

How California Educators Can Support Immigrant Youth and Families

February 2025

What Educators Cannot or Should Not Do

- Do not push students to talk or share about their immigration traumas, details of their journey, or fears—in or out of class.
- Do not offer legal advice.
- Do not give any student records or information about students to ICE or other immigration officials.
- Do not panic.
- Do not contribute to a sense of instability or fear (even when well intentioned—there is enough fear to go around as it is).

How Educators Can Support, Advise, and Equip Students and Families

- **Center the needs and stated desires of students and their caregivers.**
- **Stay calm.** The most important thing we can do as advocates is stay calm and clear-eyed, to better support our students before, during, and after an emergency. Anticipate your possible reactions so that you are prepared. If you cannot stay calm, that is not a moral failing. Call in a colleague for support and remove yourself from the situation.
- **Help create positive experiences** for students to be young people. Offer school as a safe space during trying times.
- **Partner with legal organizations** to:
 - Provide Know Your Rights trainings to all students and families (note that an online option, e.g., Zoom, may be more comfortable for families).
 - Provide representation, consultation, and legal guidance to students and families. At this time, many communities throughout California lack the resources to make legal support a reality for all or even many students. Legal organizations throughout the state are working to make such partnerships a reality. In the absence of legal resources, it is still important to know what legal organizations are in your area and what supports they can provide in advance of or in case of an emergency.

Purpose

- To provide educators with information about rights, responsibilities, and opportunities when supporting immigrant youth in a tense immigration climate
- To encourage and model school- and district-wide protocols in service of newcomer youth
- To equip caring educators who don't have systemic support in their schools or districts
- To counteract fearmongering and ground communities in our rights, the facts, and what we can do to support one another

- **Equip families with knowledge and resources:**
 - **Provide Red Cards** to use in case of an encounter with law enforcement. Teach students and/or families how to use the cards.
 - **Share the NIJC’s document “Know Your Rights: If You Encounter ICE.”**
 - **Encourage and support families to create preparedness plans** in the event that someone in their family is detained or deported. You can say something like: “This is a really scary time. Here are some things you can do to feel more in control and as prepared should your family come in contact with ICE.” [Here is a sample plan from the ILRC.](#)
 - Encourage students and families to **memorize phone numbers of trusted adults**, family members, attorneys (or county rapid response hotlines), if applicable, in case a student or their loved one is detained or deported.
 - Encourage families to **keep all important records in one place**, and store copies of them digitally as well as in a second trusted location.
 - Encourage families to **update their school emergency contacts** to include a range of people including, if possible, someone with stable immigration status.
 - Educate families about the **Caregiver Authorization Affidavit**, a form that can authorize a qualified adult to make medical and educational decisions on a behalf of a minor if their parent is unable to do so.
 - Connect with local immigrant-supporting organizations and volunteer initiatives.
 - Be mindful of **what documents to carry** (see [detailed guidelines from NILC](#)):
 - Do **not** carry foreign identity documents or copies;
 - **Do** carry a paper copy of any upcoming hearing notices or pending immigration applications or appointments, if applicable;
 - **Do** carry documents showing you have been in the United States for 2+ years, if applicable, for example:
 - School records—vaccination records and attendance records
 - Documents—utility bills and a signed lease
 - Schools can provide a letter attesting to regular parent/guardian attendance at school events or pickups.
- Telegraph that you are **a safe person** (and/or or that your school is **a safe place**) for students:
 - Share information about sanctuary district policies and ICE protocols with families;
 - Post immigrant rights posters around your classroom or campus;
 - Host immigrant rights events, cultural celebrations, and family support sessions;
 - Post signs in multiple languages and hold multilingual events.
- **Understand district and/or county protocols** (and create or agitate for such protocols at your school/district). Many districts have policies in place that outline what to do if ICE comes to campus—who responds to and communicates with ICE. (Here’s a [sample ICE protocol from OUSD](#).)
- **If you learn of an immigration action or someone in immigration crisis:**
 - Stay calm and don’t panic. If you cannot stay calm, pass the relevant information to another trusted staff person.
 - Know your chain of command and do not communicate with ICE (unless that is your designated responsibility).
 - Do not share student information with ICE.
 - Collect as many details as possible about the situation and write them down.
 - Call your [local rapid response hotline](#), if you have one.
 - Debrief with colleagues to make a follow-up plan and/or to finetune your protocol for the next incident.

Basic Student and Family Rights, Recommendations, and Resources

Many Know Your Rights trainings that used to happen inside and outside of detention have been terminated by the Trump administration. While school staff should not give legal advice, they can educate students about their most basic rights, and direct them to the following resources.

- Students and families should Know Their Rights. [Here is a great document that outlines a person's rights with ICE, as well as multilingual videos from the ACLU.](#)
- **Key rights that everyone has, regardless of immigration status:**
 - The right to remain silent;
 - The right to refuse a government agent from entering your house, unless they have a judicial warrant (a warrant signed by a judge) with your name on it;
 - The right to seek legal counsel, though immigration attorneys are not provided by the government free of charge.
- Students and families **should not:**
 - Sign any government documents without first talking to a lawyer;
 - Let ICE inside their home unless a government agent has a judicial warrant (a warrant signed by a judge) with your name on it;
 - Lie to authorities;
 - Commit crimes or get arrested;
 - Apply for any immigration benefit (e.g., work permit, green card) without first talking to an immigration attorney.
- Students and families should attend all immigration court hearings **even if they do not have an attorney. To check** if/when and where they have a hearing, **go online or call.**
- Students and families should apply for a California ID.

Monthly Updates

Immigrant Legal Defense will be holding monthly "Immigration Law and Policy Updates with ILD for California Educators" on Zoom, the third Tuesday of every month. For more information, see ild.org/upcoming-events.

Statewide Immigration Enforcement Hotline: 916-319-0795

Many communities have their own rapid-response hotlines to track, monitor, and fact-check ICE raids and arrests. In January 2025, the California Department of Education set up a statewide immigration hotline "in order to provide timely support, guidance, and connections to resources" for California educators. The state encourages educators to leave a message on this hotline regarding any ICE enforcement issues and concerns. Messages will be responded to as quickly as possible. **The hotline number is 916-319-0795.**