



# Protecting Our School Communities:

## A Response to ICE Enforcement

---

Schools should always be places of learning, stability, and belonging. In moments when fear or uncertainty is present in the broader community, schools often become essential sources of reassurance, routine, and support for young people and their families.

We believe that children and families should be able to access school safely and without disruption. School grounds have historically been treated as sensitive spaces, recognizing that students' right to learn and families' ability to bring children to school should not be compromised by immigration enforcement activity. When enforcement occurs at or near schools, it can undermine that stability and [affect entire learning communities](#).

Right now, many students, families, and school communities are experiencing trauma, stress, or uncertainty related to existing immigration enforcement activity or the fear that it may occur. These impacts extend beyond those directly involved and can influence students' sense of safety, focus, and well-being.

This includes students witnessing family or community members being detained, including on or near school grounds. In some cases, students and staff have been exposed to aggressive enforcement tactics, including the use of force or chemical agents on school grounds. Even students who are not directly impacted may feel worried, distracted, or unsettled. In times like these, the steady presence of caring adults, predictable school routines, and welcoming environments matter more than ever.

This guide offers general considerations for how school communities can support students and families. It is not legal advice. Schools should continue to follow district policies and consult district leadership and legal counsel when specific legal questions arise.

Our hope is that this resource reinforces what schools do best: creating safe, affirming spaces where all students can learn, grow, and feel supported.



## The Role of Schools: Stability, Safety & Systems

Schools are not immigration enforcement agencies. Public schools are legally required to educate students regardless of immigration status, a protection affirmed by the Supreme Court in [Plyler v. Doe](#). Schools also have a responsibility to protect the privacy of student information under federal law, including the [Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act \(FERPA\)](#). These legal foundations help to ensure that schools remain safe and accessible places of learning, not sites of immigration enforcement.

Since 2011, schools have been identified as “sensitive locations” by CBP and ICE, where agents were instructed to avoid enforcement activity. That had been longstanding practice prior to recent policy shifts by this current administration.

The role of schools is caring for students, supporting learning, and maintaining environments where young people feel safe and able to grow, especially during times of community stress. Strong school climates and clear preparation help schools respond calmly and consistently.

### SCHOOLS AND DISTRICT LEADERS CAN SUPPORT THIS BY:



#### **Providing stability and routine**

Predictable schedules and familiar procedures help students feel grounded.



#### **Protecting student dignity and privacy**

Respecting confidentiality and following student privacy expectations builds trust.



#### **Maintaining welcoming, inclusive environments**

Students need visible reminders that they belong.



#### **Communicating clearly and calmly**

Sharing factual information and avoiding speculation reduces fear.



#### **Connecting families with trusted resources**

Schools can bridge families to legal, mental health, and social services.



#### **Ensuring staff understand roles and procedures**

When staff know expectations, schools can respond steadily.



#### **Identifying who leads communication**

Clear communication channels prevent confusion during unstable moments.



#### **Planning for multilingual outreach**

Families should receive information in languages they understand.

Preparedness supports calm, coordinated responses and reinforces schools as places of learning and belonging.



# What School Communities Can Do Right Now

## ASK YOUR SCHOOL BOARD TO ADOPT A SAFE & WELCOMING SCHOOLS RESOLUTION

School boards can set clear expectations and protocols so staff know how to respond if immigration enforcement seeks access to campuses, students, or records.

One of the most effective ways to do this is through a school board resolution.

### Sample School Board Resolution

Affirming Safe and Welcoming Schools and Establishing Protocols Related to Immigration Enforcement

WHEREAS, public schools are legally and morally obligated to provide safe learning environments for all students;

WHEREAS, all children have the right to access public education regardless of immigration status (*Plyler v. Doe*);

WHEREAS, student education records are protected by federal privacy law (FERPA);

WHEREAS, fear of immigration enforcement activity disrupts student learning, attendance, and well-being;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that [DISTRICT NAME] affirms:

- 1 Welcoming Schools**  
All students are welcome and have equal access to education and services regardless of immigration status.
- 2 No Immigration Status Collection**  
Staff shall not ask about or collect immigration status information unless specifically required by law.
- 3 Student Privacy**  
Student information will not be shared with immigration enforcement except as required by FERPA and applicable law, and only after review by district leadership and legal counsel.
- 4 Campus Access Protocol:** Any request from immigration enforcement must be directed to the principal and the Superintendent. No access to non-public areas or students will be granted without legally sufficient documentation reviewed by district administration.
- 5 District Resources:** District personnel and resources will not be used for civil immigration enforcement purposes.
- 6 Clear Procedures:** The Superintendent shall maintain written procedures and provide staff training.
- 7 Support for Students:** The District will ensure access to counseling and support services.
- 8 Communication:** This resolution and procedures will be communicated to families in appropriate languages.



## Email/Call Script to Your School Board

You can use the following as a guide when contacting your school board about adopting a resolution like the one included above. Be sure to send your message to all board members and the superintendent.

*Hello [Board Member Name],*

*I'm writing to ask the board to adopt a Safe and Welcoming Schools resolution that sets clear procedures for any immigration enforcement request involving students, campuses, or records, and that reinforces student privacy protections under federal law.*

*Our [district name] students deserve to learn without fear, and our staff deserve clear guidance and protocols. Taking this step would help ensure that all students and families know they are valued members of our school community and that our schools remain focused on learning, safety, and support.*

*Please place a resolution like the one I have attached on the agenda and vote to adopt it. Thank you for your leadership and your commitment to our students.*

*[City]*

*[Name]*

*[Connection to the school community]*

## Supporting Students Experiencing Fear, Trauma, or Family Disruption

Immigration enforcement activity, or even the possibility of it, can be deeply distressing for students, families, and staff. Some students may be coping with the detention of a parent, caregiver, or family member, including sudden separation or uncertainty about where a loved one is. Others may witness enforcement actions in their community or at school. These experiences can create fear, grief, confusion, and a loss of stability. Even students who are not directly impacted may worry about friends or family members and feel unsettled.

Students may show their distress in different ways, including difficulty concentrating, changes in behavior, withdrawal, heightened anxiety, emotional outbursts, or fatigue. Responses may reflect trauma, shock, or ongoing uncertainty.

### SCHOOLS CAN SUPPORT STUDENTS BY

- \* **Keeping routines consistent:** Predictability helps students feel grounded and reinforces that school remains a stable place.
- \* **Using trauma-informed practices:** Patience, flexibility, and steady adult presence help students who may be carrying stress.
- \* **Ensuring counselors, social workers, and trusted adults are visible and accessible:** Students benefit from knowing where they can turn for support.
- \* **Providing calm spaces:** Supportive environments give students opportunities to regroup when needed.
- \* **Clearly communicating policies with families:** Sharing district policies and procedures that guide staff response if immigration enforcement agents come to school or if a student or their family is impacted by immigration enforcement.
- \* **Being prepared and following established protocols:** When staff understand procedures and roles, schools can respond calmly and maintain stability, including supporting students if a caregiver becomes unexpectedly unavailable.

Emotional safety is an essential part of school safety.

## LGBTQ+ Students in Immigrant Families

LGBTQ+ students in mixed-status or undocumented families often navigate layered experiences of vulnerability and resilience, balancing concerns about identity, family safety, and belonging at the same time.

### SCHOOLS CAN SUPPORT STUDENTS BY

- \* Build visible cultures of belonging
- \* LGBTQ+ students should see themselves reflected through inclusive language, policies, daily practices and classroom visuals that signal safety and belonging.
- \* Protect student privacy and confidentiality
- \* Trust is foundational, especially for students whose families may fear exposure to institutions.
- \* Assure every student has an affirming adult
- \* One caring, affirming adult can help students navigate uncertainty and increase a student's sense of safety and connectedness.
- \* Affirming school climates can help buffer the effects of stress and uncertainty.

## Communicating with Families

Clear, compassionate communication helps reduce fear, prevent misinformation, and reinforce schools as steady, trusted institutions. During times of uncertainty, families often look to their schools for reassurance, accurate information, and signals of stability.

Thoughtful communication can help families feel informed without increasing alarm.

### SCHOOLS AND DISTRICTS CAN

- \* **Share information from trusted legal and community organizations:** Provide links and contacts from credible sources rather than interpreting legal issues directly.
- \* **Communicate in multiple languages whenever possible:** Ensure families receive information in languages they understand, using translation and interpretation support.
- \* **Remind families of student privacy protections:** Reassure families that schools follow laws protecting student and family records and handle sensitive information carefully.
- \* **Be clear about school procedures and roles:** Let families know who to contact with questions and how the school responds to safety or legal concerns.
- \* **Avoid sharing unverified information or rumors:** Speculation can heighten anxiety. Stick to confirmed information and school-specific guidance.
- \* **Use a calm, steady tone:** Communication should be supportive and measured, emphasizing care and continuity rather than urgency or alarm.
- \* **Maintain regular communication rhythms:** Familiar formats — newsletters, robocalls, parent portals — help reinforce stability.

Consistent, transparent communication strengthens trust and helps families feel supported, even when broader circumstances feel uncertain.

## Educator & School Community Resources

Educators and school communities do not have to navigate these challenges alone.

Many organizations offer tools, legal information, and practical guidance to help schools respond to immigration enforcement impacts in ways that support student well-being and safe learning environments.

Knowing your own rights and helping families find trusted support can reduce fear and uncertainty. The resources below are a starting point to help schools stay informed, strengthen readiness, and connect families with support.

Schools are trusted community hubs and play an important role in helping families access accurate information and services during difficult times.

### SCHOOLS AND SCHOOL LEADERS CAN

- \* Stay informed using trusted sources
- \* Share information from reliable organizations
- \* Connect families with legal, mental health, and social service resources.
- \* Create and distribute “Know Your Rights” and other guides for students and families.
- \* Coordinate with trusted community partners

Schools do not need to solve every challenge alone. Helping families find accurate information and dependable support is both meaningful and impactful.

1

#### Education-Focused Resources

These materials help schools build knowledge, strengthen readiness, and reinforce their role as steady, supportive spaces for students.

[American Federation of Teachers \(AFT\) — Immigration + ICE Raids Resources](#)  
[National Education Association \(NEA\) — Guidance on Immigration Issues](#)  
[UnidosUS — Resources for Educators](#)

2

#### Knowing and Exercising Your Rights

Understanding legal rights can help reduce fear, counter misinformation, and empower individuals to advocate for themselves and others.

##### Immigration Legal Rights

[American Civil Liberties Union \(ACLU\) — Immigrants' Rights](#)  
[Immigrant Legal Resource Center — Know Your Rights & Advocate Training](#)  
[Immigrant Defense Project — Know Your Rights with ICE](#)  
[National Immigrant Justice Center — ICE Encounter Guidance](#)

##### Protest & Civic Engagement Safety

[ACLU — Protesters' Rights](#)  
[Human Rights Campaign \(HRC\) — Preparedness, Peaceful Protesting, and Safety](#)