lead.”

If officers become insistent

“I am following organizational policy. I am contacting my supervisor now.”

APPENDIX G: JUDICIAL WARRANT (SAMPLE)

AO 93 (Rev. 11/13) Search and Seizure Warrant

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

for the

In the Matter of the Search of
*(Briefly describe the property to be searched
or identify the person by name and address)*

)
)
)
)
)
)

Case No.

SEARCH AND SEIZURE WARRANT

To: Any authorized law enforcement officer

An application by a federal law enforcement officer or an attorney for the government requests the search of the following person or property located in the _____ District of _____
(identify the person or describe the property to be searched and give its location):

I find that the affidavit(s), or any recorded testimony, establish probable cause to search and seize the person or property described above, and that such search will reveal *(identify the person or describe the property to be seized):*

YOU ARE COMMANDED to execute this warrant on or before _____ *(not to exceed 14 days)*

☐ in the daytime 6:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. ☐ at any time in the day or night because good cause has been established.

Unless delayed notice is authorized below, you must give a copy of the warrant and a receipt for the property taken to the person from whom, or from whose premises, the property was taken, or leave the copy and receipt at the place where the property was taken.

The officer executing this warrant, or an officer present during the execution of the warrant, must prepare an inventory as required by law and promptly return this warrant and inventory to _____

(United States Magistrate Judge)

☐ Pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 3103a(b), I find that immediate notification may have an adverse result listed in 18 U.S.C. § 2705 (except for delay of trial), and authorize the officer executing this warrant to delay notice to the person who, or whose property, will be searched or seized *(check the appropriate box)*

☐ for _____ days *(not to exceed 30)* ☐ until, the facts justifying, the later specific date of _____

Date and time issued:

Judge's signature

City and state:

Printed name and title

APPENDIX H: ADMINISTRATIVE ICE WARRANT (SAMPLE)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY Warrant for Arrest of Alien

File No. _____

Date: _____

To: Any immigration officer authorized pursuant to sections 236 and 287 of the Immigration and Nationality Act and part 287 of title 8, Code of Federal Regulations, to serve warrants of arrest for immigration violations

I have determined that there is probable cause to believe that _____
is removable from the United States. This determination is based upon:

- ☐ the execution of a charging document to initiate removal proceedings against the subject;
- ☐ the pendency of ongoing removal proceedings against the subject;
- ☐ the failure to establish admissibility subsequent to deferred inspection;
- ☐ biometric confirmation of the subject's identity and a records check of federal databases that affirmatively indicate, by themselves or in addition to other reliable information, that the subject either lacks immigration status or notwithstanding such status is removable under U.S. immigration law; and/or
- ☐ statements made voluntarily by the subject to an immigration officer and/or other reliable evidence that affirmatively indicate the subject either lacks immigration status or notwithstanding such status is removable under U.S. immigration law.

YOU ARE COMMANDED to arrest and take into custody for removal proceedings under the Immigration and Nationality Act, the above-named alien.

(Signature of Authorized Immigration Officer)

(Printed Name and Title of Authorized Immigration Officer)

Certificate of Service

I hereby certify that the Warrant for Arrest of Alien was served by me at _____
(Location)

on _____ on _____, and the contents of this
(Name of Alien) (Date of Service)

notice were read to him or her in the _____ language.
(Language)

Name and Signature of Officer

Name or Number of Interpreter (if applicable)

Form I-200 (Rev. 09/16)

APPENDIX I: FAMILY PREPAREDNESS PLAN (SAMPLE)

This plan helps ensure your family is prepared in case of an emergency or if a parent/caregiver is unexpectedly unavailable as a result of immigration enforcement.

1. Family Information

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Address: _____

Children/Dependents:

Name: _____ Age: ____

Name: _____ Age: ____

2. Emergency Contacts

Primary Caregiver:

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Backup Caregiver:

Name: _____

Phone: _____

3. Care Plan

- ☐ I have chosen a caregiver for my children
- ☐ My caregiver knows they may be contacted
- ☐ My caregiver has important documents

4. Important Documents

Keep these in one safe place:

- ☐ IDs / Passports
- ☐ Birth Certificates
- ☐ Medical Records
- ☐ School Information
- ☐ Important Contacts

Location of documents: _____

5. Communication Plan

Person to call first: _____

Second contact: _____

Emergency code word: _____

- ☐ My children know who to call
- ☐ My children know at least one phone number

6. Safe Places

Where can your children go if needed?

7. Health Information

Allergies / Medical Needs: _____

Doctor: _____

Phone: _____

8. Review

- ☐ I reviewed this plan in the last 6–12 months
- ☐ All contact information is up-to-date

Staff: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX J: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Shelter & Property Access

- **Can ICE enter shelters or private property without a warrant?**

ICE may detain individuals in public spaces with an administrative warrant. Entry into private spaces requires a judicial warrant.

- **What happens if ICE enters the property without respecting boundaries? Can residents sue?**

Residents and organizations should document and record interactions with ICE agents, which can later be used as evidence of wrongdoing in court. Secure spaces, signage, and staff training are important measures to safeguard our constitutional rights.

- **Does refusing entry to a private space without a judicial warrant or requesting a judicial warrant constitute harboring or obstruction?**

No. Refusing entry to a private space when agents do not have a judicial warrant or asking to see one does not constitute harboring or obstruction.

- **Is a car considered a private space?**

Yes, there is a reasonable expectation of privacy in a vehicle. Agents need a judicial warrant to search your car.

- **If private spaces become vulnerable, what should we expect and how should we prepare?**

Private spaces remain protected under the Fourth Amendment. Implementing a policy and training staff on responding to enforcement actions can help individuals prepare for a possible visit to their facility by agents. Document violations and maintain signage, policies, and security measures.

ICE Authority, Identification & Enforcement Activity

- **What role does local law enforcement play in federal immigration enforcement?**

Local law enforcement agencies generally enforce state and local laws, while ICE enforces federal immigration laws. Law enforcement's involvement in immigration enforcement varies significantly by jurisdiction, local policy, and cooperation agreements. In California, the California Values Act (SB 54), prohibits local law enforcement from using its resources for immigration enforcement, with limited exceptions.

- **Can ICE's vehicles be identified?**

ICE agents often use unmarked vehicles and may not wear identifiable uniforms.

- **Are ICE agents required to identify themselves?**

We have a right to ask agents to identify themselves but they may not always do so.

- **Can ICE pull people over? Must individuals show ID?**

ICE does not have authority for random traffic stops. ID is not required without a warrant. Do not run or lie. Narrate actions if documenting.

- **What is the role of bounty hunters or private investigators in immigration enforcement?**

Bounty hunters do not have authority to detain individuals. Physical apprehension by private actors would constitute kidnapping. ICE has reportedly paid private investigators for information leading to apprehensions. If physical assault or abduction occurs, contact law enforcement.

- **Is it legally permissible or advisable for staff to follow or monitor ICE agents or vehicles? What are the risks?**

It is not advisable to follow ICE agents or vehicles as this may put you in harm's way and/or risk you being charged with obstruction.

APPENDIX J: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Client Rights, Documentation & Legal Considerations

Are we required to hand over confidential client documents to ICE?

Yes, if a valid legal subpoena or judicial warrant for client documents is presented you may need to turn them over, but always seek legal counsel before responding to such a request.

What guidance applies to clients currently on probation or parole regarding ICE contact?

ICE agents appear to be using past criminal history as a possible reason to stop and detain individuals without legal status. If a program participant has a past criminal history and is stopped and/or detained by ICE, they should remember they have the right to remain silent, the right to document and record, the right to ask for a lawyer, and the right to request a judicial warrant for the search of private areas.

What should staff do if witnessing a detention?

Do not physically interfere. Document the incident and, if safe, gather identifying information of the person being detained. You can also ask agents where they are taking the detained person.

If a parent is detained by ICE, what is the timeline and procedure for the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) to rehome or place their children?

If parents have already arranged for a family member or trusted friend to care for their child, DCFS generally does not become involved. DCFS intervention typically occurs only when no appropriate caregiver is available and concerns about the child's welfare are reported. If no suitable caregiver can be identified or located, DCFS may place the child with a foster family on an emergency basis in accordance with agency protocols.

Are there additional protections for domestic violence survivors in ICE-related situations?

There are no known federal protections for domestic violence survivors specific to ICE enforcement. Some protections may exist at the state level. ICE is a federal agency; local law enforcement may be more receptive to context-specific concerns.

How should we address landlords threatening to call ICE on tenants?

False reporting may be illegal. These types of threats may violate state landlord-tenant laws. In California it is against the law for landlords to discriminate against tenants, retaliate against tenants, or influence tenants to move out by threatening to disclose a tenant's immigration status to immigration agents or law enforcement.



Unseen is a non-profit initiative that works to support communities too often written out of the American story.