



American Public Human Services Association

*State and local health and human services agencies work tirelessly to ensure the well-being of all people, often responding to disruptions and crisis at the family, neighborhood, and regional levels with vital services, coordination, and supports. Recent large-scale immigration enforcement activities serve as a reminder that human services agencies—alongside schools, community organizations, and places of worship—play a key role in promoting resiliency for affected families and the neighborhoods in which they live. We know that agency leaders are developing and refining plans on how to best support children and families impacted by immigration enforcement systems and APHSA seeks to continue to support that work on an ongoing basis. The following offers a number of recommendations and resources focused on preparing the workforce, mitigating harm to children, understanding the legal parameters, and building family and community resiliency:*

**Support dissemination of family emergency planning materials through networks of community-based organizations, school partners, faith communities, and advocates in your community.** The [Women’s Refugee Commission’s Parental Rights Toolkit](#) includes useful information on protecting parental rights when detained or deported, making care arrangements for children, determining if a child is in the child welfare system and participating in that system’s process, as well as important, state-specific handbooks for parents with children in the child welfare system, guidance on how to request appointed counsel in family court, and contact information for child welfare agencies in Mexico and Central America.

**Understand the role and responsibilities of Immigration and Customs Enforcement in detention and removal proceedings.** Human services administrators may consider setting up meetings with their regional ICE/Enforcement and Removal Field officers to develop strategies for human services to provide supports to families after the immigration enforcement site has been secured.

Additionally, ICE has policies in place to ensure that parents in detention have rights to communicate with their children, including facilitation of phone calls and visitation to the extent practicable, specific technical assistance in facilitating parental engagement in family court proceedings, and assistance in reunifying children with parents at the point of repatriation. The [parental interest fact sheet](#), available in English and Spanish, is a useful overview of policies for parents and human services staff alike.

Child welfare administrators, attorneys, or advocates can contact the ICE office specializing in child welfare issues at: [Parental.Interests@ice.dhs.gov](mailto:Parental.Interests@ice.dhs.gov) (family separation/parental interests inquiries); [Detention.LegalAccess@ice.dhs.gov](mailto:Detention.LegalAccess@ice.dhs.gov) (legal access general inquiries)

**Assess your organization's readiness to meet the needs of immigrant and mixed status families dually involved with child welfare and immigration enforcement.** The Migration Policy Institute and APHSA [published a report](#) based on best practices identified in jurisdictions across the country. Specific recommendations include:

- Employ specialized staff or provide access to a skilled point of contact for caseworkers to reach out to for guidance and support on immigration issues in child welfare cases.
- Develop pre-service and ongoing training for frontline workers concerning immigration issues in child welfare cases with content emphasizing cultural competency and issues relating to legal status.
- Review whether language access policies adequately reflect the characteristics and needs of the service population with attention to translation of forms and availability of multilingual staff and interpreters who are not children or other family members.
- In light of the importance of placing children with relatives when possible and appropriate, identify and address barriers that may prevent noncitizen caregivers, including unauthorized immigrants, from becoming licensed providers.
- Review policies concerning placement of children with a parent or guardian abroad, develop MOUs with consulates for countries with significant numbers of placements, and ensure that the jurisdiction either has skilled staff or contracts for access to such staff for involvement in these cases.
- Reach out to consulates whose nationals comprise substantial service populations to coordinate and explore developing MOUs to address respective roles when foreign nationals or children of foreign nationals are involved with the agency.
- Develop a process, using internal staff or a grant or contract with an outside entity, to ensure that all noncitizen children in care, and parents associated with children in care, are screened for immigration benefits such as naturalization, humanitarian protection, and relief from deportation.
- Provide workers with guidance about how to inform adults and children about confidentiality protections, as failure to address concerns about immigration enforcement can prevent child welfare agencies from effectively engaging with immigrant families.
- Develop policies for communicating with and engaging detained parents in child welfare case planning and hearings, and for sharing the parent's location with the court and any parent attorney group so that the parent may be assigned counsel; review ICE's directive on Detention and Removal of Alien Parents or Legal Guardians, incorporate its key provisions into agency policy manuals or guidance to caseworkers, and identify and build a relationship with the appropriate ICE field office point of contact for child welfare matters.