

Protocols for Immigration Enforcement:

Compliance and Readiness at The Seattle Public Library

Purpose

The City of Seattle is a “[Welcoming City](#),”¹ which means we value inclusion and equity. As part of this, Library and other City employees do not inquire about citizenship status. We “serve all residents regardless of immigration status.”

The Seattle Public Library is a central hub of an equitable and connected city where knowledge flourishes, and people find opportunities. SPL provides service to all people regardless of immigration status. Our values of care, connection, and learning guide how we interact with our community and each other, and our guiding principles of equity and intellectual freedom are fundamental standards embedded in our work.²

This document is based on the City of Seattle’s Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs (OIRA) Immigration Enforcement Compliance and Readiness training on February 27, 2025. It is a guide to support compliance with federal, state, and local laws related to immigration.

This guide seeks to create a uniform response protocol across City of Seattle properties for visits and requests made by any federal immigration enforcement authority. Library staff will be educated on what constitutes non-public, restricted locations within City of Seattle spaces, as well as who may access those restricted locations.

This guide will provide a basic understanding of how immigration enforcement can be conducted in public spaces and establish best practices for documenting any immigration enforcement activity, inquiry, or incident within our facilities.

Background

In 2025, the Trump administration increased the number of federal agencies tasked with immigration enforcement. The agencies now responsible for enforcement include:

- Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE)
- Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA)
- Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF)
- U.S. Marshals Service

¹ Seattle is a “Welcoming City” [About Us - landRaffairs | seattle.gov](#)

² [About the Strategic Plan | The Seattle Public Library](#)

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- Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP)
- U.S. Customs and Border Protection / Border Patrol
- Homeland Security Investigations
- United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)

Historically, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) was responsible for federal immigration enforcement tasks. Now, with multiple federal agencies responsible for conducting immigration enforcement, it is necessary to be aware of the different agencies and how to respond if there is immigration enforcement actions occurring in our spaces.

Index: Protocols and Additional Information

In the following pages, you will find protocols for immigration actions taken in public and non-public areas, applicable laws and policies, and additional resources and information.

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Protocol: Immigration Enforcement in Public Areas

WHAT TO KNOW

- **Public area is defined as:** “any area open to the public or viewable by the public (reception or waiting area, parks, meeting rooms, etc.)”
- **Warrants not required:** Immigration enforcement officers can operate in public areas without a warrant. Officers may arrest an individual in a public space without a warrant if they have probable cause to believe that individual is in the U.S. unlawfully. It is **not** the Library employee’s job to determine whether this exists. It will be determined by a court at a later time.

HOW TO PREPARE

- **Study this guide:** All staff should be aware of and trained on City guidance for encounters with immigration enforcement
- **Know and mark your spaces:**
 - MOS will create clear demarcation of public vs. non-public areas.
 - Locations/division management will:
 - work with MOS and CIP to display these signs, and
 - make sure non-public areas are not otherwise visible or open to visitors.
- **Follow the plan:** Follow the steps outlined in this guide and use [SPL’s Crisis Notification Plan](#).

WHAT TO DO

Please take the following steps if you see an immigration enforcement action occur in a public area at the Library:

- Do NOT interfere with immigration enforcement in public areas.
- **Immediately** contact your on-site supervisor/lead
- The supervisor/lead will initiate the [SPL Crisis Notification Plan](#):
 - Contact Regional Manager/Service Manager or LINC
 - RM/SM/LINC will contact Admin-in-Charge and Comms-in-Charge

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- Admin-in-Charge will notify additional SMT members and Mayor's Office as appropriate

WHAT NOT TO DO

If immigration enforcement is occurring in a public area:

- **DO NOT** interfere. Instead, contact your on-site supervisor/lead and initiate the [SPL Crisis Notification Plan](#).

WHY REPORTING MATTERS

- Reporting up the chain of command immediately for direction is important because these can be complicated issues made more so by stressful conditions.
- By following this protocol, employees are NOT put in the position of individually assessing whether there is a judicial or administrative warrant. Library leadership, the Mayor's Office, and City Attorney's Office will do that.

ABOUT FILMING/PHOTOGRAPHING LAW ENFORCEMENT

Please note: There are some potential risks associated with filming or photographing law enforcement activity, whether using a personal or City-issued device. The [Freedom Forum has helpful information](#) about this. In addition, recording law enforcement activity while on work time means that any photos or recordings are considered public record. Please be mindful of this information, and use your best judgment when determining whether photographing or recording enforcement actions is appropriate.

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Protocol: Enforcement in Non-Public Areas

WHAT TO KNOW

Non-public areas are normally protected from searches and seizures. Non-public can be defined as areas where there is a “reasonable expectation of privacy” both subjectively and objectively. Examples of non-public spaces include a private office or staff work room that is clearly marked and inaccessible to visitors. Non-public areas should be clearly demarcated as such. Examples include “Employee Only” areas with signage, “key card access” areas, etc.

Officers need a judicial warrant to enter and search non-public areas, unless an exception applies. Officers do not need a warrant to enter and search non-public area if:

- Consent for entry is given by an employee who has apparent authority, OR;
- There are urgent circumstances, an emergency, or a hot pursuit.

HOW TO PREPARE

- **Study this guide:** All staff should be aware of and trained on City guidance for encounters with immigration enforcement
- **Know and mark your spaces:**
 - MOS will create clear demarcation of public vs. non-public areas.
 - Locations/division management will:
 - work with MOS and CIP to display these signs, and
 - make sure non-public areas are not otherwise visible or open to visitors.
- **Follow the plan:** Follow the steps outlined in this guide and use [SPL's Crisis Notification Plan](#).

WHAT TO DO

- **DO NOT consent/grant access to non-public areas.**
 - **Please tell them the following:** “You may not enter this non-public area, and I am not authorized to let you enter. I will notify Library administration, and someone will be coming to verify.”

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- Ask officer(s) to wait in a public area.
- **Immediately contact your on-site supervisor/lead**
- The supervisor/lead will initiate the [SPL Crisis Notification Plan](#):
 - Contact Regional Manager/Service Manager or LINC
 - RM/SM/LINC will contact Admin-in-Charge and Comms-in-Charge
 - Admin-in-Charge will notify Mayor's Office
- **Document any actions taken by federal immigration authority**, including:
 - Name(s) of the officer(s), badge number
 - Documents presented
 - Requests made
 - Oral statements
 - Actions taken
 - Refusal, if it occurs, by the officer to comply with a request to wait
- Submit your documentation through the SPL Incident Report form.

WHAT NOT TO DO

If immigration enforcement is occurring in a non-public area:

- If enforcement is happening in a non-public area without consent, continue reiterating that officers are not allowed to enter a non-public area, but for your safety, do not physically interfere.
- Document what was said and done, as instructed above.

MAYOR'S OFFICE PROTOCOL

The Mayor's Office will:

- Check identification and write down the name of the federal immigration authority, badge number, and their supervising officer.
- Ask for, review, and make a copy of court order or judicial warrant authorizing the search of City premises or to enter non-public City areas.
- If a signed judicial warrant is presented, accompany any federal immigration authority during any search.
- Take notes of any actions by the federal immigration authority during the search.
- Request a list of any items seized.

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- Document any refusal by any federal immigration authority to comply with any request.
- Submit your documentation through the SPL Incident Report form.

WHY REPORTING MATTERS

- Reporting up the chain of command immediately for direction is important because these can be complicated issues made more so by stressful conditions.
- By following this protocol, employees are NOT put in the position of individually assessing whether there is a judicial or administrative warrant. Library leadership, the Mayor's Office, and City Attorney's Office will do that.

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Protocol: Responding to Requests for Information

Enforcement Officers Authority to Ask Questions

- Immigration enforcement officers – either with or without a warrant – may ask any questions about an individual’s immigration status or other matters.
- All members of the public have the right to refuse to answer.
- Library employees should not instruct individuals to remain silent or refuse to answer questions
 - Sometimes giving instructions can be interpreted as “Harboring Illegal Aliens” or “impeding federal law”

Responding to Law Enforcement Requests for Information

- If you, as a Library staff member, receive questions about a patron from immigration enforcement officers, refer to SPL’s administrative procedure for [Responding to Law Enforcement Requests](#).
- Immediately report any requests for information or direct communications by or with any federal immigration authorities.
- **Immediately contact your on-site supervisor/lead**
- The supervisor/lead will initiate the [SPL Crisis Notification Plan](#):
 - Notify on-site supervisor/building lead
 - Lead will contact Regional Manager/Service Manager or LINC
 - RM/SM/LINC will contact Admin in Charge
- Admin in Charge will notify Mayor’s Office.

Public Records Requests

- All public records requests should be processed in accordance with state law and following [SPL’s Public Disclosure Procedure](#).

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Enforcement in Non-City “Sensitive Locations”

For staff who conduct outreach, engagement, or programming off-site, it’s important to be aware of federal laws and policies related to non-City “Sensitive Locations.”

Federal Law and Policy

- Federal law **does not** prohibit immigration enforcement in “sensitive locations”
- The Trump Administration revoked Biden-area policy that prohibited arrests by enforcement officers at “sensitive locations” (Jan. 21, 2025 DSH Directive)

Previously Recognized “Sensitive Areas”

- Schools/childcare locations and places where children gather
- Medical/healthcare facilities
- Places of worship
- Social services establishments
- Places for religious or civil ceremonies or observances (funerals, gravesides, weddings)

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Applicable Laws and Policies

U.S. FEDERAL LAW

Immigration law enforcement is exclusively a federal function. On January 20, 2025, President Trump issued a number of immigration-related executive orders, including “[Protecting the American People Against Invasion](#),” which has introduced sweeping change to U.S. immigration policy with significant impacts on local governments.

WASHINGTON STATE LAWS AND POLICIES

Keep Washington Working Act (2019)

- The Keep Washington Working Act (KWWA) prohibits certain entities, including state agencies and state and local law enforcement, from collecting, using or disclosing information for immigration enforcement purposes, except as required by state or federal law, or as a necessary condition of federal funding to the state.
 - Only collect and retain information needed to serve the public; do not collect citizenship or immigration-related information unless required and set up nondiscriminatory access to benefits and services.
- Prohibits law enforcement from inquiring about immigration or citizenship status unless linked to a criminal investigation.
- Bars sharing non-public personal information with federal immigration authorities unless required by law.
- Forbids detaining individuals solely for determining immigration status or based on civil immigration warrants.
- Disallows contracts allowing state/local agencies to detain individuals for federal civil immigration violations.

Courts Open to All Act (2020)

- Restricts court officials from collection or sharing immigration information unless tied to a criminal case.
- Prohibits civil arrests at or near court facilities, except when federally mandated.

CITY OF SEATTLE LAWS AND POLICIES

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[Chapter 4.18 of Seattle Municipal Code \(SMC\)](#)

Not Hindering

The City's focus is on using its resources on City business, but the City does not interfere with federal agencies acting under judicial orders or otherwise within the law. Chapter 4.18 SMC states that City officers and employees:

- Are to cooperate with, and not hinder, enforcement of federal immigration laws, and
- Are not prohibited from cooperating with federal immigration authorities *as required by law*.

Not Inquiring or Seeking to Ascertain

Chapter 4.18 SMC also states that “notwithstanding” the “not hinder” description above:

- Unless otherwise required by law or court order, no Seattle City officer or employee shall inquire into the immigration status of any person, or engage in activities designed to ascertain the immigration status of any person.
 - There is limited exemption to this directive related to SPD and an individual who is committing or has committed a felony criminal law violation.

[City of Seattle Resolution 31730](#)

Provides that City services are accessible to all residents, regardless of immigration status.

LIBRARY POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

- [Responding to Law Enforcement Requests](#) Administrative Procedure
- [Confidentiality of Patron Information](#) Board Policy
- [Ensuring Confidentiality of Patron Information](#) Administrative Procedure

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Additional Resources and Information

[Know Your Rights: Civil Immigration Enforcement in Washington State](#)

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN JUDICIAL / ADMINISTRATIVE WARRANTS

Judicial Warrant

A judicial warrant is an official court order signed by a judge that authorizes a search of private (or non-public) property, seizure, or arrest based on probable cause that a crime is being committed or has been committed. A judicial warrant:

- Will have the name of the state or federal court at the top of the document
- Is signed by a judge
- If the signature is by an immigration judge, it is not a judicial warrant
- Has the correct name and identifying information of the person they are pursuing
- Accurately identifies the location where they are attempting to enter (has the address)
- Has an effective date that has not expired
- A judicial warrant must be complied with

Administrative Warrant

An ICE administrative warrant is a document, issued by federal agency. Administrative documents are not signed by a judge but rather an immigration officer like an ICE agent or immigration judge. Administrative warrants do not give federal immigration agents authority to enter a nonpublic area without consent. An administrative warrant:

- Is issued by a federal agency, such as Department of Homeland Security (DHS), and signed by an immigration officer or immigration judge.
 - It may have “U.S. Department of Homeland Security” at the top of the document
 - It may authorize a seizure or arrest (in a public area)
- **DOES NOT** authorize search of non-public areas
 - Staff can refuse the officer entry to search premises or seek to obtain evidence.
 - Protocol is to allow Mayor’s Office and City Legal to make this determination.