

Preparing for ICE Raids in Your Local Community

Questions for schools and parishes to help guide your preparations

Archdiocese of Seattle – Immigrant and Refugee Ministry

Adapted from CLINIC *Rapid Response Toolkit* and Arkansas Immigrant Defense *Preparing for ICE Raids*

This guide offers questions to help guide you in preparing to support immigrant communities in the aftermath of a local ICE raids, especially children who find themselves suddenly without a parent present.

On the first day of school in 2019, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) raided locations in Mississippi and in so doing left children with nowhere to go.

“We were totally unprepared. Totally unprepared for our children to have no parents. And, preparation would have made a huge difference in the lives of our school’s students.” – A Mississippi school counselor

ICE Raids can result in children returning home to find their parents gone. They need a safe place to go for healthy food, sleep, to be entertained, and to get mental health support. Making plans now for what your school or parish could do in case parents are taken away can help to both be prepared as well as alleviate some of the anxiety and fear in our immigrant communities.

Issues and Challenges to Consider

Pastoral Support and Faith

You may consider holding a vigil or prayer service to bring the whole community together in support, but also recognize that immigrants may be reticent to gather in person after a raid.

- Many immigrants will seek the support and guidance of their pastor. What challenges will this pose and how might the parish respond?
- How might deacons or chaplains support these families?
- It may be of some comfort for families to know that immigrants detained at the ICE Processing Center in Tacoma are served by our Detention Center Chaplain. In addition, [AIDNW](#) operates a visitation program that may be able to help connect family members. However, immigrants picked up by ICE may be detained elsewhere.

The Language Barrier

In the wake of the raid, your school or parish may be overwhelmed by the need for people fluent in Spanish and other languages to respond to questions. A spreadsheet of all staff and key volunteers and what languages they speak will be helpful. There are many good interpretation apps now available. Some require creating an account and some have fees. Identifying which interpretation apps are used by your immigrant communities will be useful when needed.

Releasing Minors

Many immigrant parents have already prepared a Power of Attorney to designate someone as the child’s caretaker in the event they are taken by ICE. Parishes should encourage parents list alternative adults who have their permission to pick up children from parish activities. Schools should encourage parents to maintain updated contact information. Asking for this annually is likely insufficient. If you don’t already, consider doing this at the start of each semester or parish program. See the next item.

Encourage the creation of a Family Preparedness Plan

Gathering important documents is the first step to creating a plan for emergencies like this.

Encourage your immigrant families to gather documents such as passports, birth certificates, deeds, insurance policies, tax documents, medical and school records, and any arrest or conviction records.

For parents, now is the time to consider child care and guardianship options. Use Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc's Emergency Planning Guide at

<https://www.cliniclegal.org/resources/protecting-your-community/help-immigrants-protect-their-families-clinics-emergency>

Absenteeism, Isolation, and Food Insecurity

The day following the 2019 raid in Mississippi, approximately half of the school districts' Spanish-language students did not show up for school. The raid scared both children and parents into staying home.

- What assets, volunteers, and systems do you already have in place that could be used to support them?
- Could your school use the school buses to share information and updates, and distribute food?
- Do you have phone trees in place that could be used to contact parents?
- Could you enlist the help of your St. Vincent de Paul Conference to make home visits?

Mental Health and Anxiety Support

ICE Raids are extremely emotional times for children, parents, teachers, and staff.

- What role could school counselors offer after a raid and how?
- If your parish has a mental health ministry, what support could they offer?
- Recognize that older children may have to step into caregiving roles for younger siblings.
- Meet with staff and teachers to affirm that pastoral and mental health needs in these situations are more important than academics or other issues, and discuss what that may mean on a practical level.

Other Considerations

- Cameras and filming can increase anxiety. Review how and when activities at your school and parish use these, and if their use can be suspended for a time.
- Virtual meetings on Zoom and other platforms often automatically record sessions. Consider turning this off, allowing people to keep their camera turned off, and do not require attendees in virtual meetings or gatherings to identify themselves. Do not allow the use of AI assistants in virtual meetings. Know how to remove someone from a virtual meeting if they are being disruptive.
- People may need rental assistance if they lose their jobs because they are afraid to leave their children.