

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

What You Can Do as a Bystander

During Immigration Enforcement Actions



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It's easy to freeze when you see immigration agents detaining someone, especially if the officers are acting quickly or aggressively. Consider talking about these action items with a trusted friend or family member, and practice what you can say out loud before you need to use this information.

IF YOU WITNESS SOMEONE BEING DETAINED BY IMMIGRATION OFFICIALS

Remember: Your safety, and the safety of those around you, is the top priority. You cannot challenge unconstitutional law enforcement actions on the street.

- If you have a smartphone, record video of the interaction. *Read more details about recording ICE below.*
- Call a deportation defense hotline to alert local advocates of ICE activity — RI, MA, and CT hotline numbers are listed below. Be ready to share specific information:
 - **Where** exactly are the agents?
 - **How** many immigration or law enforcement agents are there?
 - **What** are the agents doing?
 - **How long** have the agents been in that location?
 - **What**, if anything, do you know about the person being detained?
- Here are some common agency acronyms you may see on agents' vests:
 - "ICE": Immigration and Customs Enforcement
 - "ERO": Enforcement and Removal Operations
 - "CBP": Customs and Border Protection
 - "DHS": Department of Homeland Security
- Call the family and/or emergency contact of the person being detained, if you know who they are. You can be the connection to ensure their support network is alerted as soon as possible.
- Write down everything you remember about what you witnessed.
- Get contact information and copies of any recordings or photos from other witnesses.

See ICE in your community? You can call the deportation defense hotline at **401-675-1414** to report ICE activity, even if someone is not being actively detained.

IF POSSIBLE, PROVIDE EMOTIONAL SUPPORT FOR THE PERSON BEING DETAINED, AND REMIND THEM OF THEIR RIGHTS

You can talk to the person being detained as long as you are not interfering with or obstructing the officers.

Remind them:

- "You can remain silent!"
- "You don't have to answer questions!"
- "You have the right to call your lawyer!"
- "You don't have to sign anything without a lawyer!"

RECORDING ICE

You have a First Amendment right to record law enforcement actions in public spaces, but recording can still carry risks.

- Try to record any identifying information about the ICE agents, like agency vests, badge numbers, car make and model, or car license plates.
- Capture context of where you are, like street signs or landmarks.
- Do not stop and restart recording, and do not edit the original video — even the file name.
- Make a copy of the video and store it in a safe place. Share the footage with the victim's family or lawyer if you can, or alternatively, an immigration organization in your area.
- You can still be arrested if you break other laws. For example, Rhode Island has a hands-free driving laws, and you can be cited for filming with a smartphone in your hand while driving.

How to reduce risk while recording:

Some law enforcement officers may react harshly or retaliate against those who record their activities, even though filming law enforcement is protected by the First Amendment. Use your own judgment and weigh how comfortable you feel.

- Maintaining enough distance can help prevent officers from claiming you were interfering. A *good rule of thumb: Be far enough away an officer would have to walk towards you to make contact.*
- Film openly and keep your hands visible.
- Avoid sudden movements and remain calm.
- Don't record while driving.
- Follow instructions — which can be difficult if directions are not lawful or are contradictory. *In this scenario, note that you are also recording yourself complying with directions.*

DO NOT INTERFERE OR ESCALATE THE SITUATION WITH FORCE

Understand what consequences you could face if you intentionally break the law, whether for civil disobedience or any other purpose, such as obstructing an arrest.

- Do not touch, push, or hit an officer.
- Do not run away; if you leave the situation, walk calmly.
- Always speak respectfully.

Remember: ICE agent misconduct cannot be challenged on the street.

“WHY IS KNOWING MY RIGHTS IMPORTANT, IF THEY’RE BEING VIOLATED ANYWAYS?”

- You have to understand your rights first to recognize if they have been violated.
- If you understand the violation and it is documented, you can later challenge the violation in court.
- Documentation is how we show abuses of power.

OTHER ACTIONS YOU CAN TAKE

- Share this resource with friends, family, and others in your community.
- Save the deportation hotline numbers in your phone contacts, so you have this information on hand if you need it.
- Always use humanizing language.
- Contact your local and state officials to advocate for pro-immigrant laws, policies, and rights. Find out more information on our website at www.riaclu.org.
- Contribute to mutual aid funds or donate to organizations working to protect immigrants and their rights.
- Talk with friends or family who are at risk of being detained about creating an emergency plan. This can include:
 - Have an emergency contact list.
 - Keep copies of all legal documents in a safe place that their emergency contact can access.
 - Consult with a reputable immigration lawyer to explore any options to attain immigration status.
 - Memorize phone numbers for family members and an immigration lawyer.
 - Get passports for children who are U.S. citizens.
 - Put together a family care plan or temporary guardianship for children, should a parent be detained.

HOTLINE NUMBERS TO CALL

• Rhode Island: 401-675-1414

AMOR Defense Line Against Deportation & Police Brutality is a multilingual (currently English & Spanish) line that connects community members to AMOR's Case manager and community support network.

• Massachusetts: 617-370-5023

Operated by the LUCE Immigrant Justice Network of MA. The hotline is operational from 5am - 9pm every day of the week across multiple languages: English, Spanish, Portuguese, French, Haitian Creole, and Mandarin.

• Connecticut: 854-666-4472

CT Students for a Dream is an undocumented youth-led statewide organization in CT that fights and builds power for the rights and dignity of immigrants and communities of color.

Updated March 2026. This document is not intended as legal advice.

If you feel your rights have been violated, contact the ACLU of Rhode Island by emailing info@riaclu.org, or call (401) 831-7171.