

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Under the Trump Administration, arrests of immigrants by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) have increased in Pennsylvania.¹ Fear of arrest, detention, and deportation permeates the everyday lives of immigrants and their families, affecting their physical and psychological well-being.² The lack of transparency or consistency in ICE practices creates pervasive uncertainty, stress, and anxiety for communities.³

Community based organizations across the state have firsthand experience with the impact of ICE enforcement on their communities. They know anecdotally how localities cooperate with ICE in arresting and detaining immigrants. Given the difficulties in challenging ICE directly at the federal level, community based organizations are increasingly looking to advocate for change at the local level.⁴ These organizations, however, have expressed a need to more comprehensively understand how localities are cooperating with ICE.

This report, therefore, seeks to shed light by more systematically examining cooperation between ICE and local entities in the era of the Trump administration.⁵ We collected information by filing Right to Know (RTK) requests, speaking with local officials, and reviewing the results of Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests conducted by other advocacy organizations (see Methodology in the Appendix). By providing an in-depth study of the mechanisms of ICE collaboration with select county jails, county probation, and local law enforcement, we reveal the various ways in which ICE's enforcement system interlocks with local criminal justice systems in Pennsylvania.

We found that counties are consistently collaborating with ICE (Figure 1).⁶ County jails and probation departments, for example, regularly share information about immigrants with ICE pursuant to informal agreements or formal written policies. They also actively help ICE to locate and arrest immigrants. Further, counties allow ICE to use their jails and prisons solely for purposes of detaining persons accused of violating civil immigration laws. In Pennsylvania, there are currently seven county jails and one county-run family detention center that have signed federal contracts to detain immigrants for ICE. Despite the significant human cost, counties are profiting from the growing numbers of immigrants in civil detention.

On the other hand, police collaboration appears to be less systematic and mostly ad hoc. The majority of the police departments we examined in Pennsylvania do not have written policies or arrangements governing ICE collaboration. The vacuum has created an opening for individual police officers to act based on their own personal inclinations, and for ICE to solicit greater levels of assistance from individual police and police departments.