



A Salesian Guide for Supporting Young People of Immigrant Families

SALESIAN NETWORK
of SCHOOLS USA WEST





A Salesian Commitment to Love and Protection

As Salesians of Don Bosco, we have a special responsibility to care for and protect the most vulnerable in our communities. This guide is not a political statement; rather, it is a call to live out our Catholic values by ensuring the safety and well-being of all students, especially those facing the uncertainty and fear of deportation. By preparing, we can provide our students and their families with the protection, support, and compassion they need during one of the most difficult experiences of their lives.

This guide offers strategies for educators, administrators, and support staff to respond effectively and compassionately in the event of an Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) raid on a Salesian school campus. Rooted in the Salesian values of love, protection, and solidarity, it aims to protect our immigrant students from the risks of human trafficking, abandonment, or exploitation if they or their parents are detained. While we hope never to face such a situation, it is essential to prepare in advance. This preparation ensures that we can act swiftly and effectively to safeguard our students and provide the necessary support. Our response must remain non-political, grounded instead in the teachings of the Gospel, Catholic social doctrine, and Salesian spirituality, which call us to approach every situation with compassion, justice, and pastoral care.

As Salesian and Catholic educators, we are called to live out the Gospel's message of love, mercy, and justice, especially for the most vulnerable among us. The dignity of each child is at the heart of our mission, and we are entrusted with the responsibility to protect their right to an education, safety, and a future filled with hope. In moments of crisis, such as an ICE raid, it is our duty to respond with urgency, compassion, and a spirit of solidarity, rooted deeply in our Salesian philosophy of education and Catholic social teaching.

Let us always remember: *"Do not be afraid, for I am with you"* (Isaiah 41:10). In these moments of crisis, our schools must be places of refuge, solidarity, and hope.



Rooted in Salesian Spirituality and Education

Salesian education is a mission of love, respect, and accompaniment. Inspired by St. John Bosco, we are called to be guides, mentors, and protectors of young people, especially those who are at risk. Don Bosco's preventive system of education emphasizes the importance of creating a loving environment where students feel safe, respected, and cared for. In the face of crisis, we must remember that our mission is to help young people grow in their faith, hope, and love for others.

This is a moment for us to embody that Salesian spirit of accompaniment and care. We must not only protect students' physical safety but also support their emotional and spiritual well-being. We are called to be present with them, to offer hope, and to ensure that they know they are not alone.

Collaboration: A Unified Salesian Response

As Salesian educators, we are not just teachers—we are protectors, advocates, and companions on the journey. In times of crisis, especially when the safety and well-being of our immigrant students are at risk, we must respond with compassion, justice, and unwavering commitment to the values of the Gospel.

This is a call to unite across our Salesian Network of Schools, collaborate with diocesan offices, and partner with local organizations to ensure our response is rooted in love, justice, and protection. Our collective strength lies in working together. We must work closely with legal aid organizations, social services, and local community groups to ensure that families have access to the support they need. This includes connecting families to legal resources, providing information about their rights, and offering a network of support to help them navigate the crisis.

The well-being of our students and their families must remain our priority, and we can achieve this only through a united effort. By sharing resources, knowledge, and support across schools, dioceses, and advocacy groups, we can offer a compassionate, comprehensive response, ensuring that every student is cared for and protected, especially in the face of threats like an ICE raid. We are not alone in this mission. Together, we can make sure every child has the opportunity to live, grow, and thrive in safety, dignity, and love.



The Salesian Call to Protect the Most Vulnerable

The care of children is a responsibility that extends beyond the classroom. As a school community, it is crucial to remember that children left without their parents face significant risk of exploitation. The absence of parents due to ICE raids creates a dangerous void that can expose children to human trafficking, physical harm, and abandonment. We must ensure that every child has a safe place to go, the support they need to thrive, and access to food, health care, and mental health services.

In a situation where our students may face the loss of their parents due to an ICE raid, we are called to be a source of stability and protection. Our role as educators extends beyond academic instruction; we are also pastoral guides who must provide a sanctuary of care and compassion.

- **Listening and Support:** We must listen to the needs of our students, recognizing the trauma, fear, and confusion they may be experiencing. By offering a compassionate presence, we can create a safe space for them to process their emotions and find hope in the midst of uncertainty.
- **Education as Protection:** One of the most powerful ways we can protect our students is by ensuring they have uninterrupted access to education. Regardless of immigration status, every child has the right to learn, to grow, and to be nurtured. Our classrooms should be places where every student feels valued, welcomed, and secure, regardless of their background or legal situation.
- **Urgency in Action:** Time is of the essence in these situations. When parents or guardians are detained, the impact on children is immediate and profound. We must be prepared to respond quickly, with a well-thought-out plan in place, ensuring that students are not left vulnerable to exploitation or abandonment. Our response should be swift but rooted in pastoral care—offering not only protection but also emotional and psychological support during what could be a traumatic time for them.



A PLAN OF ACTION

In the spirit of Don Bosco, our mission is not only to educate but to provide a safe environment where every child feels loved, valued, and protected. This guide is designed to help you create a plan that will safeguard the well-being of your immigrant students.

1. Create a Safe Environment

The school will establish clear and immediate policies and procedures to ensure that, in the event ICE or other law enforcement show up on campus, all students and families continue to feel safe, respected, and able to learn in a peaceful environment.

2. Develop Procedures for Responding to Immigration Officer's Presence on Campus

The school should appoint a designated point person, or "rapid responder," to manage any situations where ICE or other law enforcement agencies arrive on campus. This individual will be responsible for communicating directly with immigration authorities, including speaking with ICE officials if they seek permission to enter the school. Additionally, other staff members should be assigned to document any interactions with immigration officials, using written notes and cellphone photos or videos to ensure a clear record of the event.

3. Formation and Training for Faculty and Staff

The school should create training programs for all staff members—teachers, administrators, and support staff—on how to handle immigration-related matters. This will include guidance on how to respond if an immigration officer asks to visit the school or gain access to a student. Additionally, if possible, the school will appoint an Immigrant Affairs Liaison. This person will help organize the training for staff, offer support and non-legal advice to families, and assist with communication between the school, local government, and other important community partners. This approach ensures that our school community is well-informed, supported, and able to maintain a safe, welcoming environment for all.



4. Overcoming Language Barriers and Ensuring Communication

In the aftermath of an ICE raid, one of the most immediate challenges will be communication. Many of our immigrant students and their families may not speak English fluently, making it harder for them to access the support and information they need.

- **Staffing for Language Support:** Designate a lead faculty or staff member to coordinate communication efforts for non-English-speaking families. Identify staff who speak the most common languages represented in your community, such as Spanish, Mandarin, Cantonese, Vietnamese, etc. This list should be comprehensive, including not only teachers and administrators but also custodians and support staff. A well-maintained, easily accessible database of staff language capabilities is essential.
- **Active Outreach:** In the event of an ICE raid, reach out proactively to non-English-speaking families in their native language. Ensure that they understand the resources the school offers, including mental health services, opportunities to continue learning remotely, and updates on the situation.

5. Supporting Families Through Emergencies

In many cases, immigrant families may have prepared for the possibility of a parent being detained by ICE by designating a trusted adult to take custody of their children in such an event. However, this process must be clear, and schools should take steps to facilitate these transitions.

- **Power of Attorney and Emergency Contacts:** Encourage immigrant families to designate a trusted family member or friend as a backup caregiver for their children in case of an ICE raid or other emergency. Schools should request this information from parents and ensure that contact details are up to date.
- **Releasing Students to Non-Custodial Guardians:** While the ideal scenario is to release students only to their listed guardians, in an emergency, the school should have flexibility in checking out students. Staff may, for example, allow non-custodial family members to pick up children if they can verify the child's identity, such as through a photo or social media connection.

Resources for power of attorney and guardianship:

<https://www.cliniclegal.org/resources/state-and-local/planning-possibility-enforcement-standby-guardianship-immigrant-parents>



6. Anticipating Increased Absenteeism and Vulnerability

ICE raids will likely lead to increased absenteeism as students and parents may stay home out of fear. In addition, families who are already living with the uncertainty of immigration status may experience food insecurity, heightened anxiety, and a lack of resources.

- **Community Outreach:** Schools should consider going into the community to provide important information on immigration legal services, school updates, and resources like food distribution. If possible, schools should create a plan for checking in with families directly, particularly those who may be too fearful to come to the school.
- **Food and Mental Health Support:** In the spirit of Catholic charity and Salesian care, schools must be ready to provide meals and mental health support to students and families in need. Ensure that mental health professionals are available to address the trauma, fear, and anxiety that students and their families may experience during and after an ICE raid.

7. Providing Mental Health and Emotional Support

The emotional toll of an ICE raid on students and families can be profound. It is vital for schools to offer both immediate and ongoing support to help students and parents cope with the anxiety, fear, and trauma they may be facing.

- **Creating Safe Spaces:** Schools should designate spaces where students can receive emotional support, whether through individual counseling or group sessions. Consider providing students with access to chaplains or spiritual counselors who can offer comfort and a sense of peace during a difficult time.
- **Supporting Faculty and Staff:** Educators, too, may experience stress or grief related to the events unfolding. Providing mental health support for staff—especially those who work directly with vulnerable students—is crucial to maintaining a healthy school environment.

Resources for mental health:

https://immigrantsrising.org/wp-content/uploads/Immigrants-Rising_Mental-Health-Resources-for-Undocumented-People.pdf



8. Frequently Asked Questions for School Officials

- **Q: What happens to students when their parents are detained by ICE?**

A: If parents are detained, the Department of Human Services (DHS) may intervene to care for the child. The child could be placed with relatives or other guardians, similar to the process for children in other emergency situations. Schools should remain in contact with local agencies to ensure that students are placed safely.

- **Q: Can ICE raid a school?**

A: Under recent policy changes, ICE is no longer restricted from conducting raids at schools. However, schools retain the right to refuse entry without proper legal documentation, such as a valid arrest warrant.

- **Q: Can ICE access student records or interview students?**

A: No. Immigration officials do not have the right to access student records or conduct interviews with students without the presence of a legal guardian or an attorney. Schools are under no obligation to cooperate with immigration enforcement in these matters, and the confidentiality of student information must be maintained.

- **Q: What should I do if ICE comes to our school with an arrest warrant?**

A: The school should immediately contact its legal counsel. An arrest warrant must be signed by a judge and specifically identify the person to be arrested. ***If ICE presents an administrative warrant, it is not legally binding, and the school should not comply.***



9. Steps for Dealing with Law Enforcement at School

If ICE or other law enforcement agents come to the school:

- **Request Identification:** Ask to see identification from all officers or agents involved. Document their names and badge numbers.
- **Request a Judicial Warrant:** If they present a warrant, request a copy, ensuring it is signed by a judge.
- **Consult Legal Counsel:** Contact the school's attorney immediately. If the request is for student data or to interview a student, ensure that legal counsel is present before proceeding.
- **Protect Student Information:** Do not release any student information or schedule details without consulting with legal counsel.

SOURCES

Catholic Legal Immigration Network (CLINIC)

USCCB's Justice for Immigrants

Immigrant Legal Resource Center

National Immigration Law Center

LOCAL HOTLINES

Report and document raids and arrests. One hotline is the United We Dream's hotline to report a raid: 1-844-363-1423. Or texts can be sent to 877877

Community-based Rapid Response Networks:

- Alameda County
 - Centro Legal at (510) 437-1554 during the operating hours of 9AM - 5PM
- Contra Costa County
 - Stand Together at (925) 900-5151
- Los Angeles County
 - Rapid Response Network at (888) 624-4752
 - CHIRLA at (213) 201-3797



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- https://www.ilrc.org/sites/default/files/resources/family_preparedness_plan_v3-20170323.pdf
- https://justiceforimmigrants.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/Responding-to-Immigration-Enforcement-Efforts_FINAL.pdf
- <https://www.usccb.org/resources/protectedareas.pdf>
- <https://www.cliniclegal.org/issues/know-your-rights>
- <https://www.cliniclegal.org/issues/family-separation>
- <https://www.cliniclegal.org/file-download/download/public/333>
- <https://www.nea.org/sites/default/files/2025-01/nea-immigration-guidance-booklet-2025.pdf>
- <https://esign.com/power-of-attorney/ca/minor-child/>
- <https://oag.ca.gov/sites/all/files/agweb/pdfs/bcj/school-guidance-model-k12.pdf>
- https://www.ilrc.org/sites/default/files/resources/family_preparedness_plan_v3.pdf
- https://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/resources//child_trauma_toolkit_educators.pdf
- https://files.ecatholic.com/22403/documents/2019/10/Resources_Immigration_3.20.17.pdf?t=1571600876000