



ICE Rapid Response System Checklist

With increased U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement activity in our communities and on our campuses, being prepared to protect and support immigrants is critical for the safety and security of students, colleagues and the larger community. A strong rapid response system is built on preparedness, coordination, trust, verification and execution. This requires careful planning, not just reaction. The overall goals are early detection of suspected activity, rapid communication, and coordination among institutions, unions, student groups and community partners. While this checklist is designed to respond to immigration enforcement actions, its structure can also be used to respond to attacks on other marginalized groups. The following checklist draws from several reputable models in healthcare, K-12 education and higher education that have proven effective in protecting lives and minimizing harm.

1. Establish a core rapid response team.

This team must be trained and authorized to activate the campus immigration emergency plan when enforcement action is suspected or confirmed.

- Identify a coordinated team with clearly defined roles:
 - Lead organizer / coordinator;
 - Legal liaison (partner attorney or legal organization);
 - Communications lead;
 - Campus observer network coordinator;
 - Community liaison (local immigrant rights organizations);
 - Student coordinator lead; and
 - Institutional liaison.
- Develop a 24/7 contact communication chain with backup contacts.
- Create a rapid decision-making protocol for urgent incidents.

2. Build legal partnerships and response protocols.

Partner with trusted legal organizations and lawyers, such as the National Immigration Law Center, the American Civil Liberties Union or other local immigration attorneys, and integrate them into the response protocols.

- Review judicial warrant requirement protocols for nonpublic spaces.
- Create “know-your-rights” guidance.
- Create constitutional and legal observer training materials.
- Create emergency legal response protocols.
- Create a legal hotline (or use an established one) or identify a rapid escalation contact.

3. Develop clear incident response protocols.

- Define what qualifies as a “trigger event” to activate your rapid response system. These could include:
 - Confirmed ICE presence on campus;
 - Detention activity nearby;
 - Community raids or sightings; and
 - Requests for help from campus community members.
- Create step-by-step response actions, such as:
 - A verification process (to avoid misinformation);
 - An internal notification process;
 - External alert protocols;
 - Documentation and reporting protocols; and
 - Clear escalation and de-escalation protocols.
- Develop a standardized system to document incidents, including:
 - Date, time, location, number of agents, and the agency (or agencies) conducting the operation;
 - Description of ICE activity; and
 - Witness accounts.
- Maintain secure data storage with privacy protections.
- Track patterns and share aggregated data with partners for advocacy purposes.



4. Create a campus and community observer network.

- Recruit and train union members and allies as constitutional observers.
- Provide training on:
 - Legal observation and documentation;
 - De-escalation and situational awareness;
 - Personal risk assessment, safety and non-interference;
 - Private vs. public space, and legal limitations;
 - “Know your rights” (students, staff, faculty).
 - How to respond to ICE presence; and
- Integrate resources and frameworks from reliable sources such as the AFT, the Presidents’ Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration, the National Immigration Law Center and the ACLU.
- Provide scenario-based drills (similar to hospital rapid response simulations).
- Assign geographic or departmental coverage zones.
- Establish a secure reporting channel (encrypted or verified system).
- Integrate with legal and rapid response teams.

5. Build a secure communication system.

- Use multichannel alerts, such as text messaging systems, phone trees and encrypted messaging apps such as Signal.
- Maintain a verified alert list (students, staff, faculty, community partners).
- Maintain a strict, verifiable protocol to confirm ICE activity before issuing alerts (to avoid panic).
- Ensure accessibility and multilingual communication.

6. Coordinate with campus administration to the extent possible.

- Engage the administration proactively by:
 - Creating campuswide “know your rights” trainings and protocols for safety plans.
 - Clarifying campus policies regarding immigration enforcement actions on campus.
 - Understanding Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act protections and campus law enforcement roles.
 - Reviewing campus agreements with the Department of Homeland Security and ICE.
- Advocate for:
 - “Sensitive locations” protections;
 - Institutional commitment to limit cooperation with ICE; and
 - Review of data collection policies.
- Ensure transparency in policies and emergency procedures.

7. Develop rapid mobilization plans.

- Preplan actions such as:
 - Rallies or visibility responses (when safe);
 - Legal support deployment; and
 - Media responses.
- Identify safe gathering points and establish clear de-escalation guidance.
- Coordinate with community partners for broader mobilization.
- Develop support protocols for detained campus community members.

8. Strengthen community partnerships.

- Build relationships with:
 - Local immigrant rights groups;
 - Faith-based organizations;
 - Other labor unions;
 - Community rapid response networks; and
 - Mutual aid groups.
- Align protocols with existing community-based rapid response systems.

9. Create internal and external communication protocols.

- Draft preapproved talking points for:
 - Media inquiries;
 - Member communications; and
 - Internal and external communication about encounters.
- Identify trained spokespeople.
- Establish protocols for:
 - Social media alerts;
 - Press statements;
 - Internal updates; and
 - External updates.

10. Protect privacy and data.

- Limit data collection to essential information.
- Ensure secure storage of sensitive information.
- Provide restricted access protocols for your committee.
- Avoid maintaining unnecessary records that could expose individuals’ identifiable information.

11. Regularly review and improve the system.

- Conduct regular post-action reviews after any incident or drill to designated personnel.
- Update protocols based on lessons learned, policy changes and community feedback.
- Maintain ongoing training and system refreshers.

Resources

Northeastern Illinois University ICE Response Group—[Teaching Resources Packet](#) (syllabus language and classroom protocols)

Migrant Justice—[Campaigns: Rapid Response](#)

Siembra NC/Defend and Recruit/Make NC Work—[National Workplace Guide: Fourth Amendment Workplaces](#)

Legal Aid Justice Center—[Rapid Response Toolkit](#)

California Collaborative for Immigrant Justice—[Community Resources](#)

Presidents' Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration—[Immigration Enforcement on Campuses: What You Need to Know](#)

AFT—[All the Resources You Need on Immigration and ICE](#)